

Better Futures

College is for Everyone!

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Pathways Game

Take a piece a paper and write your journey from adolescence to now. Emphasize some milestones, roadblocks and barriers that occurred, (examples:, school, foster care, diagnoses, graduations, children, work experience, hospitalization, homelessness, etc.) Turn it over and wait for further instructions.

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Goal of the Project: Implement and test a peer mentoring/coaching intervention to assist young people in foster care with a serious mental health diagnosis prepare for and participate in post-secondary education.

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BACKGROUND:

- Casey Alumni Study found that over half of former foster youth have diagnosed mental health problems (Pecora, 2005). In Oregon, we found that 70% of youth had a DSM diagnosis (Hogensen, J., 2007)
- 70-80% of youth in Foster Care and youth with serious Mental Health conditions aspire to go to college (McMillen, C., 2003)
- Only 20% of youth in FC and 34% of youth with MH conditions actually attend (Wagner M., 2007)

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DESIGN:

- Youth randomly assigned to Community As Usual (CAU) or intervention group
- Youth are enrolled in 3 waves
- Intervention components include individual coaching sessions using a peer coach model, Summer Institute and mentoring workshops
- Youth are assessed at baseline, immediately after the Summer Institute, immediately after coaching ends, and 5 months following intervention (during the next school year)

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PARTICIPANTS:

About 80 youth who:

- Currently are in foster care
- Experience a serious mental health condition
- Live in Portland, Oregon metro area
- Open to the idea of college

Wave 1:

17 youth (10 intervention, 7 control)

Attrition:

1 intervention, youth moved out of state

Wave 2:

25 youth (15 intervention, 10 control)

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OUTCOMES:

- Mental Health
- Postsecondary Preparation/Participation
- Employment/Career Engagement
- Recovery/Quality of Life
- Social Support
- Self Determination

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Intervention Wave 1:

Completed intervention and in follow-along period

Final assessment scheduled for November

Intervention Wave 2:

Summer Institute: completed 07-27-11

5 Mentor Workshops in next 7 months

Peer Coaches Assigned and Started

Baseline and Post-Institute Assessments completed

2010

Summer
Institute



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Summer Institute Details:

- 15 youth, 2 Foster All-Stars and Staff
- 3 nights/4 Days
- Portland State University Campus Dorms
- Daily Panels, Tours, Activities and Workshop
- Evening Activities and Dinner
- Relationship Building/"Outing Self"

Research & Training Center for Pathways to Positive Futures,
Portland State University

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Peer Coaching:

- Skills (problem solving, hanging tough, narrowing goals)
- Experiential Activities (completing FAFSA, exploring resources on internet, investigating mental health supports, informational interview to explore career area)
- Information (application time line, scholarships)
- Average 2x per month
- Advantages to the Peer Coach Model

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Peer Coaching:

- Collaborative problem solving,
- Peer support and experience,
- Self determination and empowerment lens,
- Build relationships, offer resources and support,
- Youth directed on personally valued goals,
- Try to not retraumatize the youth

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Mentoring Workshops:

- Workshop 1: *“College is for Everyone!”* SR/JR Year Timeline
- Workshop 2: *“Come Learn about NELA, Essay Writing and More”*
Community Relations Coordinator
- Workshop 3: *“Self-Care and Mental Health Supports”*
Portland Chapter Director for Youth M.O.V.E.
Foster care alumni panel
- Workshop 4: *“Things People Never Told Me”*, Transition Services
Teen Transition Caseworker, DHS
Youth Transition Specialist, ILP
- Workshop 5: Graduation and Celebration!

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“Things People Never Told Me”

-**Bills** need to be paid every month

-**Good to use a budget. If you master a budget, anything is possible!**

-**Apply to subsidized housing and for food stamps**

-**Buy a folder to keep track of all of your important paperwork!**

-**Finding your “community” or a place where you belong is key to surviving on your own.** Creating a support system of like-minded people (people like you who like what you like) is important. You can also be part of many different communities for all the different parts of you.

-**Go to school!** Ask for accommodations and support when needed.

-**It’s okay to feel lost. It’s okay to feel confused.** It’s okay to be scared. It’s okay to cry when you’re frustrated. You’re not the only one experiencing these feelings. You’re not “crazy” even if you *feel* “crazy”. Call someone, go for a walk, draw (even if you think you can’t), write, listen to music (Pandora is an excellent choice!), and take a break to breathe.

-**Health Care** is important! Get checkups, utilize therapy and mental health services, get advice and information from reliable sources, etc. You are eligible for Chafee Medical -ask your case worker or ILP worker about it.

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What We've Learned So Far

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Demographics:

Table 1: Race and Ethnicity

	<i>Wave 1</i>	<i>Wave 2</i>
	(17)	(25)
Caucasian/non Hispanic	7	12
Hispanic/Latino	3	6
Asian/Pacific Islander	2	1
Black/African American	3	5
Native American/Alaskan	1	-
Other	1	1

Table 2: Sex/Gender

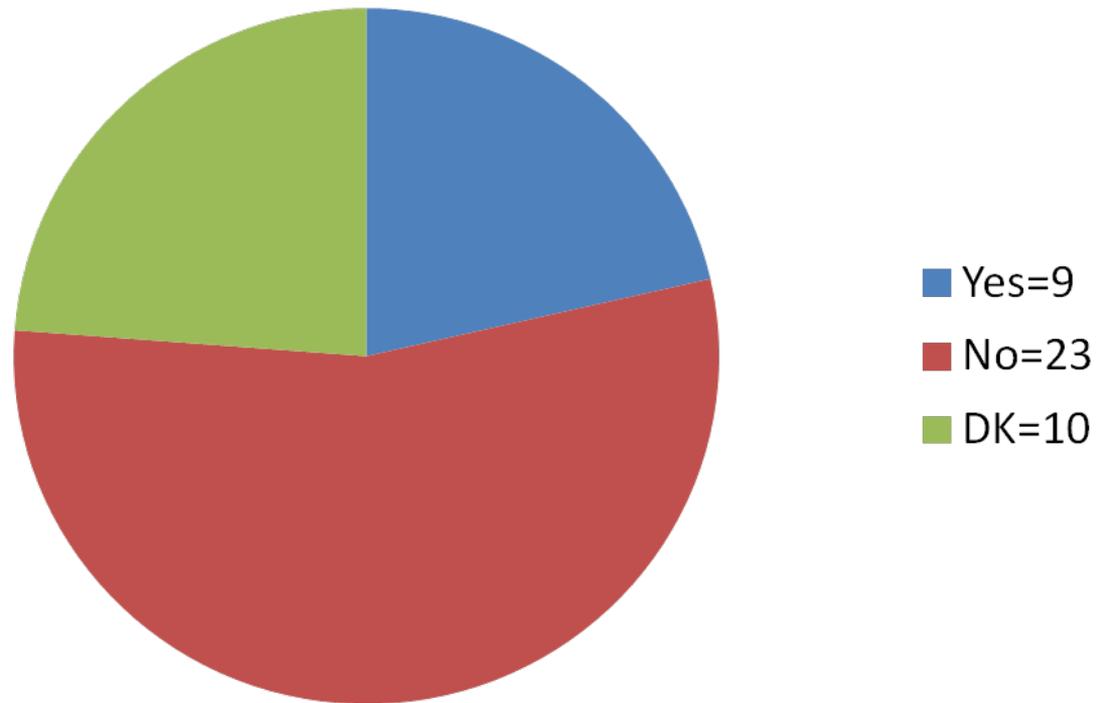
Male	10	10
Female	7	15
Other	-	-

Source: Outcome Measure

N=42

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Bio Parents attended College N=42



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Wave 1

Average number of coaching
sessions attended: 11.8

Average number of workshops
attended: 2.6 out of 4

Better Futures: Wave 1

Average number of hours spent in active coaching: 25.1

Average Experiential Time: 8.6 hours

Experiential time= supporting the youth to participate in an activity to take action toward a goal

Average Didactic Time: 7.0 hours

Didactic time= assist the youth to identify and work toward his or her goal; one-to-one time when you are talking about goals, barriers, and strategies, planning, etc.

Average Relational Time: 9.5 hours

Relational time= “getting to know you or catching up” time that do not relate to the youth goals or activities

Better Futures – Wave 1 Results

- Several promising trends in expected direction
- One significant overall finding in expected direction
- Very small N so difficult to tell differences at this point
- Next couple weeks new data of outcomes of first wave

Better Futures – The Youth: Wave 1



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Serena:

- Likes and takes advantage of all the opportunities Better Futures has offered (conferences, workshops, looking for a job, applying to college) and has never missed a meeting/workshop
- Finished scholarships and financial aid applications
- Didn't know she needed a transition plan, and after talking about it, asked her caseworker about it and now attends ILP meetings and is schedule for Chafee housing
- Now knows what she wants to do in the Fall and is going after it when before she would change her mind every meeting. She now feels confident in her decision.

“I finished my OSAC and FASFA on time because you [their coach] wouldn't leave me alone about it but I guess I'm happy I finished it”-Serena

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Alex:

- Proactive in regards to taking himself to ILP and getting a mentor
- Keeps going strong even when faced with difficult times
- Finished resume and cover letter and is currently looking for a job
- Didn't know he needed a transition plan, and after talking about it, asked his caseworker about it and now attends ILP meetings
- Starting to take charge of *his* life (finishing high school, starting college, and obtaining accommodations such as ILP and a long-term mentor)

“I finally have someone to talk to who knows where I’m coming from and who won’t judge me”-Alex

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Troy:

- Grades have gone up
- Finished scholarships and financial aid applications
- Finished college application, placement testing, and has scheduled to meet with his program's advisor

“My grades are good. I actually got an A and some B's and NO D's! and I feel a little bit more motivated. I like the snacks we get when working on stuff and keeps me coming back! Oh and the help with college stuff is cool too” - Troy

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Monica:

- Formed dance club at school and didn't give up when it became difficult and now choreographs new dances regularly
- Finished scholarships and financial aid applications
- Finished college application, turned in, and will be starting in the Fall
- Attended many different school orientations until she found the right "fit" for her
- "Schmoozed" in regards to getting into re-attending ILP (all of my youth have done so when before they were not interested because they didn't see a point in it)

"I feel like I have a future, a plan. Before Better Futures, I knew what I wanted but not how to get it. No one showed me Chafee or FAFSA or a college application before, but you helped me figure it all out. Now I know and I'll be completely signed up in April." -Monica

Better Futures – Resources

Supports:

- Financial Aid (FAFSA)
- Chafee Funds
- Oregon Student Assistance Commission (OSAC)
- Education & Training Vouchers (ETV)
- Subsidy Program (ILSP)

Resources:

- FosterClub <http://www.fosterclub.com>
- Independent Living Program (ILP)
- Disability and Health Services
- Youth MOVE youthmovenational.org
- Aspire www.getcollegefunds.org/aspire



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Questions?

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