



NEBRASKA
FOSTER CARE REVIEW OFFICE



Bridge to Independence (b2i) Special Report

as Shared in the
Foster Care Review Office (FCRO)
June 2022 Quarterly Report

Special Report on Bridge to Independence Extended Foster Care Program (commonly called b2i)

- The Nebraska Bridge to Independence Program (b2i) was designed to provide specific state supports to qualifying young adults ages 19 or 20 who were in foster care and opt to enroll. It is a short-term program that ends supports on the participant's 21st birthday.
- Young adults must meet eligibility criteria related to education and/or employment unless unable to complete due to documented medical conditions.
- They must maintain monthly contact with an independence coordinator who helps them develop and modify their transitional living plan and connects them to available resources, in addition to helping them make progress on their personal goals.

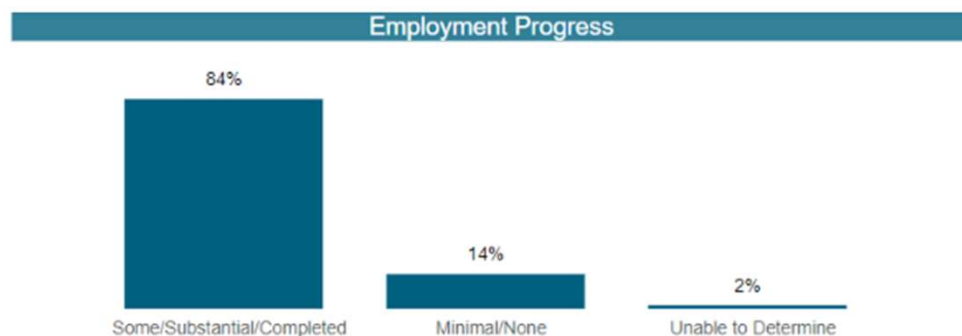
Special Report on Bridge to Independence Extended Foster Care Program (commonly called b2i) **Case Reviews by FCRO**

- The Foster Care Review Office conducts monthly reviews of a sample of b2i participants.
- Data is collected on specific goals and progress toward each goal the young adult has selected or is working on, as well as some basic demographic information. In addition, overall progress toward independent living is determined by FCRO staff.
- In Fiscal Year 2021 (FY2021) the FCRO Research Team completed a sample of **200 b2i case reviews**. This sample was the focus of analysis and reporting for the FCRO June Quarterly Special Report.

Special Report on Bridge to Independence: Progress on Goals

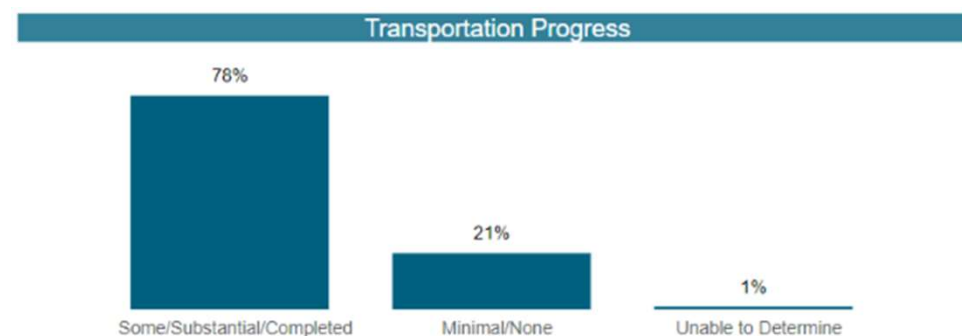
The most common goal selected by young adults in the b2i program is **employment** (97%).

- 84% of those with this goal were making some/substantial progress or had completed their goal.
- 87% of females were showing progress compared to 81% of the males.
- 86% of white young adults were showing progress compared to 82% for young adults of color.



Most (92%) had a goal regarding **transportation**, such as learning to drive, obtaining a driver's license and insurance, obtaining and maintaining a vehicle, or learning to use public transportation (where available).

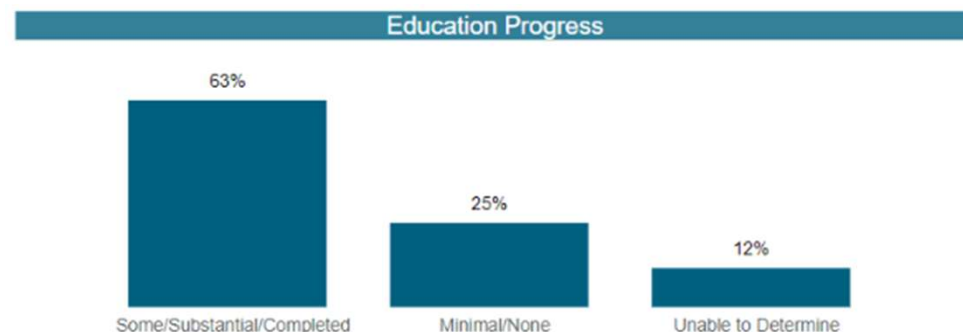
- Progress was found for 78% of the young adults, with just over 1/3 having actually completed their goal.
- 83% of females were showing progress compared to 69% of the males.
- No differences were found in progress based on race/ethnicity between young adults of color and white young adults.



Special Report on Bridge to Independence: Progress on Goals (Cont.)

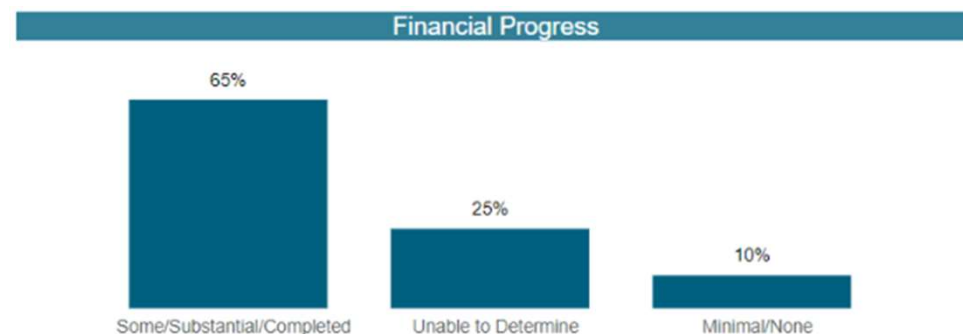
Education is a common goal, selected by 81% of the young adults reviewed.

- Despite challenges presented as a result of COVID-19, 63% with an education goal were making progress.
- No differences in progress were found based on gender.
- Dramatic differences were shown between white young adults (71% making progress) and young adults of color (51% making progress).



Over half of the young adults reviewed (59%) had a goal related to **finance**.

- Approximately two thirds (65%) were making progress.
- 70% of males were showing progress compared to 62% of the females.
- 67% of young adults of color were showing progress compared to 64% for white young adults.



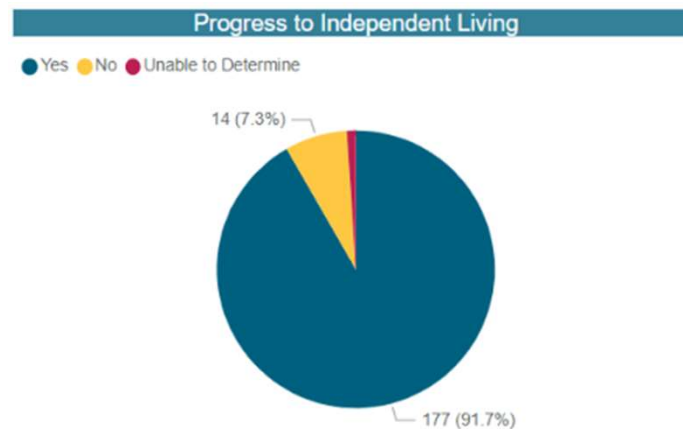
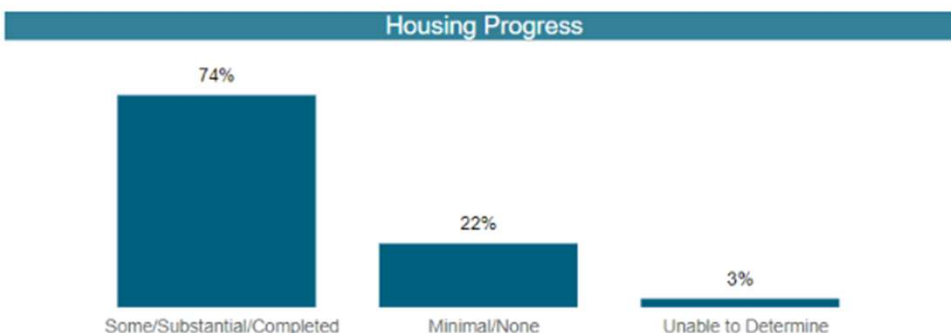
Special Report on Bridge to Independence: Progress on Goals (Cont.)

Many (49%) had a goal related to **housing**. Often this related to saving towards having their own apartment or other housing options.

- Just under 1/3 had completed this goal, and another 43% had made progress towards the goal.
- 77% of females were showing progress compared to 70% of the males.
- 78% of young adults of color were showing progress compared to 71% for white young adults.

The FCRO considers b2i participant's goals and progress levels for each aspect of skill building and support when determining the young adult's **overall progress** in the program.

- Most (92%) reviewed b2i participants were making progress to "independent living".
- 93% of females were showing progress compared to 90% of the males.
- 94% of white young adults were showing progress compared to 89% for young adults of color.



Special Report on Bridge to Independence: Overall Progress Factors

More **removals** decrease the likelihood of making progress.

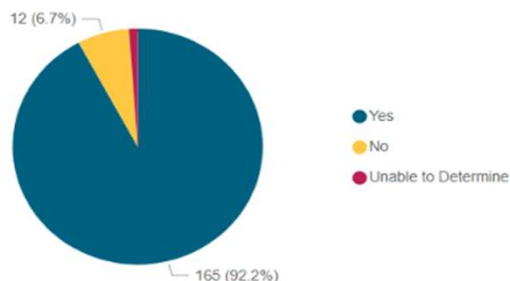
- 92% of the 1-3 category were making overall progress as compared to 86% in the 4 or more times in care category.

The more **disruptions** the young adult had experienced in childhood, the less likely they were to be making progress toward independence.

- 95% of young adults who had fewer than ten placements compared to 86% for those with ten or more out-of-home placements during their childhood.

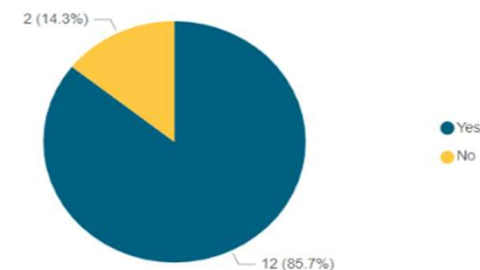
1 to 3 Times in Care as a Child

Progress to Independent Living



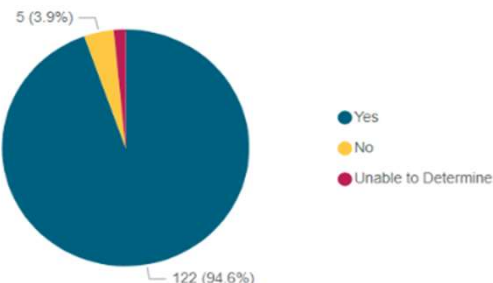
4 or More Times in Care as a Child

Progress to Independent Living



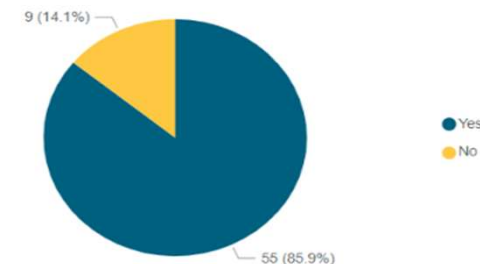
1 to 9 Placements as a Child

Progress to Independent Living

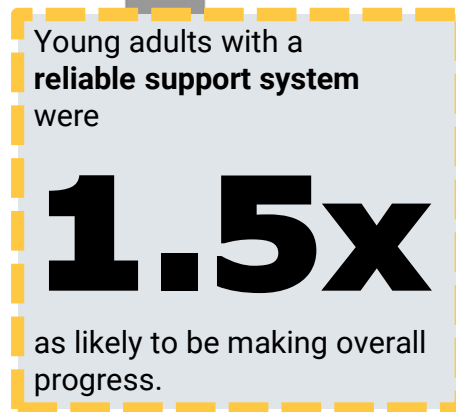
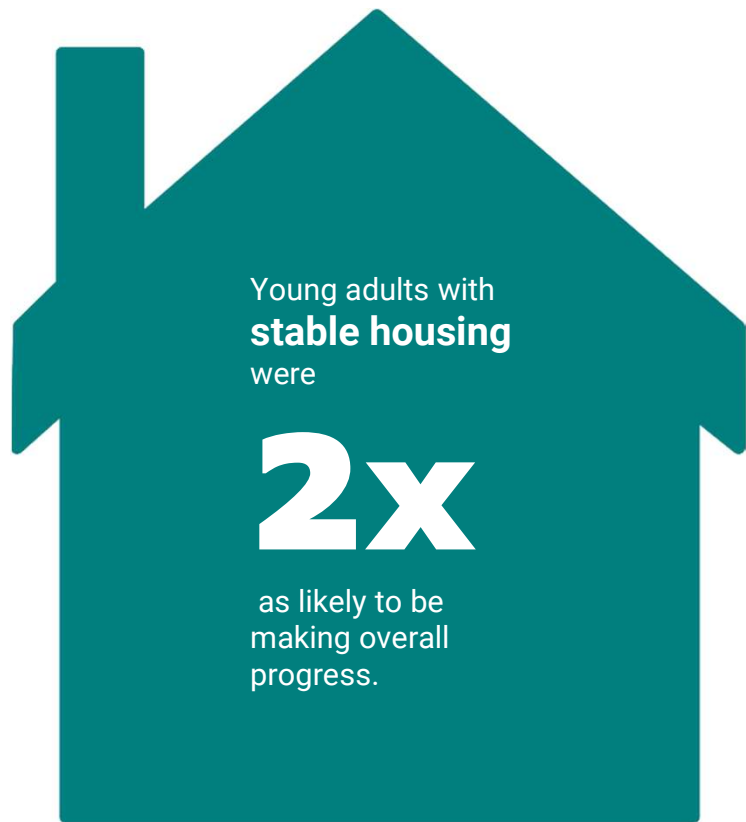


10 or More Placements as a Child

Progress to Independent Living



Key Influencers on Overall Progress to “Independent Living”



Recommendations Made in b2i Special Report

1. Ensure that older teens identify, develop and learn how to **maintain meaningful relationships with positive adults** that hopefully will endure into their early adulthood.
2. Further educate older teens and young adults on the foundational **importance of securing safe and stable housing** along with an understanding of how to maintain their home.
3. **Continue the collaborative work that has begun** between the Foster Care Review Office and DHHS Children and Family Services staff.
4. **Caseworkers of youth ages 16 to 18 should begin working with the youth on budgeting and financial management** even if the youth is not interested in voluntary enrollment in b2i as those are necessary skills for all youth approaching adulthood.

Recommendations Made in b2i Special Report

5. Use a **tailored strategy as the young adult approaches age 21** to better prepare them for the cliff effect of losing stipends and other supports.
6. Continue to **increase hope and confidence amongst participants** as they develop their skills, particularly in areas where racial disparities are known to exist.
7. Understand the **role that the b2i program can have on preventing abuse and neglect of future generations**, especially since young adult participants are of child-bearing age and may already have children of their own.

Other Recommendations Outlined to DHHS/CFS

1. **Improve delivery and documentation of independent living skills training and development for youth ages 14 and over**, including financial literacy, preparation for post-secondary education and job skills, and establishing and maintaining permanent connections with extended family or other trusted adults that can be sustained into adulthood.
2. **Collaborate with the b2i advisory committee to incorporate recommendations** regarding program evaluation and related measurement tools which will allow for ongoing outcome tracking and reporting before, during, and after b2i program participation.
3. **Consider implementing the Youth Thrive framework as part of b2i programming** to create a seamless continuum of independent living supports for all youth and young adults ages 14-26, and consider whether additional, specialized training is required for independence coordinators related to adolescent development and the needs of emerging adults.

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