

## Extended Supports for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System in Nebraska

by Katherine Gaughen and Margaret Flynn-Khan

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A young person with complex risk and needs may continue to have involvement with the juvenile justice system in Nebraska until he or she reaches the age of majority. Upon reaching the age of nineteen, young people are no longer eligible for the services they received through the juvenile justice system. Nor are there any aftercare services available to these young adults that would help them to successfully transition out of juvenile justice placements or off of probation. Yet, much like their peers in the child welfare system, young people involved in the juvenile justice system depend on the Administrative Office of Probation (AOP) to address the underlying behavioral health, mental health, and factors leading to delinquency.

Efficient and effective service provision is critical for older youth leaving the juvenile or criminal justice system as they attempt to navigate a successful path to a crime-free adulthood.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, youth transitioning to adulthood from the juvenile or criminal justice systems face even worse outcomes than their peers from the child welfare system. Within twelve months of their release from institutional placement, only 30 percent of delinquent youth were involved in either school or employment.<sup>2</sup> These youth are significantly more likely than their peers to have substance abuse or mental health problems.<sup>34</sup> In some states, almost half return to the justice system after they are released.<sup>5</sup>

As noted in *Supporting Youth in Transition to Adulthood: Lessons Learned from Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice*, “Youth aging out of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems have much in common. They share the negative developmental impact that the trauma they experienced has caused. They also share many of the same challenges, given that their involvement in these systems generally indicates compromised social and family networks, networks that would normally help an adolescent establish pro-social coping mechanisms absent fully developed emotional or cognitive capacities. In many cases, out-of-home placement can exacerbate family and community tensions, making successful social integration as a young adult even more difficult. Sustained family and community relationships are important in providing critical support to a youth as he or she faces the challenges of young adulthood. Allowing youth to age out of either system without working to repair these relationships can inhibit a youth’s future success in employment, education, and financial matters.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Altschuler, D., Stangler, G., Berkley, K., and Burton, L. (2009). *Supporting Youth in Transition to Adulthood: Lessons Learned from Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice*. Retrieved on October 19, 2015 from <http://www.jimcaseyyouth.org/sites/default/files/documents/Georgetown%20child%20welfare%20and%20juvenile%20justice.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Bullis, M., Yovanoff, P., Mueller, G., & Havel, E. (2002). Life on the “outs”: Examination of the facility-to-community transition of incarcerated adolescents. *Exceptional Children*, 69, 7–22.

<sup>3</sup> National Mental Health Association. (n.d.). Mental health treatment for youth in the juvenile justice system: A compendium of promising practices. Retrieved October 19, 2015, from [https://www.nttac.org/views/docs/jabg/mhcurriculum/mh\\_mht.pdf](https://www.nttac.org/views/docs/jabg/mhcurriculum/mh_mht.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Reclaiming Futures. (2008). Model policies for juvenile justice and substance abuse treatment. Retrieved October 19, 2015 from <https://csgjusticecenter.org/jc/publications/model-policies-for-juvenile-justice-and-substance-abuse-treatment-a-report-by-reclaiming-futures-2/>

<sup>5</sup> Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice. (2006). Juvenile offenders and victims: 2006 report. Retrieved October 19, 2015, from <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/nr2006/downloads/NR2006.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Altschuler, D., Stangler, G., Berkley, K., and Burton, L. (2009). *Supporting Youth in Transition to Adulthood: Lessons Learned from Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice*. Retrieved on October 19, 2015 from <http://www.jimcaseyyouth.org/sites/default/files/documents/Georgetown%20child%20welfare%20and%20juvenile%20justice.pdf>

### **Process for Generating Recommendations**

While there is likely a similar level of need between many young people involved in Nebraska's child welfare and juvenile justice systems, the passage of the Bridge to Independence Program (b2i) means that there are very different levels of support available to young people leaving these systems. In order to address these differences, the Bridge to Independence legislation included a provision for the Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee to develop specific recommendations for expanding to or improving outcomes for similar groups of at-risk young adults not eligible for b2i. To develop recommendations, the Bridge to Independence Committee created a Juvenile Justice Taskforce (see Appendix A for a list of Taskforce Members). Leaders from the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCCF) and the Children's Commission Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee asked Mainspring Consulting to facilitate the development of recommendations by the Taskforce.

With the support of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, Mainspring Consulting facilitated two meetings with members of the Bridge to Independence Juvenile Justice Taskforce and Committee in September and October 2015.

At the September meeting, b2i Juvenile Justice Taskforce members began by reviewing the results of sixteen focus groups conducted by NCCF and Nebraska Voices for Children (for complete focus group results, see Appendix B). Eight focus groups were held with adult participants and included representation from the Through the Eyes of the Child Teams, a collective impact initiative, probation officer teams, the statewide community-based aid planning team, the Office of Juvenile Services Subcommittee and the Coalition for Juvenile Justice. Key themes that emerged from adult focus groups included:

- Young people transitioning from the AOP need and deserve extended support;
- Young people are more likely to access a program of extended supports if it is not administered by Probation and the courts. The transition to extended services is important;
- There should be some parameters on eligibility, but those parameters should be flexible enough that youth who need assistance are not categorically excluded;
- Many services are necessary, but especially housing, case management, and life skills; and
- Extended supports should provide a plan and pathway toward transition to full independence, and not continued reliance.

Eight focus groups were also held with 61 young adult participants. Participants ranged in age from 11 to 21 and resided in a variety of placement settings, including biological, guardianship, foster and group homes, shelter care, on their own, residential treatment, Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers, and detention. All young adult participants were currently or formerly involved in the juvenile justice system in Nebraska. Key themes that emerged from the young adult focus groups included:

- Recognition regarding the need for extended services, but hesitation about continued probation supervision;
- A strong desire for freedom and the importance of choice in extended supports, while recognizing their own accountability;

- A focus on enhancing existing services rather than creating new service options and connecting young people to those existing services;
- Young adults need time to transition; and
- Messaging is important.

Based on the results of the focus groups, a review of current data from the AOP, and the expertise of committee members, the Taskforce generated an initial set of recommendations. Mainspring consultants then developed fiscal analyses of those options with input from a Steering Committee of the Juvenile Justice Taskforce. The fiscal analyses were shared with the Juvenile Justice Taskforce and members of the Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee in October. After reviewing those analyses and discussing the goals of extended supports and services for the juvenile justice population, the Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee and Juvenile Justice Taskforce agreed to put forth the following recommendations.

### **Recommendations**

Members of the Taskforce and Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee articulated the results they want to achieve through their recommendations as a guide to their discussions and the consideration of their recommendations.

Members agreed that the primary result they want their recommendations to achieve is that **young people who are involved with juvenile justice in Nebraska can make a successful transition to adulthood**. The benefits of vulnerable young people making a successful transition to adulthood are realized in the individual lives of youth as well as in society as a whole, as increased health and well-being, education and earnings, and stable family connections for young people can mean reduced adult criminal justice involvement and reduced use of public assistance benefits.

To achieve this result, members of the Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee and Juvenile Justice Taskforce put forward the following recommendation:

**Young people under the jurisdiction of the AOP and 3B wards under the jurisdiction of DHHS who are in out-of-home placement on their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday should be able to voluntarily opt into Bridge to Independence between ages 19-21 if it is determined that it is in their best interest to do so, due to a lack of alternative supports.**

The Taskforce agreed it was important to build on the success of b2i and felt that certain vulnerable young adults exiting the juvenile justice system require the same level of support as young people exiting the child welfare system. Specifically, the taskforce wanted to ensure that young adults who lack family supports and as a result have no place to go upon exit from juvenile justice out-of-home placements, are able to enter the b2i program. The group agreed that if legislation and implementation of this recommendation moves forward, further work would need to be done to delineate the specific criteria for determining which young people lack support and who would make that determination.

One benefit of allowing young people to voluntarily sign themselves into b2i is that the state could determine eligibility for Title IV-E funding, maximizing federal dollars available to support these young people. Nonetheless, expanding the b2i program to this additional population of young people to opt into b2i would require a fiscal allocation from the legislature. Please see Appendix C for the fiscal analysis of this recommendation.

In generating the above recommendation, the Taskforce and Committee seriously considered making the recommendation that the b2i age of eligibility should be lowered to 18 so that both eligible young people in DHHS care and those in out-of-home JJ placements could enter b2i at 18. A variety of legal challenges and programmatic concerns led the group to limit the recommendation to adding the 19 – 21 year old juvenile justice population to b2i at this time. However, taskforce members wanted to highlight the limitations of this recommendation and stress that it is important to begin exploring how to address barriers and decrease the age of eligibility for b2i from 19 to 18.

Important concerns with eligibility for b2i beginning at age 19 include the following:

- Young people are routinely discharged from DHHS custody to independent living at age 18. These young people fall into a gap in services now, as they are not eligible to enter b2i until age 19;
- Taskforce members were concerned that beginning eligibility at age 19 for juvenile justice youth could lead judges to extend juvenile justice involvement for young people when it is not warranted, in order for them to access the services at age 19; and
- The b2i program has a very low IV-E penetration rate, meaning that most young people are ineligible for IV-E when they enter b2i because of employment earnings. As a result, Nebraska does not get federal matching funds for these individuals. If young people can enter b2i at age 18, as is the policy in all other states that have extended foster care, they will have had less time to progress in employment after high school and will be more likely to be income eligible for IV-E. Once young people enter the program, there is no requirement to redetermine IV-E eligibility.

Despite the above concerns with eligibility for b2i beginning at age 19, the fact that the age of majority is 19 in Nebraska made participants concerned that signing a voluntary placement agreement to enter b2i would not be a legal option for young adults at age 18. Nebraska must work through several challenges related to the current age of majority before pursuing b2i eligibility at age 18:

- Determine who can sign a young person into b2i prior to age 19:
  - If only the parents can voluntarily sign young people into b2i before age 19, determine whether checks for direct stipends must go to parents or can be directed to young people;
  - If only the parents can voluntarily sign young people into b2i before age 19, determine whether IV-E eligibility is determined based on the parents' or the young persons' income; and
  - If only parents can voluntarily sign young people into b2i before age 19, determine whether young people have the right to opt out of b2i without parental consent. Can parents sign young people out of b2i against the young adult's wishes?
- Create a training plan to ensure both the judicial system and case managers and/or probation officers are using best practice in determining which young people should remain in care until age 19 and which might benefit from entering the voluntary b2i at age 18.

### **Future Considerations**

Recognizing that many young people in the juvenile justice system may not need the level of support offered by b2i, but do need guidance from caring adults and connections to community resources, the group also considered Nebraska's existing infrastructure to support young adults in transition. After reviewing the existing PALS and Central Navigator programs, the taskforce agreed there was merit to expanding these programs to serve young people transitioning from the juvenile justice system, but did not recommend moving forward with such an expansion at this time. In the future, the taskforce recommended carefully reviewing the following options for implementation:

**1. Young people under the jurisdiction of the AOP and 3B wards under the jurisdiction of DHHS who are in out-of-home placement at age 18 should be able to voluntarily receive case management services until they reach age 21.**

Taskforce members believed strongly that young people in juvenile justice out-of-home placements could benefit from intensive case management services and access to a small amount of flexible, needs-based funds focused on helping them achieve self-sufficiency. The Nebraska's PALS model and needs-based funds offer an existing model and infrastructure that are currently limited to serving young people in the child welfare system who are transitioning from care, but could be built upon to serve young people in out-of-home placements under juvenile justice jurisdiction.

**2. All young people who receive support and services from the AOP at age 18 can access services from a central navigator until they reach age 21.**

Nebraska currently operates a Central Navigator Access system for young people transitioning out of the child welfare system that could be utilized to serve youth exiting juvenile justice. It is designed to ensure that young people can have access to needed supports and services in an effective and timely manner through a systematic approach of collaborative partnerships intended to promote a continuum of care. The system utilizes a youth-centered approach and identifies the range of supports and services available in communities to make efficient and targeted referrals for young people. Nebraska could expand eligibility for this low-cost, low intensity model to young people who have been involved with juvenile justice at age 18 in order to help them access essential supports as they transition to adulthood.

# Appendix A

## Membership Roster Juvenile Justice Extension Task Force

Task Force Co-Chairs: Jeanne Brandner, Office of Probation and Juliet Summers,  
Voices for Children

### Task Force Members:

Deanna Brakhage, Nebraska Dept. of Health and Human Services  
Shannon Brower, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities  
Becca Brune, Nebraska Appleseed  
Nathan Busch, Nebraska Dept. of Health and Human Services  
Ralene Cheng, Office of Probation  
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Sarah Helvey, Nebraska Appleseed  
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Doug Lenz, Central Plains Center for Services  
Katie McLeese Stephenson, Court Improvement Project  
Mary Jo Pankoke, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation  
Doug Peters, Nebraska Dept. of Health and Human Services  
Cassy Rockwell, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation  
Kelli Schadwinkel, Office of Probation  
Shayne Schiermeister, Nebraska Dept. of Health and Human Services  
Jill Schubauer, Region 3 Behavioral Health  
Megann Schweitzer, Nebraska Dept. of Health and Human Services  
Jennifer Skala, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation  
Lana Verbrigghe, Child Savings Institute

## Appendix B





# Stakeholder Perspectives on Extended Supports and Services for Juvenile Justice Alumni

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*Prepared for the Juvenile Justice Extension Taskforce of the Nebraska Children's Commission's Young Adult Supports and Services Sub-Committee*

This report captures feedback gathered from sixty-two young adults with current or former involvement in the Nebraska Juvenile Justice system and forty-four professionals working within the system concerning the creation of a supports and services program for young adults, ages 19 and 20, leaving the juvenile justice system without adequate natural or community connections. Ideas concerning components of the program, fears about its implementation, and needs of young adults with this experience are presented.

**Table of Content**

*Introduction*.....2

*Process*.....2

*Results: Demographics*.....4

*Results: Young Adult Themes*.....7

*Results: Provider Themes*.....10

*Items for Further Investigation*.....15

*Conclusions*.....16

*Appendix A: Young Adult Facilitation Guide*.....18

*Appendix B: Young Adult Assent Form*.....21

*Appendix C: Young Adult Youth Feedback Forms*.....22

*Appendix D: Provider Facilitation Guide*.....24

*Appendix E: Provider Assent Form*.....27

*Appendix F: Provider Feedback Forms*.....28

## Introduction

In an effort to explore the need and potential structure of a supports and services program for 19 and 20 year old young adults with juvenile justice system involvement and minimal natural supports, the Young Adult Services and Supports subcommittee of the Children’s Commission, in partnership with the Nebraska Probation Administration, plans to convene a group of stakeholders in September and October 2015. Stakeholders will be asked to explore three questions, including:

1. If such services and supports are needed.
2. If so, how they should be structured, provided, and what oversight is needed.
3. If so, what would it cost? (Analysis provided by Mainspring Consulting)

In preparation for these meetings, a workgroup was created to gather feedback from young adults with juvenile justice experience and adult stakeholders (i.e. service providers, administrators, family members, judicial professionals, and other interested community members). The focus groups would focus on gathering feedback on the first two questions being explored. The workgroup consisted of representatives from Nebraska Probation Administration, Nebraska Children, Voices for Children, and the University of Nebraska’s Center for Children, Families and the Law. The group determined focus groups would provide the best method of information gathering. Representatives of these organizations collaborated in the planning, development, facilitation, and compilation of focus group materials. Additional support was provided by Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative and Mainspring Consulting.

This report offers a synthesis of the results of all focus groups held, including process, demographic information, key themes, discussion and next steps. Copies of all materials used during the focus groups are provided in the appendices.

## Process

Sixteen focus groups were held across Nebraska in total; eight with youth and eight with adult stakeholders. Sixty-two youth and forty-two adults participated. Youth participants ranged from age 11 to 21 and resided in a variety of placements covering a majority of the continuum of placement options (including: biological, guardianship, foster and group homes, shelter care, on their own, residential treatment, and detention). All young adults participating were currently or formerly involved in the juvenile justice system in Nebraska. Adult participants served in a variety of system roles including diversion, services providers, detention or YRTC staff, judges, attorneys, shelter staff, foster parent providers, advocates, community service staff, domestic violence services, system administration, oversight agencies, and researchers.

Given the short timetable for gathering feedback, focus group locations were identified by the planning workgroup with the hopes of gathering voice from youth and professionals with experience in various juvenile justice placement and service options from across the state. Identified sites were contacted by a member of the planning team via email or phone. Logistical arrangements were then made with those able to hold a group within the given timeframe. All youth focus groups were held in person. Of the adult groups, five were held in person and three by conference call. All entities allowing a focus group to be held with their members or young consumers are listed below.

<b>Focus Group Entities and Locations</b>	
<i>Adult Focus Group Entities</i>	District 1 and 3 Through the Eyes of the Child Teams (SE Nebraska & Lincoln) Operation Youth Success (Omaha) District 3 and 4 Probation Officer Teams (Lincoln and Omaha) Community-based Aid Planning Team Members (Statewide representation) Children’s Commission’s Juvenile Services Subcommittee (Statewide representation)

	Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice (Statewide Representation)
<i>Youth Focus Group Entities</i>	Boystown Campus (Omaha) Boystown Shelter (Grand Island) Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center (Geneva and Kearney) ReConnect for Success (Omaha) Project Everlast (North Platte) Scottsbluff County Detention (Gering) Juvenile Justice League (Omaha)

Planning team members facilitated each of the groups with the exception of the Project Everlast-North Platte group, which was facilitated by the youth group's advisor. Participants completed an assent form, demographic sheet, and focus group questions. An explanation of the purpose and process discussion and an opportunity for questions was given. Following an icebreaker question, questions, specific to the development of a young adult support and services system for disconnected young adults leaving probation services, were asked. Questions were tailored for youth and adult feedback. Questions for both groups are listed below.

<b>Focus Group Questions</b>	
<i>Ice-Breaker Question</i>	What Probation services or support do you think is most important?
<i>Adult Questions</i>	<p>Do you think Nebraska should allow extended court jurisdiction and/or probation oversight on a voluntary basis beyond age 19 where continued treatment and services are needed and agreed to?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What do you see as pros and cons of this policy?</li> </ul> <p>In some cases, youth who are in out of home placement due to juvenile justice involvement do not have a home to return to. Would you be in favor of policy changes allowing these young adults to voluntarily enter the Bridge to Independence program if it was documented that they do not have a home to return to?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If not Bridge to Independence, do you believe Probation should develop and administer a similar set of services for youth who do not have a home to return to?</li> </ul> <p>For the broader population of youth under probation oversight, do you believe it is important to offer extended supports and services at age after a youth turns 19? Why or why not?</p> <p>If yes, what types of services do you see as most important to offer?</p> <p>Who should be the main referral source and provide the case management for extended services?</p>
<i>Youth Questions</i>	<p>Right now, in Nebraska, court jurisdiction and probation stops at age 19 in juvenile cases. If you had the option to continue your probation case, at age 19, as a way to continue to get services, would you want to?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Why or why not?</li> </ul> <p>Are there services that probation is providing that you would want to continue?</p> <p>If special services were provided to youth who had been involved with juvenile justice after they 19, what types of services are most important?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Would you opt to keep your probation case open if that was the only way to continue</li> </ul>

	<p>receiving those services?</p> <p>If services after 19 were available, would you want your current probation officer as your main contact?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Why or why not?</li> </ul> <p>Is there anything else you want to share?</p>
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Notes were taken by a workgroup member or staff on-site with each of the focus group locations. Information from each type of group (youth and adult) were consolidated and condensed into overarching themes by a member of the workgroup and shared with the rest of the team for feedback. Themes are outlined in the following two sections. Specific responses are not provided due to a commitment to participants that responses would remain anonymous and only themes would be captured in the report.

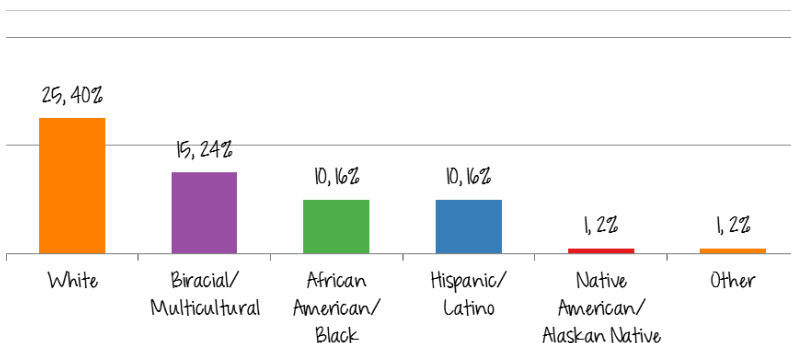
### Results: Demographics

Information was collected via feedback forms from a total of 62 youth and 44 adult focus group participants. Participants were from and/or worked in various locations across Nebraska, although the majority lived or worked in Lincoln/Lancaster County and Omaha/Douglas/Sarpy Counties. Youth participants tended to be more diverse in terms of gender, racial background, and ethnicity than adult participants, who were primarily female (77%) and white (86%). No adult participants reported their ethnicity as Latino/Hispanic, although data was missing for one adult.

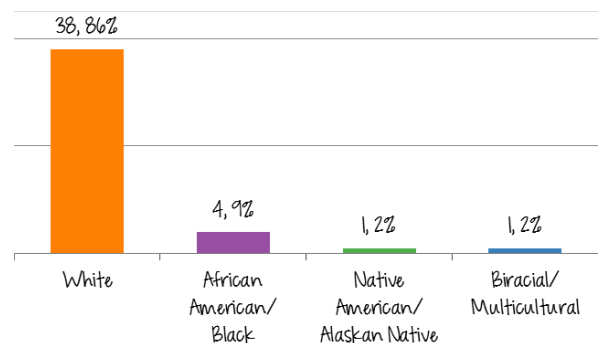
#### BASIC YOUTH INFORMATION

Young People's Towns		Adult's City/County/District	
Omaha	22	Lancaster County	14
Lincoln	10	Douglas County	7
North Platte	7	Gage County	2
Grand Island	4	Lincoln	2
Ames	2	Statewide	2
Broken Bow	2	17 Western & Central Co.	1
Hastings	2	Buffalo County	1
Kearney	2	Cass County	1
Lexington	2	District 1	1
		Douglas/Sarpy Co.	1
Chicago	1	Geneva/Fillmore	1
Columbus	1	Region 3 area	1
Elm Creek	1	Kearney/ Buffalo /Dist. 9	1
Fremont	1	North Platte	1
McCook	1	Lancaster Co. & 13 rural Co	1
Michoacan, Mexico	1	Omaha	1
Oxford	1	Grand Island/Hall & Howard Co.	1
Palisade	1	Sarpy County	1
		Sarpy/Otoe/Cass Co.	1
		Winnebago/ Thurston Co.	1

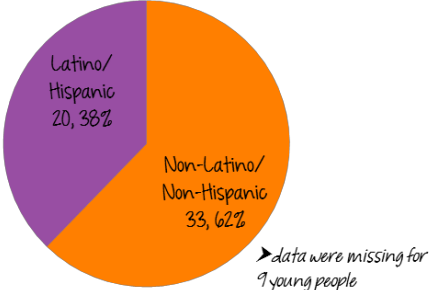
Racial Background of Youth



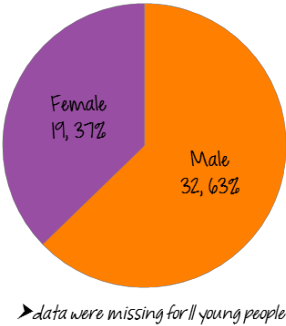
Racial Background of Adults



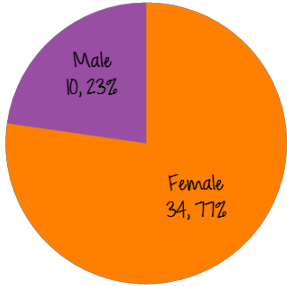
Ethnicity of Youth



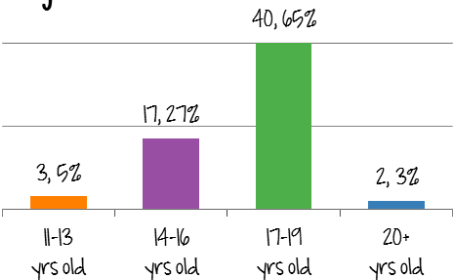
Gender of Youth



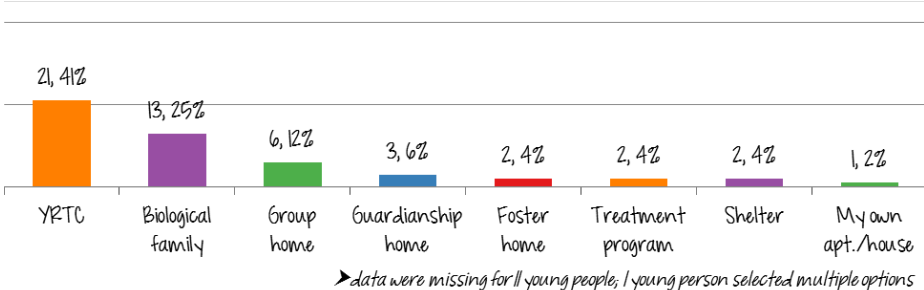
Gender of Adults



Ages of Youth



Current Living Situation of Youth



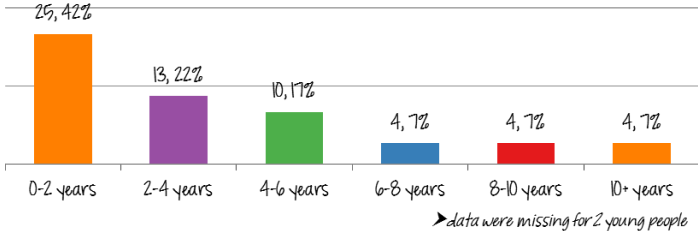
**PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH JUVENILE JUSTICE**

Most youth who completed a feedback form had been in the juvenile justice system for less than two years (42%), although a handful had been involved for 10 or more years (7%).

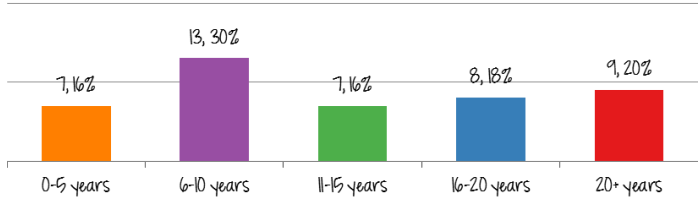
When looking at how long adult participants had been working either in juvenile justice or with at-risk youth, the length of time was much longer, with over 50% having spent 11 or more years with this population.

The majority of adults identified as probation officers (32%) or fell into the “other” category (32%). “Other” responses most commonly included different types of service providers and other child welfare roles, such as foster parent, CASA volunteer, FCRO staff, etc.

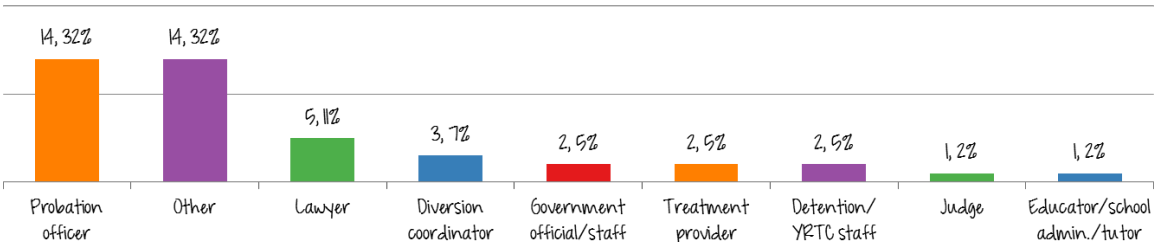
Length of Time Youth were in Juvenile Justice System



Length of Time Adults have Worked with at-Risk Youth



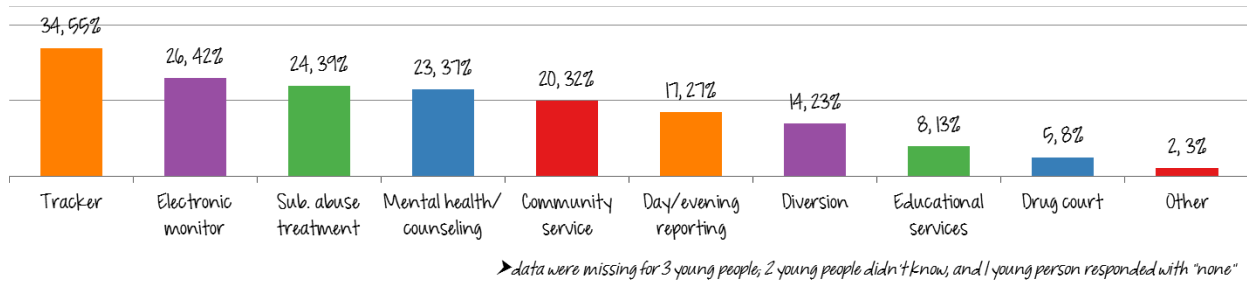
Adults' Primary Role with Youth on Probation



The most common probation services youth reported receiving included working with a tracker (55%), wearing an electronic monitor (42%), or participating in substance abuse treatment (39%), mental health counseling (37%), or community service (32%). The adult group most frequently reported providing mental health/counseling services (32%), educational services (27%), day/evening reporting services (25%), and tracking services (25%).

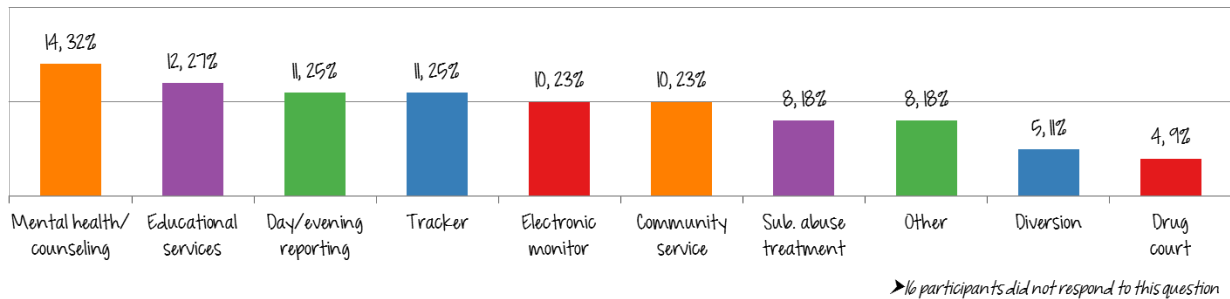
### Involvement with Probation Services: Youth

Note: young people were asked to select all services that applied



### Type of Probation Services Provided by Adults

Note: participants were asked to select all services that applied

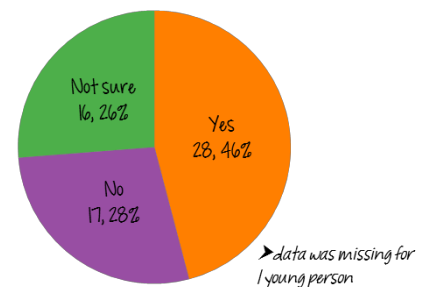


## EXTENDING VOLUNTARY SERVICES PAST AGE 19

When asked whether probation should offer voluntary services for youth after the age of 19, just under half of youth participants responded in agreement (46%). The remainder either disagreed (28%) or were uncertain (26%).

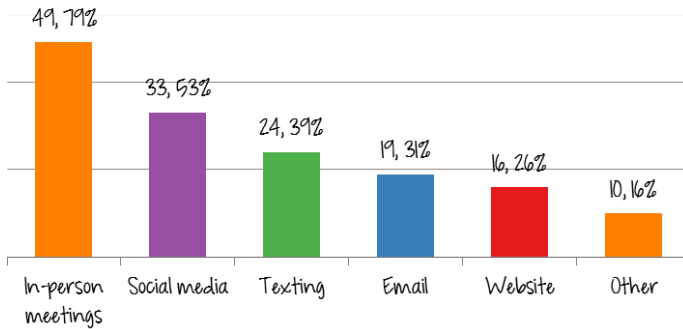
When asked about the best methods of keeping young people up-to-date on these potential extended services, youth vastly preferred in-person meetings (79%). Social media was the second most common response (53%), with the most common preferred type of social media being Facebook (69%).

### Youth Perspective on Extended Services



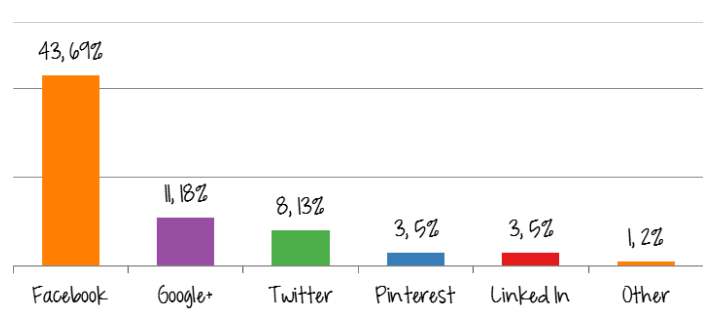
### Best Way to Keep Youth Informed

Note: young people were asked to select all that apply



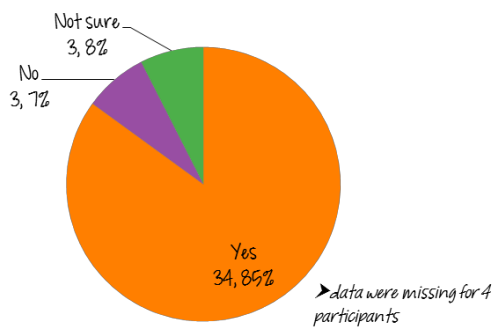
### Type of Social Media

Note: young people were asked to select all that apply

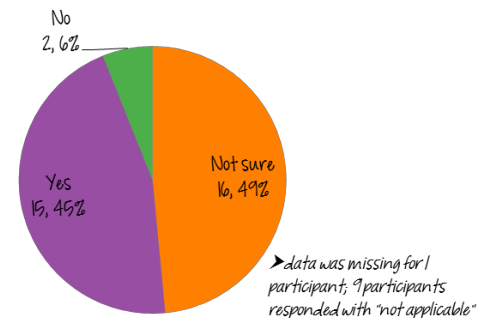


Alternatively, the adult group was much more in favor of offering voluntary services for probation-involved youth after the age of 19 (85%). Only a handful either disagreed (7%) or weren't sure (8%). When asked whether they – or their organization – would be able to extend their own work to include this population, most adult participants who responded were unsure (49%), although very few immediately indicated that this would not be possible (6%).

### Adult Perspective on Extended Services



### Would Adult/ Adult's Organization be able to Extend Services?



## Results: Young Adult Themes

Overall, young adult participants expressed a great deal of query about the specifics of an extended supports and services program. This hesitation was evident in their responses. Facilitators reinforced that the program was only in a contemplation phase and that the focus groups were aimed at providing them with the opportunity to help decide if such a program was necessary and, if so, how it should operate. With this guidance, young people provided many items to consider and suggestions. These have been categorized into nine areas which are discussed below.

### Hesitation about Continued Probation Supervision

The desire to be “done” with the system provided the biggest barrier to youth wanting an extended supports and services program. Many participants tempered their answer about extending probation involvement due to fear and uncertainty of what the program would require and restrict. Youth were worried about the stigma attached to being on probation. Some expressed a desire to open a new docket, so that their probation docket could be closed and sealed. This included worry about having to keep a probation case open until someone turned 19 in order to access the services and having to continue attending court. Youth indicated they would like the program to be run more casually than traditional court. They wanted the judge to be involved to “make it official”, yet avoid as much of the formalities of court as possible. They also wanted the option of keeping their attorney.



Young adults were very concerned about trading freedom for access to services. The recognition of turning 19 and becoming a legal adult provided them a new set of rights and abilities appeared important to youth. Few participants shared a willingness to sacrifice any of these adult rights for greater access to services. Some youth voiced wanting services on an “as needed” basis, rather than being required to be in a program. Youth in every group expressed feeling as though they had already been in the system too long and just wanted to be “done with it”. They shared wanting to rid themselves of the “label” of probation and “get out of the services.”

### Importance of Choice

A strong desire for the program to be completely voluntary was echoed among all groups. This further supports the theme of desire for freedom and the power of choice that separates being a minor and legal adulthood. Some youth acknowledged that other young people may need such a program; however, it “wasn’t for me”. Those supporting the creation of such a program often spoke about the need for the young adults involved to have a say in the services provided them, the people supporting them, and the development of any personal plans or goals. Clearly, the wish for voice was central to many participants.

### Recognition of Need

Young adults recognized that supportive services are important and needed by some people. A number shared an awareness of being unprepared for the “reality of life” and wanted help with life skills, ranging from basic daily skills like cooking to grander abilities such as job, housing, and college access. Other youth acknowledged a need for young adults to complete services, such as substance abuse and mental health treatment, in progress at the time of their nineteenth birthday or release from Probation services. Some youth felt an extended supports and services program could help anytime a probation case was closed or be included in all re-entry plans, especially after leaving a restrictive placement, like YRTC. It appeared there was a general openness to such a program being created.

### Services Needed

Youth identified a number of services received while probation-involved that they would like to see expanded and others that should be offered specifically to young adults age 19 and 20. Interestingly, there was a fair amount of disagreement about the helpfulness or necessity of some services. In fact, some youth strongly disagreed with the inclusion of certain services, for example drug tests, random visits, and check-ins. Quite intense discussions occurred out services linked to accountability, like caseworker or drug testing. Some youth strongly desired having someone or some way of being “checked on”, while others wanted absolute freedom to make their own choices. Services discussed are outlined below.

<b>Desired Services and Supports</b>		
<i>Type of Service</i>	<i>Offered while Probation-Involved</i>	<i>Available via Extension Program</i>
Treatment	Substance Abuse Counseling Urine Analysis/Drug Tests	Counseling Drug and Alcohol Treatment Urine Analysis/Drug Testing
Life Skills	Pregnancy/Parenting Practice with daily living skills Financial Literacy	Moving Housing Reading a Lease Renter’s Rights Pregnancy/Parenting Cooking Independent Living How to Buy Groceries Budgeting/How to Pay Bills

		Getting State ID and other documents such as birth certificate
Social	Connection to Social/Fun/Community/Civic Engagement Groups	Fun, Positive Social Groups Help finding new social groups-someone to connect them to positive friends
Coaching/Personal Support	Day Reporting Someone to “check in”	Service Navigation One-stop shop organization Help Accessing Other Services & Systems (food stamps, vocational rehabilitation, disability, etc.) Someone to Check-in/Call for Help Guidance
Employment & Education	Job Skills Resume Creation/Building How to Search for Jobs	Career/Education Resources Help Job and College Searching Education Services and Scholarships Employment Skills and Search Summer Housing while in College
Other	Medicaid Thinking for a Change Car/Transportation	Transportation Medical Coverage Utility Assistance Car Programs including how to get insurance, registration

### Enhancement of Existing Services

Recognition of the availability of services in other state systems and communities existed, yet youth acknowledged that they were not always known or easily accessed by young adults. One group shared feeling probation officers are not very well connected with community services and felt diversion officers had a better understanding of available supports. It seemed as though young people sought some person or way to learn about and connect to these services while still involved with Probation. Some youth expressed feelings that an extended services and supports program would not be needed, if youth had greater access to programs and skill development while involved with Probation. Another group discussed wanting help connecting to job, social service, treatment, and parenting offered rather than creating a separate program or system. One youth exemplified this by stating, “This should be more social services, instead of juvenile justice.”

### Time to Transition

A smoother transition from system involvement to adulthood was discussed by many of the groups via talk about the lack of aftercare, feelings of institutionalization and specific references to transition programs. The need for more training related to and practice with life skills was a topic among every group and made up a majority of the services suggested. More opportunities to learn life skills while involved with probation, verses having things done for them was proposed as a way to help ease young adults need for such a program. Feelings of institutionalization and disempowerment were expressed in each group. Some youth connected these feelings to a hesitation of older youth wanting to be involved in an extended program.

### Seeking Connection

A want for someone to “check in” on them and hold them accountable was shared in multiple groups. The desire for people who cared, listened, understood, and were dependable provided the most common response to the question about who should be the main contact for services. Feelings about probation

officers serving as the primary contact were mixed. In one group, almost all of the youth indicated that their probation officer had been a support for them, noting their appreciation of the probation officers' interest in their lives and support for reaching their goals. Some youth also shared they wanted to avoid having to build another new relationship. Other youth worried that probation officers' caseloads are too large to allow them to continue to serve youth in an extended program.

Other young people disagreed with having probation officers serve as the primary support for an extended services program. They expressed a desire for someone completely separate from the probation system, even funded by a different source, and of the youth's choosing. Regardless of the support person, youth didn't want to be judged or looked down upon by the person(s) supporting them. Many youth expressed wanting someone to provide advice, encouragement, and unconditional support for them, even though they frequently disagreed with whom that person should be. Youth identified possible alternative support people and specific traits they wanted in a support person. These are outlined below.

<b>Case Management Suggestions</b>	
<i>Alternative Support People</i>	<i>Support Person Traits</i>
Mentor of the Youth's Choosing Drug & Alcohol Counselor Youth Counselor (like those at YRTC) Alumni of Juvenile Justice System Volunteer Older with More Life Experience Without a Probation Title Not	Understand the program and services available Nice/Kind/Supportive Respectful Understanding Honest Listens to What Youth Wants Visits Frequently Follows Up

### Need for Accountability

Concern about the potential for abuse of the program was raised by youth in multiple groups. Certain criteria and expectations to continue receiving services and supports, such as avoiding new law violations, responding to contact attempts, attending school or working a regular job, counseling, and/or occasional drug tests, were suggested by some young adults. Other young adults felt that requirements should not be put on program participants and that there was little that could be done to avoid manipulation of the program.

### Messaging

A few of the groups talked about how the program would need to be promoted in a unique, clear, and honest manner, in order to entice young adults to participate. They provided a couple specific suggestions. Youth suggested not calling it a "case", but a program; and, the "worker" something void of probation-like labels. Utilizing social media to help keep young adults connected and market the program was recommended, with Facebook being identified as the preferred method. The importance of relationships was underscored as a messaging/informational strategy, given that 49% of youth listed "in-person" as a preferred strategy for sharing information about extended supports and services. Ensuring that many of those serving youth and young adults were aware of the program and educating eligible youth about the program was offered as a strategy for improving involvement. The language used for such a program and its components matters.

## **Results: Provider Key Themes**

Like the youth participants, providers had a number of questions, ideas, concerns related to the creation of an extended supports and services program. Conversely, they raised a greater number of thoughts related to program administration and implementation. Provider feedback has been broken down into pros/cons discussion, suggested services and key themes.

### Pros and Cons Discussion

The first question of provider focus groups challenged participants to discuss benefits and drawbacks of an extended services and supports program. Though generally positive on the idea of a program of extended supports, participant responses ranged widely when it came to concerns. Pro and con themes are outlined below.

*Pro: All 19 Year Olds Need Support to Successfully Transition to Adulthood.*

Participants shared a general sense that 19 year olds are not prepared to survive on their own without support, and some probation youth have none. Providers expressed that youth need resources and assistance, and shouldn't be abandoned at an arbitrary age. Many participants expressed worry about 19 year olds who are currently "walking out to nothing." Probation officers described cases where they dropped clients off at shelters, or referred them to programs that might or might not continue to help them, because there was no transitional plan or aftercare program, and jurisdiction was terminating. Other participants used the word "travesty" to describe how youth work so hard in residential treatment to return to the same community and/or home environment, even against the youth's wishes. They expressed feeling that this made youth succeeding difficult. They shared feeling that extra support can help youth without natural supports do better on their own. Essentially, the belief that "kids are not always ready to be an adult" was echoed among most of the provider groups.

*Pro: Highly Vulnerable Population with Likelihood to Enter Adult System*

Participants expressed that there are very vulnerable, unconnected young people without caregivers to return to, leaving juvenile justice services; resulting in youth floundering and ending up in the adult system. Adding to their vulnerability, multiple groups brought up the "gap" between jurisdiction ending and the ability to apply for and access social services or public assistance. A program like this could bridge that gap, by enhancing guidance and accountability for youth. One participant connected this to the Bridge to Independence (B2I) program offered by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), stating, "As a community organization providing Central Access Navigation for SE service area, we have seen additional stability for youth who access B2I."

*Pro: Close Gap for those Ineligible for Bridge to Independence*

Many participants also raised the issue that some young people have had previous DHHS cases (OJS), but now are on probation and currently can't access, B2I even if they truly need it. Participants also expressed that there may be a high number of cases where there probably should have been child welfare involvement, but an abuse/neglect case (3(a)) was not filed or could not be filed due to age. Many youth age out without support. This program would mean those youth would have access to supports they need just as much as youth who are currently in B2I. Some participants felt that many of the probation youth were also wards and should be able to access B2I. Relatedly, one group suggested this program (B2I or otherwise) should be accessible to all 19-24 year olds who need it, whether or not they've been previously system-involved on either child welfare (3(a)) or delinquency (3(b)) charges.

*Pro: Bridge to Independence as an Example*

Many with knowledge and experience of B2I expressed a belief that it has been successful in offering supports such as housing etc. to the population it serves. Some talked about how this program included juvenile justice youth prior to its passage into law and served as an example that such a program can have a positive impact. Particular components of B2I were emphasized, particularly that it is voluntary and that a program for juvenile justice youth would likely need to be similarly optional

*Con: Young Adults Won't Want to Participate*

Nearly every group raised a concern with engaging this population to join the program, especially if it means remaining under court supervision and/or on "voluntary" probation. A sentiment that was expressed frequently was young people's desire to be "off papers" at all costs. For this reason, as you will see below, most groups seemed to conclude that the Office of Probation would not be the appropriate administrator of the program, or at least, it should not be called "probation" in any sense. Further, using the words "court

jurisdiction” may drive kids away from the system. One group brought up a consideration that since it would likely be voluntary, those that need it most may be those most likely to opt out.

*Con: Lack of Consequence*

One person noted that creating a voluntary program without affiliation with the court or link to the probation case would eliminate consequence for youth not following through. There was also concern expressed about some youth potentially taking advantage of the program, especially if a stipend is involved. The question of eligibility requirements came up often in this context. Participants wanted clarity on how to best capture the “right” candidates. This connected with fear expressed by a few individuals that this be a true transitional program, not an avenue for keeping young adults dependent on the government for assistance.

*Con: Cost & Public Will*

The final consequence is fairly straight-forward. The ability to find funding for such a program was expressed as a concern. Some participants linked this to public perception of youth with juvenile justice involvement as “bad kids” or rewarding those that had broken the law. It was expressed that these public beliefs could provide a challenge in leveraging public dollars (“taxpayer money”) or getting lawmakers to pass necessary legislation. However, it was suggested that both sides could be sold, because that youth may be more likely to end up in the Department of Corrections without support making the program a cost-saving measure.

*Con: Slippery Slope to Further System Involvement*

One group expressed concern about the program starting as voluntary continued court involvement and eventually morphing into further involuntary involvement. For example, a young adult who signs up will have probation or DHHS involved in their life making any backslide or mistake more likely to be seen and result in criminal charges or a child protective services filing. Participants were concerned that this amplified the changes for the cycle of system involvement to be enhanced rather than minimized.

*Con: Negative Impact on Bridge to Independence*

One group raised a worry that extending B2I itself to juvenile justice youth could endanger B2I politically. Perhaps, a separate program may be safer.

Suggested Services

Prompts about what services should be included in an extended program were present in multiple of the questions. Several service areas were identified from these discussions. These are detailed below.

<b>Suggested Services Discussion</b>		
<i>Service Type</i>	<i>Specific Services</i>	<i>Need/Discussion</i>
Case Management	Life Coach or Navigator style Like B2I’s Independence Coordinators Help access public supports Determining professional goals and steps necessary to pursue them	Distinct training needed, like that used by B2I
Basic Life Skills	Financial Literacy Opening & maintaining a checking account Budgeting Credit Literacy Personal Hygiene Getting to interviews and appointments on time	Independent living skills of all levels are needed and youth need time to practice and be coached in developing these.
Education & Employment	Completing College Applications, FAFSA aid	

Assistance	Financial Assistance in attending college or completing a G.E.D. Job Training Filling out job applications	
Finding Supports	Family Finding Community Connections Positive, Social Opportunities.	
Housing	Contract with transitional living programs or landlords	Too many homeless young adults Too few shelter beds Too few long-term housing assistance programs
Treatment	Mental Health Developmental Disability Ways to access needed treatment, Extended Medicaid coverage to pay for necessary medication and therapy Substance Abuse	One participant felt the program should <i>only</i> be offered for specific treatment purposes. Substance abuse is especially important for youth who turn 19 mid-program.
Transportation		Access to community resources can be difficult
Health	Extended Medical Coverage Physical Health Family Planning/Sexual Health	

Given that B2I came to mind for a number of participants when imagining structure, a discussion of whether or not a stipend, like that offered to B2I participants, should be offered arose in a few of the groups. Varying sentiments were given about providing a stipend. Many felt a stipend would be important and even necessary to engage youth with the program. Some were afraid of the political fall-out of “paying” youth who have committed crimes. Others thought the stipend money should go directly toward housing or utilities, savings account, groceries, etc., and not be discretionary. Regardless of specific feelings related to a stipend, most felt that the program should be tied to some form of education about becoming financially responsible

### Key Themes

#### *Population Needs and Deserves Extended Supports*

Broad consensus across all provider groups was in support of some extended supports program on a voluntary basis, dependent on the program’s structure and eligibility requirements. Some people thought it was “absolutely important” to provide this type of support. There was also some hesitation about how the program would work. Participants seemed to broadly concur that it would not be feasible to offer a comprehensive program like B2I to every probation-involved youth. Some suggested doing an approach similar to B2I by focusing on extremely disconnected youth with a long-term goal of widening to a larger population.

#### *How Youth Gain Access/Transition into the Program Matters*

Many participants worried youth would not take advantage of even short-term voluntary extensions of probation. Groups discussed the importance of program structure and marketing in order to encourage young adults to participate in the program. Some participants felt that youth with juvenile justice involvement would be more likely to access a program of extended supports if it was not facilitated by Probation and the courts. Additionally, the idea of transition planning was raised a few times, particularly in the context of moving a young person off of probation and into this separate program. Youth should know where they are going to be living, how they will be supported, and who they are going to call for help, well before they actually turn 19.

Youths’ hypothetical entrance into this program from probation was also framed by participants as an important process. Some participants felt that the original juvenile case should be sealed, so that that is not a barrier to job search and/or secondary education. Another concern expressed addressed fear about the language of “aging out” being too restrictive and resulting in youth being artificially prolonged in placement or on

probation. One group brought up the concern that many youth need education about what system(s) they are involved in. They felt that there is often an unawareness of what system(s) they are involved in, so youth are very unaware of what services are available to them. A final suggestion about transition encompassed how to create grassroots messaging and/or a navigation system to help youth understand and utilize the services available to them was common among the groups. Timing was another factor viewed as important to the creation of this program. Overall, it appeared participants felt education and entrance methods of an extended supports program directly related to the level of young adult participation.

#### *Flexible Eligibility Parameters Needed*

Eligibility came up often. Most felt some eligibility requirements were needed. Many felt eligibility should be flexible enough that youth who need assistance are not categorically excluded. More than one group felt eligibility should be broader than “out of home placement”. “Having a home to return to” was also problematic to a few groups – some young people might have a home to return to, but not a supportive or safe one. Another questions surrounding eligibility related to maintaining on-going eligibility. Would or should youth be kicked out of the program if not following through with their program requirements?

Participants acknowledged that some youth might realize they need assistance past after turning 19 and spending some time on their own. The flexibility of B2I, allowing young adults to move in and out of the program, was lauded and encouraged to be a component of eligibility for a program for youth with juvenile justice experience. Groups uniformly expressed that some form of support was important for this population, and also that this population shouldn’t be forced into accepting it. Numerous groups felt the best way to achieve this might not be through the courts, since this group of youth might feel a stigma of continued court involvement (even voluntary), or that there might be confusion about voluntariness coming out of an otherwise-involuntary court case. One group brought up that since this type of program would not have the federal requirements of B2I, it could, likely, be administered outside of the courts.

A final question considered around eligibility was, “How the program could be tailored to catch the young people who need ongoing support, while filtering out those for whom it isn’t necessary?” Several ideas were provided. These included:

- Anyone (attorney, probation, counselor, etc.) are able to refer a youth, and the program determines whether to accept. The court would not need to be involved.
- The court could order the program upon the youth’s request.
- Not just out of home placement, but language of “no appropriate home to return to” or “lacks stable familial support” or something to that effect
- One group expressed that there should be “no wrong door” into the program, have multiple referral sources.
- Again, a strong sentiment that there are probation youth who could or should be 3(a) cases but aren’t, and we should absolutely offer something to help them transition.
- One group of probation officers felt that it should be the same eligibility requirements as currently exist in b2I, but without the 3(a) requirement.
- Some participants felt the judge would be the most appropriate gatekeeper. Other participants were concerned that the judge or probation might be biased against certain youth.
- Another possibility suggested looking into the history of DHHS involvement or number of calls. If there is not a family support system or if support system is in chaos, or if there is chronic involvement, than those young adults should be given priority.
- Possibly focusing on a subset of the probation youth like 3(b) cases as an eligibility requirement.

#### *Housing, Case Management, and Basic Life Skill Services are Essential*

Housing, case management, and basic life skills were identified as essential services across all the groups. Participants discussed these services being offered in variety of ways. In addition to offering them as part of an extended supports program, participants offered other strategies for providing these services. Several groups discussed current programs or services that are already available to help segments of this population. Some

suggested creating a voucher-type program or a formal transition/referral program, possibly tied with some dedicated funding to reserve spaces for older youth. There was also a concern that all youth, not just 19 year olds, need this type of support when their case closes. Think more “aftercare” and less “continued jurisdiction.”

#### *Transition to Full Independence*

Some participants expressed concern that any program be cautious to promote plan and pathway to independence rather than continued reliance on system support. Concern was expressed about the need for continued court involvement in order to access an extended services program. Most participants stated a belief that youth with juvenile justice involvement would not want to continue coming to court. Many felt courts themselves might be biased or unable to separate the new voluntary aspect of the case from the previous adversarial proceeding. Continued court involvement could also be linked to the concern about on-going oversight of youth increasing changes for a new criminal charge or child welfare involvement.

More focus on transitional living skills was offered by a number of participants. One group brought up the issue of better preparing youth for adulthood during the life of their probation cases, by enhancing readiness for adulthood via preparation in the system, especially with daily living skills. Several participants suggested that well-run transitional living programs that offer in-house case management services might be a good way to respond to this population’s needs, during and after age 19. They suggested Probation (and others) be tasked and empowered with referring and coordinating the transition plan for youth with juvenile justice involvement. This illustrated a repeated reference to ensuring the mistakes made by the youth in the past did not follow them into adulthood more than absolutely necessary.

#### *Comparison to Bridge to Independence*

Participants were asked, “In some cases, youth who are in out of home placement due to juvenile justice involvement do not have a home to return to. Would you be in favor of policy changes that would allow these young adults to voluntarily enter the Bridge to Independence program if it was documented that they do not have a home to return to?” Broadly, the consensus was a conditional “yes” to B2I. Participants expressed a sense that DHHS has more connections to services and public assistance than Probation, and that if a good program is already built, we shouldn’t recreate the wheel. On the other hand, some worried that B2I itself could be endangered if probation youth were included. There were also systematic concerns with IV-E eligibility and how case management would be different for youth depending on the funding source.

Groups were then asked, “If not Bridge to Independence, do you believe Probation should develop and administer a similar set of services for youth who do not have a home to return to?” The answer was a more emphatic “no”. Most participants expressed that such a program did not easily mesh with the purpose and youth experience of probation, and that if Probation were to develop such a program, young people would run the other way. Conversely participants also felt that youth may already have a connection with their probation officer and bringing in yet a new system and group of people may drive youth away from the program. Many felt, however, that Probation would be the most appropriate *referral* source; an officer could identify a youth about to age out who would need the program, and work to set up the transition to voluntary “aftercare”-like services. Several groups brought up the idea of building off of existing infrastructure with a single referral point, rather than creating new program.

Mostly, however, the conversation on this question tended to center on the language of “out of home” and whether that was the right categorical eligibility requirement.

#### **Items Requiring Further Investigation**

These groups provide a number of valuable insights towards answering the three questions posed. Yet, they also raise several items that require additional discussion and exploration. These seem to fall into four areas: administration, eligibility, services and incentives, and messaging. Essential questions in each of these areas are offered below. It is suggested that these questions be considered in the larger stakeholder meetings to be held in September and October 2015.



<b>Items for Exploration</b>	
<i>Area</i>	<i>Key Questions</i>
Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is the gatekeeper?</li> <li>• Who refers?</li> <li>• Who runs the program?</li> <li>• What case management and program strategies promote a road to independence that includes ongoing informal support people and personal skills that reduce future reliance/involvement in systems?</li> <li>• How can the program be structured to ensure connection with/enhancement of existing resources/services rather than creation of duplicative services?</li> <li>• How is oversight managed to prevent collateral consequences of juvenile charges and system involvement?</li> <li>• What structure could allow for needed supports while honoring legal adulthood?</li> </ul>
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we structure eligibility so that youth who are entering adulthood without meaningful supports can access the program, without opening the floodgates?</li> <li>• How strict would reporting and ongoing eligibility requirements be? What would oversight/accountability look like to stay in the program (if at all)?</li> <li>• Accountability arose often. What consequence or accountability measures, if any, would be placed upon program participants?</li> <li>• What level of fluidity is appropriate for program involvement?</li> </ul>
Services and Incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can youth be incentivized to maintain prosocial behavior?</li> <li>• Should there be a flexible stipend, or should a stipend be conditioned on specific usage?</li> <li>• Housing is a huge need. How would the program ensure that young adults can access safe and stable places to live?</li> <li>• How can services and incentives be structured in an empowerment and educational manner verses dictating behavior?</li> </ul>
Messaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What education/training of formal and informal supports could be provided to allow for them to serve as a primary messenger for an extended supports program?</li> <li>• What strategies could be used about the importance/need of such a program to gain public will and legislative support?</li> <li>• How could the program be set up to ensure that language and labels don't create additional barriers to participation?</li> <li>• What mechanisms can be implemented to ensure youth receive clear, complete, and honest information about the program in a way that they understand and that addresses fears about continued system engagement?</li> </ul>

## Conclusions

Through these focus groups, voices from more than one hundred individuals was able to be gathered to ensure that broad stakeholder voice was considered in the Young Adults' Support and Services sub-committee's consideration of the original posed questions. Let us return to these questions.

First, "Are extended services and supports are needed?" Overall, a majority of participants expressed that a need existed. The need was especially emphasized for youth with minimal natural supports, long-term or deep system involvement, or who were aging out to homelessness or without completing a treatment program. Both providers and youth acknowledged that one of the greatest barriers to meeting this need would be addressing youths' fears and hesitation surrounding on-going system involvement and ensuring collateral consequences are minimized. Nonetheless, both audiences sited a number of current services and supports that are currently providing services that would be helpful if extended to age 21. Further, 45% of providers participating felt they had the ability within their organization to expand services. Collectively, it appears that a

strong desire and moderate ability to address the need of this population already exists; showing that further exploration via the large stakeholder meetings planned for September and October 2015 are warranted.

Exploration of the second question, that is the desired structure, services to be provided, and oversight mechanisms, garnered much less consensus. Two significant areas of varying opinion exists around whether attaching to the existing B2I program is advantageous, and the role of the court in such a program. Many of the pros and cons discussed by the provider groups and the fears expressed by youth groups speak to these two areas of disagreement. However, most participants seem to agree that the program would need to be administered differently from Probation services provided to those under 19 and would need to be voluntary. These issues, alongside the specifics of oversight, will provide essential items for on-going program creation discussion.

A final issue to note when reflecting on these focus groups exists in the youth's strong expression of desire for positive, dependable support people to help them navigate the transition to adulthood. Illustration of this wish existed in the youth's description of who should be the main contact for the program, their description of helpful services, and their thoughts about how to best inform youth about supports and services. Further, provider results show recognition that such support is not present for many youth leaving probation at 19 and would be pivotal in easing their transition towards success.

These groups may mark the first step in an extensive process towards the creation of an extended supports and services program. Nevertheless, the enthusiasm shown and dedication to a collective approach represents a strong commitment to ensuring youth have what they need to succeed.

**Appendix A: Young Adult Facilitation Guide  
Juvenile Justice Extension of Services and Supports  
Focus Groups  
Facilitator's Guide**

**Overview**

The Nebraska Probation Administration has made changes in the last couple of years to try to make sure youth with probation involvement have the help they need to make positive changes in their life. Probation is now exploring if they should offer services to youth when they reach age 19 and 20. And if so, what these services and supports should look like. They want to make sure that one of the most important voices, those of young adults currently getting Probation serves are able to share their thoughts. **So, we need your help!**

Supported by the Young Adults Supports and Services sub-committee of the Children's Commission, a group of policy-makers, probation officers, service providers, and youth (the "stakeholder group") will be gathering in September and October to explore the need and potential structure of extended supports and services for youth who turn 19 on probation and in out of home placement. This group will look at three key things:

1. If such services and supports are needed.
2. If so, how they should be structured, provided, and what oversight is needed.
3. If so, what would it cost? (An outside agency, called Mainspring, is providing the fiscal analysis.)

This packet provides a guide on leading a youth focus group on the questions listed above. This guide includes the step-by-step process for your focus group. The stakeholder group also hopes that these focus groups inspire some young people to participate in the on-going exploration of these questions by attending meetings and providing further insight, as other opportunities emerge.

Thank you, in advance, for leading a focus group. Your efforts and those of the young adults in the focus group will be shaping procedures and policies that could positively affect youth for the years to come!

**Focus group purpose**

The youth focus groups aim to gather youth insight on the above questions. It is the goal to hear from youth who have current or recent experience with Probation. Gathering voices involved in all levels of the continuum of services, from diversion to YRTC/Detention, is important to the stakeholder group.

**Helpful Information**

- No matter the design, any programs or services created for 19 or 20 year olds would honor that youth are legally adults and participation would be voluntary.

**Focus Group Basics**

**Attendees:**

- Up to 12 young adults
- A facilitator
- A note-taker

**Materials Needed:**

- Chairs in a circle
- Printed copies of the questions and demographic sheet for each participant

**Set-up:**

- Print out questions for each participant
- Arrange chairs in a circle or around a table
- Decide who will lead the conversation and who will take notes

**Facilitation tips:**

- Keep number of participants around 12
- Take about an hour to complete questions
- Ensure the space allows for confidential conversations
- Minimize unnecessary adults/staff in the room
- Encourage all participants speak up
- Allow silence
- Minimize talk on other conversations
- Get through as many questions as possible, but encourage the youth to give in depth answers which may require some further prompting
- Allow them to write down any responses they do not feel comfortable sharing with the group

**Facilitation Steps**

**1. Introductions**

**2. Session Overview**

- Inform participants of the purpose of the focus group and that different focus groups are being held throughout the state to ensure stakeholders have lots of input from many different youth and young adults.
- Purpose: gather the voice of youth to help decide if a program designed to provide supports for youth turning 19 on Probation are needed and what such services might look like.
- Group will be about an hour, we will have an in-depth discussion around each question
- You can always write down any answers you don't feel comfortable sharing.
- You choose how much you participate. If you are uncomfortable at any time, you can choose to not say anything.

**3. Review Confidentiality**

- Input from these groups will be used to inform a group of stakeholders. Your ideas will be put with lots of other people's. NO names will be used in these findings/report.
- We will just focus on themes, not individuals or specific stories.
- So, try not to worry about what you say being held against you.

**4. Ground Rules**

- Ensure the space is a safe and confidential space
- Can create a set up expectations or respect for the group and ask the group if they can commit to following the guidelines

**5. Complete Info Sheets** to collect basic demographic information, be sure to collect these.

**6. Handouts**

- Pass out printed copies and inform participants of the option to write their responses as well.

**7. Questions**

- Walk through each of the questions, allow time for everyone to respond
- Ask prompting questions
- Can flow as a conversation as well

- Collect written responses when finished

### Questions

**Ice-Breaker question:** Name and what services or support do you think is most important for youth supervised by Probation?

1. Right now, in Nebraska, court jurisdiction and probation stops at age 19 in juvenile cases. If you had the option to continue your probation case, at age 19, as a way to continue to get services, would you want to?
  - a. Why or why not?
2. Are there services that probation is providing that you would want to continue?
3. If special services were provided to youth who had been involved with juvenile justice after they 19, what types of services are most important?
  - a. Would you opt to keep your probation case open if that was the only way to continue receiving those services?
4. If services after 19 were available, would you want your current probation officer as your main contact?
  - a. Why or why not?
5. Is there anything else you want to share?

### Wrap-Up:

- Thank participants for the openness and time
- Answer any questions they may have

### Post-session Steps:

- Compile notes, scan written responses, and email to [crockwell@nebraskachildren.org](mailto:crockwell@nebraskachildren.org)
- Contact Cassy (402-817-2003/ [crockwell@nebraskachildren.org](mailto:crockwell@nebraskachildren.org)), Juliet Summers ([402.597.3100/jsummers@voicesforchildren.com](mailto:402.597.3100/jsummers@voicesforchildren.com)), or Jeanne Brandner ([402.471.4976/Jeanne.brandner@nebraska.gov](mailto:402.471.4976/Jeanne.brandner@nebraska.gov)) with any questions.

## Appendix B: Young Adult Assent Form Participant Assent Form

### Introduction

You are being asked to participate in a focus group as part of an information-gathering effort to help a stakeholder group of advocates, service providers, policy makers, family members, youth, and state officials explore whether or not to offer more services to kids when they reach age 19 and 20. And if so, what these services and supports should look like. The stakeholder group is looking at three questions.

4. If such services and supports are needed.
5. If so, how they should be structured, provided, and what oversight is needed.
6. If so, what would it cost? (An outside agency, called Mainspring, is providing the fiscal analysis.)

Focus groups will consist of a series of discussion questions and anonymous informational survey. Questions asked will cover if these serves are wanted, what they should look like and who should have oversight. Groups are facilitated by staff of Project Everlast, Voices for Children, Nebraska Probation Administration, or a community-based services/program that you are already involved in, so they will take place in a safe environment.

### Voluntary

Focus group participation is completely voluntary and you/your teen can stop at any time or skip questions.

### Confidentiality

Approximately five focus groups will be held across the state with notes from each group being combined before any results are presented. Names are not collected, unless offered voluntarily, nor are they put in the notes. Information gathered will be used to write a report that will be presented to the stakeholder group with the purpose of helping develop recommendations and make decisions. The report will focus on themes, not specific people or stories. No names will be reported to stakeholder members or Probation. Only notes from each focus group and information sheets will be gathered. Nothing said in this group will be held against participants in anyway.

### Potential Risks

It is possible you may experience sadness, disappointment or other emotions, as you share your experiences during the focus group. To minimize this risk, you will only be asked to share when you wish and conversation will be directed in a way that avoids potential problems.

### Questions

If you have questions, contact Cassy (402-817-2003/[crockwell@nebraskachildren.org](mailto:crockwell@nebraskachildren.org)), Juliet Summers (402.597.3100/[jsummers@voicesforchildren.com](mailto:jsummers@voicesforchildren.com)), or Jeanne Brandner (402.471.4976/[Jeanne.brandner@nebraska.gov](mailto:Jeanne.brandner@nebraska.gov)) with any questions.

After reading this form and receiving answers to all your questions. Please check the box associated with your decision for participation.

I agree to participate

I decline to participate

Participant (Print Name): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Young Adult Feedback Form

### Juvenile Justice Services Extension – Youth Feedback About You

*Answer the below questions and return to the person leading your group or to Cassy Rockwell at 215 Centennial Mall South, Suite 200, Lincoln NE 68508, [crockwell@nebraskachildren.org](mailto:crockwell@nebraskachildren.org), or fax to 402.476.9486. You do not have to put your name on this form. This information will be used only to capture the demographics of youth participants.*

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Town You Call Home: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your gender?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Trans or Transgender
<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____
  
2. Check your current living situation.
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Biological Family	<input type="checkbox"/> In My Own Apartment/House	<input type="checkbox"/> YRTC
<input type="checkbox"/> Adoptive Home	<input type="checkbox"/> Homeless/Couch-surfing	<input type="checkbox"/> Treatment Program
<input type="checkbox"/> Foster Home	<input type="checkbox"/> Group Home	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Guardianship Home		
  
3. Please check which Probation services you are (or were) involved in?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Diversion	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health/Counseling	<input type="checkbox"/> Drug Court
<input type="checkbox"/> Day/Evening Reporting	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Service	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please Specify) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Tracker	<input type="checkbox"/> Substance Abuse Treatment	
<input type="checkbox"/> Electronic Monitor	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Services	
  
4. How long have you been involved, or were you involved in the Juvenile Justice System?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> 0-2 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 4-6 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 8-10 years
<input type="checkbox"/> 2-4 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 6-8 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 10 years or longer
  
5. Should Probation offer voluntary services for youth after the age of 19?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
------------------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------------------
  
6. If services were offered to youth with juvenile justice experience after age 19, what's the best way to keep youth informed of these services? (check all that apply)
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Email	<input type="checkbox"/> Web Site	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please Specify) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Media	<input type="checkbox"/> In-person Meetings	
<input type="checkbox"/> Texting		
  
7. If you said that Social Media was the best way to keep you informed which social media do you prefer? (check all that apply)
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Twitter	<input type="checkbox"/> Google+	<input type="checkbox"/> Other? (Please Specify) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook	<input type="checkbox"/> Linked In	
<input type="checkbox"/> Pinterest		
  
8. In terms of racial background, how do you identify yourself?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> White	<input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
<input type="checkbox"/> African American/Black	<input type="checkbox"/> Native American/Alaskan Native
<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Latino	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Asian	
  
9. In terms of your ethnicity, how do you identify yourself?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Latino/Hispanic	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Latino/Non-Hispanic
--	--

## Juvenile Justice Service Extension Young Adult Survey

### Instructions

The Nebraska Probation Administration has made changes in the last couple of years to try to make sure youth with probation involvement have the help they need to make positive changes in their life. Probation is now exploring if they should offer services to youth when they reach age 19 and 20. And if so, what these services and supports should look like. They want to make sure that the voices of young adults currently getting Probation services are heard. Because you know what Juvenile Justice is like, we want your help!

Supported by the Young Adults Supports and Services sub-committee of the Children's Commission, a group of policy-makers, probation officers, service providers, and youth (the "stakeholder group") will be gathering in September and October to explore the need and potential structure of extended supports and services at age 19 and 20 for youth with juvenile justice experience. This group will look at:

1. If such services and supports are needed.
2. If so, how they should be structured, provided, and what oversight is needed.
3. If so, what would it cost? (An outside agency, called Mainspring, will do this.)

Below you'll find questions to help make the law work in the best way possible. Your answers will be combined with everyone else's answers and presented to foster parents, policy makers, service professionals and other youth at a meeting on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015 to help decide if services should be offered after age 19. Your personal answers will not be connected back to you, so feel free to be honest. ***Answering any question and/or speaking during the focus group is COMPLETELY YOUR CHOICE. You can choose to skip any (or all questions) both on this handout and in the group.***

### Questions

1. Right now, in Nebraska, court jurisdiction and probation stops at age 19 in juvenile cases. If you had the option to continue your probation case, at age 19, as a way to continue to get services, would you want to?
  - a. Why or why not?
2. Are there services that probation is providing that you would want to continue?
3. If special services were provided to youth who had been involved with juvenile justice after they 19, what types of services are most important?
  - a. Would you opt to keep your probation case open if that was the only way to continue receiving those services?
4. If services after 19 were available, would you want your current probation officer as your main contact?
  - a. Why or why not?
5. Is there anything else you want to share?
6. If you'd like to be contacted about opportunities to be involved in the stakeholder group, list your name and contact information below.



## **Appendix D: Adult Facilitation Guide**

### **Juvenile Justice Extension of Services and Supports Focus Groups Facilitator's Guide**

#### **Overview**

Supported by the Young Adults Supports and Services sub-committee of the Children's Commission, a group of policy-makers, probation officers, service providers, and youth (the "stakeholder group") will be gathering in September and October to explore the need and potential structure of extended supports and services for youth as they age out of juvenile probation at age 19. This group will look at three key things:

1. If such services and supports are needed.
2. If so, how they should be structured, provided, and what oversight is needed.
3. If so, what would it cost? (An outside agency, called Mainspring, is providing the fiscal analysis.)

This packet provides a guide on leading a focus group on the questions listed above. This guide includes the step-by-step process for your focus group. Thank you, in advance, for leading a focus group. Your efforts and those of the focus group participants will be shaping procedures and policies that could positively affect youth for the years to come!

#### **Focus group purpose**

The focus groups aim to gather practical insight on the above questions. It is the goal to hear from multiple perspectives what the real needs and challenges are for young people as they age out of juvenile court jurisdiction. Gathering voices involved in all levels of the continuum of services, from diversion to YRTC/Detention, from judges and lawyers to probation officers and treatment providers, and from urban to rural jurisdictions, is important to the stakeholder group.

#### **Helpful Information**

- No matter the design, any programs or services created this young adult population would honor that participants are legally adults and participation would be voluntary.

#### **Focus Group Basics**

##### **Attendees:**

- Up to 12 participants
- A facilitator
- A note-taker

##### **Materials Needed:**

- Chairs in a circle
- Printed copies of the questions and demographic sheet for each participant

##### **Set-up:**

- Print out questions for each participant
- Arrange chairs in a circle or around a table
- Decide who will lead the conversation and who will take notes

##### **Facilitation tips:**

- Keep number of participants around 12
- Take about an hour to complete questions
- Ensure the space allows for confidential conversations
- Encourage all participants to give input
- Allow silence
- Minimize talk on other conversations
- Get through as many questions as possible, but encourage participants to give in depth answers which may require some further prompting
- Allow participants to write down any responses they do not feel comfortable sharing with the group

### **Facilitation Steps**

#### **1. Introductions**

#### **2. Session Overview**

- Inform participants of the purpose of the focus group and that different focus groups are being held throughout the state to ensure stakeholders have lots of input from many different youth and young adults.
- Purpose: gather input to help decide if a program designed to provide supports for youth turning 19 on Probation are needed and what such services might look like.
- Group will be about an hour, we will have an in-depth discussion around each question
- You can always write down any answers you don't feel comfortable sharing.
- You choose how much you participate. If you are uncomfortable at any time, you can choose to not say anything.

#### **3. Review Confidentiality**

- Input from these groups will be used to inform a group of stakeholders. Your ideas will be put with lots of other people's. NO names will be used in these findings/report.
- We will just focus on themes, not individuals or specific stories.

#### **4. Ground Rules**

- Ensure the space is a safe and confidential space
- Can create a set up expectations or respect for the group and ask the group if they can commit to following the guidelines

#### **5. Complete Info Sheets** to collect basic demographic information, be sure to collect these.

#### **6. Handouts**

- Pass out printed copies and inform participants of the option to write their responses as well.

#### **7. Questions**

- Walk through each of the questions, allow time for everyone to respond
- Ask prompting questions
- Can flow as a conversation as well
- Collect written responses when finished

### **Questions**

**Ice-Breaker question:** Name and what services or support do you think is most important for youth supervised by Probation?

1. Do you think Nebraska should allow extended court jurisdiction and/or probation oversight on a voluntary basis beyond age 19 where continued treatment and services are needed and agreed to?
  - a. What do you see as pros and cons of this policy?
2. In some cases, youth who are in out of home placement due to juvenile justice involvement do not have a home to return to. Would you be in favor of policy changes allowing these young adults to voluntarily enter the Bridge to Independence program if it was documented that they do not have a home to return to?
  - a. If not Bridge to Independence, do you believe Probation should develop and administer a similar set of services for youth who do not have a home to return to?
3. For the broader population of youth under probation oversight, do you believe it is important to offer extended supports and services at age after a youth turns 19? Why or why not?
4. If yes, what types of services do you see as most important to offer?
5. Who should be the main referral source and provide the case management for extended services?

**Wrap-Up:**

- Thank participants for their openness and time
- Answer any questions they may have

**Post-session Steps:**

- Compile notes, scan written responses, and email to Juliet Summers ([402.597.3100/jsummers@voicesforchildren.com](mailto:402.597.3100/jsummers@voicesforchildren.com)),
- Contact Juliet or Jeanne Brandner ([402.471.4976/Jeanne.brandner@nebraska.gov](mailto:402.471.4976/Jeanne.brandner@nebraska.gov)) with any questions.

## Appendix E: Adult Assent Form

### Participant Assent Form

#### Introduction

You are being asked to participate in a focus group as part of an information-gathering effort to help a stakeholder group of advocates, service providers, policy makers, family members, youth, and state officials explore whether or not to offer more services to young adults aging out of probation at age 19, and if so, what these services and supports should look like. The stakeholder group is looking at three questions.

7. If such services and supports are needed.
8. If so, how they should be structured, provided, and what oversight is needed.
9. If so, what would it cost? (An outside agency, called Mainspring, is providing the fiscal analysis.)

Focus groups will consist of a series of discussion questions and anonymous informational survey. Questions asked will cover if these serves are wanted, what they should look like and who should have oversight. Groups are facilitated by staff of Project Everlast, Voices for Children, Nebraska Probation Administration, or a community-based services/program that you are already involved in.

#### Voluntary

Focus group participation is completely voluntary.

#### Confidentiality

Approximately five focus groups will be held across the state with notes from each group being combined before any results are presented. Names are not collected, unless offered voluntarily, nor are they put in the notes. Information gathered will be used to write a report that will be presented to the stakeholder group with the purpose of helping develop recommendations and make decisions. The report will focus on themes, not specific people or stories. No names will be reported. Only notes from each focus group and information sheets will be gathered. Nothing said in this group will be held against participants in anyway.

#### Questions

If you have questions, please ask your facilitator or contact Juliet Summers ([402.597.3100](tel:402.597.3100)/[jsummers@voicesforchildren.com](mailto:jsummers@voicesforchildren.com)), or Jeanne Brandner ([402.471.4976](tel:402.471.4976)/[Jeanne.brandner@nebraska.gov](mailto:Jeanne.brandner@nebraska.gov)).

After reading this form and receiving answers to all your questions, please check the box associated with your decision for participation.

I agree to participate

I decline to participate

Participant (Print Name): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE RETURN THIS ASSENT FORM TO YOUR FOCUS GROUP FACILITATOR, OR BY E-MAIL OR FAX TO: [jsummers@voicesforchildren.com](mailto:jsummers@voicesforchildren.com) 402-597-2705.**

## Appendix F: Adult Feedback Form

### Juvenile Justice Services Extension – Adult Feedback

*Answer the below questions and return to the person leading your group or to Juliet Summers at 7521 Main St. Omaha, NE 68127, [jsummers@voicesforchildren.com](mailto:jsummers@voicesforchildren.com), or fax to 402.597-2705. You do not have to put your name on this form. This information will be used only to capture the demographics of focus group participants.*

City/County/District (please list any you work in): \_\_\_\_\_

10. What is your primary role in working with youth on probation?

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Judge                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Shelter or group home staff | <input type="checkbox"/> Educator, school administrator, or tutor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lawyer (please specify role): _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Treatment provider          | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Detention or YRTC staff     |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Probation officer                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Diversion coordinator       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government official or staff        |  |   |

11. If you have previous experience in another role(s) serving the juvenile justice population, please list here:

\_\_\_\_\_

12. Please check which, if any, Probation services you provide:

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diversion             | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health/Counseling  | <input type="checkbox"/> Drug Court                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day/Evening Reporting | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Service         | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tracker               | <input type="checkbox"/> Substance Abuse Treatment |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electronic Monitor    | <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Services      |   |

13. How long have you worked in juvenile justice or with at-risk youth?

- |                                     |                                      |   |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0-5 years  | <input type="checkbox"/> 11-15 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 20 years or longer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 16-20 years |   |

14. Should Probation or another entity offer voluntary services for probation-involved youth after the age of 19?

- |                              |                             |                                   |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|

15. If services were offered to youth with juvenile justice experience after age 19, would you and/or your organization be able to extend your own work to include this population?

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No  | <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable |

16. In terms of racial background, how do you identify yourself?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> White                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander |
| <input type="checkbox"/> African American/Black | <input type="checkbox"/> Native American/Alaskan Native   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Latino        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian                  |   |

17. In terms of your ethnicity, how do you identify yourself?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Latino/Hispanic | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Latino/Non-Hispanic |
|--|--|

18. What is your gender?

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male   | <input type="checkbox"/> Trans or Transgender          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ |

## Juvenile Justice Service Extension Adult Survey

### Instructions

The Nebraska Probation Administration has made changes in the last couple of years to try to make sure youth with probation involvement have the help they need to make positive changes in their life. A taskforce of the Children's Commission is now looking at whether Probation should offer extended, voluntary supports to youth beyond the age of 19, and if so, what these services and supports should look like. The taskforce will be meeting in September and October to explore the need and potential structure of extended supports and services beyond age 19 for youth with juvenile justice experience. This group will look at:

1. If such services and supports are needed.
2. If so, how they should be structured, provided, and what oversight is needed.
3. If so, what would it cost? (An outside agency, called Mainspring, will do this.)

Below are the questions discussed in the focus group. Please feel free to fill out this survey with additional thoughts or concerns. Your answers will be combined with everyone else's answers and presented to the taskforce at a meeting on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015 to help decide if services should be offered after age 19. ***Answering any question and/or speaking during the focus group is voluntary and input will not be individually reported. You can choose to skip any (or all) questions both on this handout and in the group.***

### Questions

1. Do you think Nebraska should allow extended court jurisdiction and probation oversight on a voluntary basis beyond age 19 where continued treatment and services are needed and agreed to?
  - a. What do you see as pros and cons of this policy?
2. In some cases, youth who are in out of home placement due to juvenile justice involvement do not have a home to return to. Would you be in favor of policy changes allowing these young adults to voluntarily enter the Bridge to Independence program if it was documented that they do not have a home to return to?
  - a. If not Bridge to Independence, do you believe Probation should develop and administer a similar set of services for youth who do not have a home to return to?
3. For the broader population of youth under probation oversight, do you believe it is important to offer extended supports and services at age after a youth turns 19? Why or why not?
4. If yes, what types of services do you see as most important to offer?
5. Who should be the main referral source and provide the case management for extended services?

## Appendix C

# EXTENDED SUPPORTS AND SERVICES FOCUS GROUPS: STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

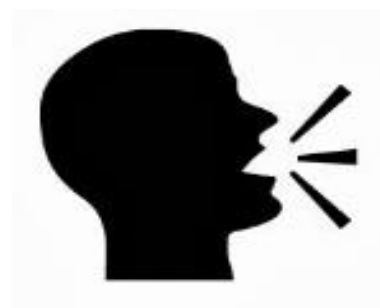
## COMPILED: SEPTEMBER 2015

### INTRODUCTION

The Young Adults' Supports and Services Sub-committee of the Children's Commission, in partnership with the Nebraska Probation Administration is exploring the need and potential structure of a supports and services program for 19 and 20 year old young adults with juvenile justice system involvement and minimal natural supports. To ensure stakeholders had a voice in the development of such a program, 16 focus groups were held in early September 2015; 8 with young adults and 8 with adult stakeholders. All youth groups were held in person.

### KEY THEMES - YOUTH

- We are afraid to loss our adult freedoms and want to be done with the system.
- Services MUST be voluntary, informal, and respect my personal choices.
- Don't forget about the awesome work already happening in my community...instead of something new, just help me be better connected.
- Life is hard and some youth need and want help.
- Youth need time, practice and support to transition.
- Support, listen and care about us. Personal connections MATTER!
- We deserve to have expectations and accountability.
- Be creative in talking about and 'selling' the program.



### KEY THEMES – PROVIDER

- Young adults are leaving our system without connections and deserve extended supports.
- How Youth Gain Access/Transition into the Program Matters.
- Eligibility MUST be flexible!
- Housing, case management, and basic life skill services are essential.
- Ensure transition to independence; avoid further system reliance.

### CASE MANAGEMENT SUGGESTIONS – YOUTH

<i>Case Management Suggestions</i>	
<i>Alternative Support People</i>	<i>Support Person Traits</i>
Mentor of the Youth's Choosing	Understand the program and services available
Drug & Alcohol Counselor	Nice/Kind/Supportive
Youth Counselor (like those at YRTC)	Respectful
Alumni of Juvenile Justice System	Understanding
Volunteer	Honest
Older with More Life Experience	Listens to What Youth Wants
Without a Probation Title Not	Visits Frequently
	Follows Up

### REFERRAL/IDENTIFICATION PROCESS SUGGESTIONS – PROVIDER

Providers had many thoughts concerning how the program could be tailored to catch the young people needing ongoing support, while filtering out those for whom it isn't necessary. Several ideas were provided, including:

- Anyone (attorney, probation, counselor, etc.) are able to refer a youth, and the program determines whether to accept. The court would not need to be involved.
- The court could order the program upon the youth's request.
- Not just out of home placement, but language of "no appropriate home to return to" or "lacks stable familial support" or something to that effect
- One group expressed that there should be "no wrong door" into the program, have multiple referral sources.



- Again, a strong sentiment that there are probation youth who could or should be 3(a) cases but aren't, and we should absolutely offer something to help them transition.
- One group of probation officers felt that it should be the same eligibility requirements as currently exist in b2I, but without the 3(a) requirement.
- Some participants felt the judge would be the most appropriate gatekeeper. Other participants were concerned that the judge or probation might be biased against certain youth.
- Another possibility suggested looking into the history of DHHS involvement or number of calls. If there is not a family support system or if support system is in chaos, or if there is chronic involvement, than those young adults should be given priority.
- Possibly focusing on a subset of the probation youth like 3(b) cases as an eligibility requirement.



### PRO'S & CON'S DISCUSSION – PROVIDER

#### Pros:

- All 19 year olds need support to successfully transition to adulthood.
- Highly vulnerable population with likelihood to enter adult system
- Close gap for those ineligible for Bridge to Independence
- Bridge to Independence provides an example

#### Cons

- Young adults won't want to participate
- Lack of consequence
- Cost & public will
- Slippery slope to further system involvement
- Negative impact on Bridge to Independence

### DESIRED SERVICES - YOUTH

Desired Services and Supports		
Type of Service	Offered while Probation-Involved	Available via Extension Program
Treatment	Substance Abuse Counseling Urine Analysis/Drug Tests	Counseling Drug and Alcohol Treatment Urine Analysis/Drug Testing
Life Skills	Pregnancy/Parenting Practice with daily living skills Financial Literacy	Moving/Housing/Leases/Renter's Rights Pregnancy/Parenting Cooking/ How to Buy Groceries Independent Living Budgeting/How to Pay Bills Getting State ID and other documents
Social	Connection to Social, fun, community, and civic Groups	Fun, Positive Social Groups Help finding new social groups/positive friends
Coaching/Personal Support	Day Reporting Someone to "check in"	Service Navigation One-stop shop organization Help Accessing Other Services & Systems (food stamps, vocational rehabilitation, disability, etc.) Someone to Check-in/Call for Help Guidance
Employment & Education	Job Skills Resume Creation/Building How to Search for Jobs	Career/Education Resources Help Job and College Searching Education Services and Scholarships Employment Skills and Search Summer Housing while in College
Other	Medicaid Thinking for a Change Car/Transportation	Transportation Medical Coverage Utility Assistance Car Programs including how to get insurance, registration

**DESIRED SERVICES - PROVIDER**

Suggested Services Discussion		
Service Type	Specific Services	Need/Discussion
Case Management	Life Coach or Navigator style Like B2I's Independence Coordinators Help access public supports Determining professional goals and action steps	Distinct training needed, like that used by B2I
Basic Life Skills	Financial Literacy Opening & maintaining a checking account Budgeting/Credit Literacy Personal Hygiene Getting to interviews and appointments on time	Independent living skills of all levels are needed and youth need time to practice and be coached in developing these.
Education & Employment Assistance	Completing College Applications, FAFSA/Financial Assistance in attending college or completing a G.E.D. Job Training/Filling out job applications	
Finding Supports	Family Finding Community Connections Positive, Social Opportunities.	Access to community resources can be difficult Lack of transportation
Housing	Contract with transitional living programs or landlords	Too many homeless young adults Too few shelter beds and long-term housing assistance programs
Treatment	Mental Health Developmental Disability Ways to access needed treatment, Extended Medicaid coverage Substance Abuse	One participant felt the program should <i>only</i> be offered for specific treatment purposes. Substance abuse is especially important for youth who turn 19 mid-program.
Health	Extended Medical Coverage Physical Health Family Planning/Sexual Health	

**QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT**

Focus groups raised a number of important questions in four areas.

*Administration*

- Who is the gatekeeper?
- Who refers?
- Who runs the program?
- What case management and program strategies promote a road to independence that includes ongoing informal support people and personal skills that reduce future reliance/involvement in systems?
- How is oversight managed to prevent collateral consequences of juvenile involvement?
- How is oversight managed to prevent collateral consequences of juvenile charges and system involvement?
- What structure could allow for needed supports while honoring legal adulthood?



*Eligibility*

- How do we structure eligibility so that youth who are entering adulthood without meaningful supports can access the program, without opening the floodgates?
- How strict would reporting and ongoing eligibility requirements be? What would oversight/accountability look like to stay in the program (if at all)?

- What level of fluidity is appropriate for program involvement?

#### *Services and Incentives*

- How can youth be incentivized to maintain pro-social behavior?
- Should there be a flexible stipend, or should a stipend be conditioned on specific usage?
- Housing is a huge need. How would the program ensure that young adults can access safe and stable places to live?

#### *Messaging*

- What education/training of formal and informal supports could be provided to allow for them to serve as a primary messenger for an extended supports program?
- What strategies could be used about the importance/need of such a program to gain public will and legislative support?
- How could the program be set up to ensure that language and labels don't create additional barriers to participation?
- What mechanisms can be implemented to ensure youth receive clear, complete, and honest information about the program in a way that they understand and that addresses fears about continued system engagement?

**Appendix C  
Fiscal Analysis**

**Fiscal Analysis of Young People under the Jurisdiction of the AOP Opting into Bridge to Independence**

<i>Programs</i>	2016	2017	2018
<b>Description - Costs of Extending Care to 21</b>			
Estimated number of JJ youth in voluntary care per month at age 19	39	40	41
Estimated number of JJ youth in voluntary care per month at age 20	26	25	25
Average monthly maintenance cost - relative foster care	\$519.29	\$534.87	\$550.91
Average monthly maintenance cost - direct stipends	\$760	\$760	\$760
Number of youth expected to receive direct stipends	65	65	66
<b>Total Average monthly cost - direct stipends</b>	<b>\$49,400</b>	<b>\$49,400</b>	<b>\$50,160</b>
<b>Total annual maintenance cost</b>	<b>\$592,800</b>	<b>\$592,800</b>	<b>\$601,920</b>
Total Monthly Administrative Cost for Direct Stipends	\$29,640	\$29,640	\$30,096
<b>Total annual administrative costs (host homes &amp; direct stipends)</b>	<b>\$29,640</b>	<b>\$29,640</b>	<b>\$30,096</b>
Foster Care Review Office Costs	\$560	\$577	\$594
<b>Total Foster Care Review Office Costs</b>	<b>\$72,800</b>	<b>\$74,984</b>	<b>\$78,422</b>
Public caseworker average salary and benefits	\$47,681.67	\$49,112.12	\$50,585.48
Number of youth per caseworker	16	16	16
Public caseworker total cost	\$193,706.78	\$199,517.99	\$208,665.12
Public supervisor average salary and benefits	\$64,978	\$66,927	\$68,935
Number of youth per supervisor	96	96	96
Supervisor Total Cost	\$43,995.52	\$45,315.39	\$47,392.92
<b>Total annual case management costs</b>	<b>\$237,702</b>	<b>\$244,833</b>	<b>\$256,058</b>
<b>Total Operating Costs</b>	<b>\$95,081</b>	<b>\$97,933</b>	<b>\$102,423</b>
Average Monthly Medicaid Expenditure Per Youth (STATE SHARE ONLY)	\$173	\$178	\$184
<b>Total Annual Medicaid Expenditure</b>	<b>\$134,940</b>	<b>\$138,988</b>	<b>\$145,360</b>
<b>Total Estimated Expenses - Extending Care to 21</b>	<b>\$1,162,963</b>	<b>\$1,179,179</b>	<b>\$1,214,279</b>
<b>Revenues</b>			
FC IV-E Penetration Rate 1 - With VPA Model	0.2200	0.2200	0.2200
FMAP rate	0.5327	0.5327	0.5327
<b>Total Annual IV-E Maintenance Revenue</b>	<b>\$69,473</b>	<b>\$69,473</b>	<b>\$70,541</b>
IV-E Administrative Rate	0.50	0.50	0.50
<b>Total Annual IV-E Administrative Revenue</b>	<b>\$47,875</b>	<b>\$49,213</b>	<b>\$51,370</b>
<b>Estimated Total Annual Title IV-E Revenue</b>	<b>\$117,347</b>	<b>\$118,686</b>	<b>\$121,911</b>
<b>Total State Share Care to 21 Expenses</b>	<b>\$1,045,616</b>	<b>\$1,060,493</b>	<b>\$1,092,368</b>

### Fiscal Analysis of 3B Wards under the Jurisdiction of DHHS Opting into Bridge to Independence<sup>7</sup>

<i>Programs</i>	2016	2017	2018
<b>Description - Costs of Extending Care to 21</b>			
Estimated number of DHHS 3B youth in voluntary care per month at age 19	37	0	0
Estimated number of DHHS 3B youth in voluntary care per month at age 20	0	37	0
Average monthly maintenance cost - relative foster care	\$519.29	\$534.87	\$550.91
Average monthly maintenance cost - direct stipends	\$760	\$760	\$760
Number of youth expected to receive direct stipends	37	37	0
<b>Total Average monthly cost - direct stipends</b>	<b>\$28,120</b>	<b>\$28,120</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Total annual maintenance cost</b>	<b>\$337,440</b>	<b>\$337,440</b>	<b>\$0</b>
Total Monthly Administrative Cost for Direct Stipends	\$16,872	\$16,872	\$0
<b>Total annual administrative costs (host homes &amp; direct stipends)</b>	<b>\$16,872</b>	<b>\$16,872</b>	<b>\$0</b>
Foster Care Review Office Costs	\$560	\$577	\$594
<b>Total Foster Care Review Office Costs</b>	<b>\$41,440</b>	<b>\$42,683</b>	<b>\$0</b>
Public caseworker average salary and benefits	\$47,681.67	\$49,112.12	\$50,585.48
Number of youth per caseworker	16	16	16
Public caseworker total cost	\$110,263.86	\$113,571.78	\$0.00
Public supervisor average salary and benefits	\$64,978	\$66,927	\$68,935
Number of youth per supervisor	96	96	96
Supervisor Total Cost	\$25,043.60	\$25,794.91	\$0.00
<b>Total annual case management costs</b>	<b>\$135,307</b>	<b>\$139,367</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Total Operating Costs</b>	<b>\$54,123</b>	<b>\$55,747</b>	<b>\$0</b>
Average Monthly Medicaid Expenditure Per Youth (STATE SHARE ONLY)	\$173	\$178	\$184
<b>Total Annual Medicaid Expenditure</b>	<b>\$76,812</b>	<b>\$79,116</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Total Estimated Expenses - Extending Care to 21</b>	<b>\$661,994</b>	<b>\$671,225</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Revenues</b>			
FC IV-E Penetration Rate 1 - With VPA Model	0.2200	0.2200	0.2200
FMAP rate	0.5327	0.5327	0.5327
<b>Total Annual IV-E Maintenance Revenue</b>	<b>\$39,546</b>	<b>\$39,546</b>	<b>\$0</b>
IV-E Administrative Rate	0.50	0.50	0.50
<b>Total Annual IV-E Administrative Revenue</b>	<b>\$27,252</b>	<b>\$28,014</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Estimated Total Annual Title IV-E Revenue</b>	<b>\$66,798</b>	<b>\$67,559</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Total State Share Care to 21 Expenses</b>	<b>\$595,197</b>	<b>\$603,665</b>	<b>\$0</b>

<sup>7</sup> Because complete data regarding the demographics of 3B wards under the jurisdiction of DHHS was not available, this fiscal analysis assumes that the remaining 37 3B wards will turn 19 in 2016 and voluntarily opt into b2i. This analysis also assumes that these 37 young people will remain a part of b2i until they turn age 21. As a result, these assumptions represent the highest possible estimate of additional expenses related to the expansion of b2i to this population in 2016 and 2017.