

# Bridge to Independence 2019 Child Trends Evaluation





# Goals of the Evaluation

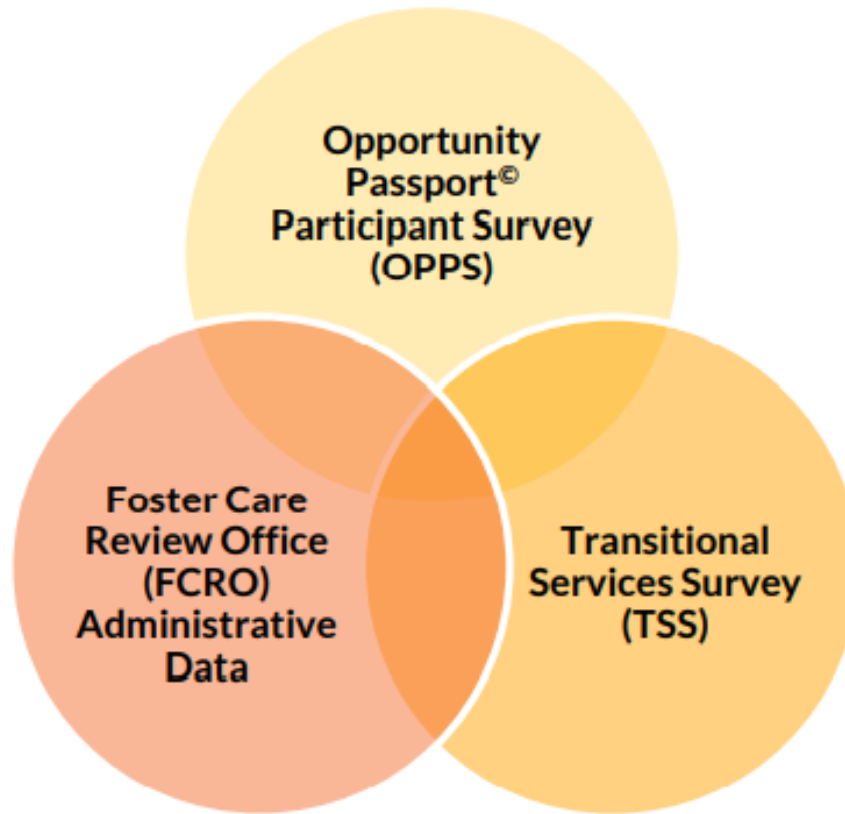
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- To evaluate young people's outcomes before and after b2i
- To evaluate whether and how b2i improves participant outcomes.



# Data Sources

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# Key Findings: Defining Success

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While many of the young people listed some of the outcomes Child Trends included in the original definition (e.g., education and financial stability), most centered on attributes other than the typical outcomes used to measure well-being. Participants also stressed the importance of setting and working toward goals with a **positive attitude**.



# Key Findings: Outcomes

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In general, participating in b2i is associated with improved outcomes for young people. B2i participants are **more likely** than their non-b2i peers to:

- Report having some post-secondary education experience
- Have safe, stable, and affordable housing
- Be able to cover monthly expenses
- Have adults to turn to in a crisis or for a loan

Young people who participate in both b2i and in the Opportunity Passport asset matching program through CYI are also more **hopeful** and have **better self-regulation** than their peers who are only part of the CYI system without asset matching.



# Key Findings: Importance of b2i Resources

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- All participants reported having a high-quality, positive relationship with their b2i independence coordinator.
- They also reported that their independence coordinator was able to address any concerns they had and help them make progress toward their goals.
- To be successful in b2i, young people emphasized the importance of having a positive attitude, setting goals and working to reach them, and building a strong relationship with their independence coordinator.
- Participants were also appreciative of the monthly stipend, reporting that it allowed them to feel financially secure and focus their energy elsewhere (e.g., education, parenting).
- Some participants expressed difficulty with managing their money when they first entered b2i and began receiving the stipend.



# Key Findings: Exiting b2i

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- Young people reported not thinking about the exit process until a few months prior to aging out
- Several participants expressed anxiety about covering expenses after exiting b2i
- Young people exiting do not report the same positive outcomes as those still in the program
- Exited participants were no less likely than their non-b2i peers to experience housing instability
- They were also no more likely to be able to cover their monthly expenses post b2i



# Recommendations: Entering b2i

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## Young people can also be better prepared to enter b2i.

Some participants reported that they struggled to manage their stipend or trust their independence coordinator when they first enrolled in the program.

- Caseworkers for pending b2i participants should work closely with independence coordinators to educate young people about the program and help them establish a **budget** before they receive their first monthly stipend.
- More communication will not only prepare young people for the financial responsibilities of b2i, it will also ease the transition between young people's graduation from high school and their enrollment in the program. Earlier contact with their independence coordinator will also provide more time for young people to build that important relationship.





# Recommendations: Exiting b2i

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The differences in outcomes for exited b2i participants when compared to current participants suggests that participants need more support to prepare for their exit from the program.

**Practices that may ease the stress of transitioning out of b2i include the following:**

- Require participants to open a savings account and draft a savings plan.
- Leverage the Opportunity Passport matching-savings program
- Provide trainings and information strategically and frequently.
- Taper off the stipend amount in the months before exit.



# Future Evaluations

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- Studies must reflect participant definitions of success in b2i:
  - Setting and achieving personal goals
  - Having hope for the future
- Data on participants' knowledge, perceptions and outcomes should be collected at different stages in their b2i experience.
- Housing measures should be reviewed to better understand b2i participant experiences.

## *Additional recommendation:*

- Collect data on young people who choose not to enroll in b2i (pg. 22)