



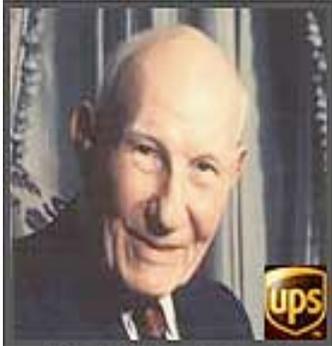
The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative

Helping youth leaving foster care make successful transitions to adulthood.

Second Chance Act Grantee Conference

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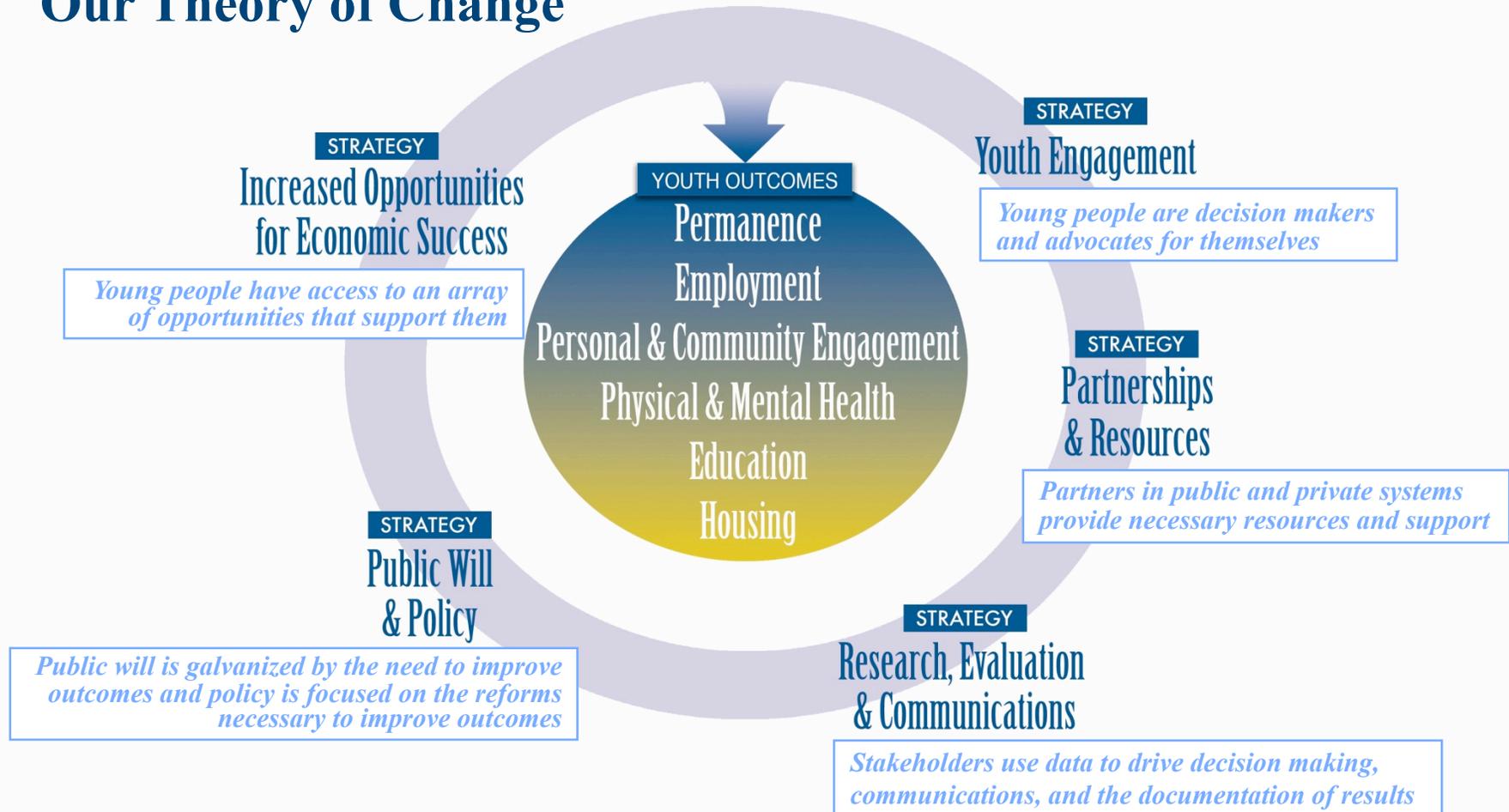


- **The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative was created in 2001 to improve outcomes for the young people who leave foster care, now nearly 30,000 each year.**
- **The subset of young people that “age out” of foster care without permanence experience a high rate of negative outcomes.**
- **The Initiative’s Vision is for all young people leaving foster care to make successful transitions to adulthood.**
- **As a national foundation, the Initiative’s Mission is to bring together the people, systems and resources necessary to assist youth leaving foster care in making successful transitions to adulthood.**
- **The Initiative provides “value added” by testing and developing promising approaches that are developmentally appropriate for adolescents and emerging adults.**



Strategy Rationale

Our Theory of Change



All five strategies working together lead to improved outcomes and systems for youth leaving foster care.



Overview

Systems Responses to Brain Research

- **Messaging the research**
- **Developmental timelines & interventions rather than chronological**
- **Strengths-based youth engagement & decision-making**
- **Fostering Connections to Success Act and the non-minor dependent**

Child Welfare, Justice Systems & State Intervention

- **Similarities, differences and opportunities for cross-learning**
- **Role of families (permanency and juvenile justice)**
- **Politics, rhetoric and evidence based interventions**
- **Integrated practice models**



Messaging the Brain Research

Prefrontal cortex of adolescent brain undergoes second stage of pruning and continues to develop beyond the teen years and into the early to mid twenties.

Prefrontal cortex governs reasoning, decision-making, judgment and impulse control - - so how much deference and weight should be given to the decisions and preferences of young people?

National Juvenile Justice Network (NJJN): Frame the research in a way that is respectful and effective --focus on opportunity, investment and education not on youth as incompetent, reckless and irrational.



Types of Engagement with Adults

Typical Youth Participation

- *Token positions & merely advisory*
- *Communication is one-sided & adult dominant*
- *Lacking trust and mutual understanding*
- *Age-based stereotypes*
- *Short-term or one-time*
- *Youth expected to be rubber stamps*

Authentic Youth Participation

- *Equal positions & full partners*
- *Equal opportunities to influence*
- *Relationships are nurtured & trust is built*
- *Collegial respect and mutual sharing*
- *Longer term & youth involved from the start*
- *Youth have ongoing role*



Engaging Youth in the Change Process

Youth Action

Concrete actions by young people that make a difference in their lives, their communities, and society as a whole

Youth Empowerment

An attitudinal, structural, and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives and the lives of others

Youth Infusion

The process of integrating youth into all spheres of community life to ensure their voices and actions are valued and are influential in efforts



Developmentally appropriate services

Planning and services need to take into account any delays that occur during childhood

Adolescent brain may be especially sensitive to experiential input so helpful services seen as fruitful investment opportunities in youth

Behaviors understood in context of stage of adolescent brain development



Justice & Child Welfare -- Similarities & Differences

Different justifications for using police power of state to intervene

Working with families

Subgroups of former foster youth (Chapin Hall: Courtney, Hook and Lee)

- *Accelerated Adults about 36% (doing fairly well but growing up fast)*
- *Struggling Parents about 25 % (life dominated by parenting under difficult circumstances)*
- *Emerging Adults about 21% (delaying some transition markers while avoiding hardship)*
- *Troubled and Troubling about 18% (serious problem situations such as incarceration, homeless, etc.)*



Permanency principles applied to juvenile justice

Providing young people in foster care with safe and committed families is a key indicator of success in child welfare; but if permanence alone were a panacea then young people exiting the juvenile justice system would be experiencing much better outcomes

Qualitative measures of family functioning and quality relationships are important to improve juvenile justice outcomes

These measures can be tools for building helpful supports to young people without unnecessarily inviting the state to exercise its police power to disrupt families without due process

Supports and services can buttress otherwise “minimally adequate” families



Social Capital & Permanence

Promote social cohesion and personal investment in the community

Elements of goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse among individuals, groups and families

A producer of "civic engagement" and a broad societal measure of communal health

Facilitates individual or collective action, generated by networks of relationships, reciprocity, trust, and social norms



Cross System Collaboration

- *Allow child welfare to retain jurisdiction of dually adjudicated youth. (JJ youth benefit from Chafee and Fostering Connections)*
- *Collaboration between the juvenile justice and child welfare systems to efficiently target service provision for crossover youth*
- *Align multiple planning efforts plans (permanency plan, ILP, IDEA/ education plans, aftercare plans, etc.)*
- *Consolidated models of practice (e.g. Tennessee)*
- *EBP system transference for better practice*



Elements of effective transition planning

- *Youth directed - engaged for long term commitment to plan*
- *Clinically address issues of trauma, identity loss, ambiguous loss*
- *Self determination and resiliency promoted*
- *Strengths-based and promotes positive youth development*
- *Strengths and needs assessed & guide content*
- *Cross system collaboration and data sharing*
- *Plans outline responsibilities, accountability and track progress*
- *Court tracking and enforcement*



Content of transition plans

Permanency and preparation for adulthood in an integrated plan

Education planning to develop vocational or post secondary education interests

Housing and home life planning (acquisition & maintenance of independent housing)

Health/mental health and self care planning (astute consumers & self monitoring)

Transportation planning

Life skills and daily living planning and service provision

Finances and money management planning

Career planning, work life planning and service provision (economic stability)

Supports (social relationships and communication skills planning & services)



Conclusion: What young people need to be connected

Young people need:

- *people in their lives -- adults who listen, guide & respect them*
- *safe, stimulating, structured places where they can live, learn, work, and play*
- *opportunities -- high-quality instruction and training in things they're interested in and opportunities to work & contribute through service*
- *helpful supports and interventions that are redundant -- provided in as many settings as possible such as families, schools, youth organizations, and workplace*
- *families that provide emotional support -- but also act as brokers, monitors and guides for young people*