

**Mark E. Courtney
Nathanael Okpych
Dominique Mikell
Brooke Stevenson
Keunhye Park
Justin Harty
Huiling Feng
Brittani Kindle**

2016

Child Welfare Fair

**CalYOUTH Survey of Young
Adults' Child Welfare Workers**

Mark E. Courtney
Nathanael Okpych
Dominique Mikell
Brooke Stevenson
Keunhye Park
Justin Harty
Huiling Feng
Brittani Kindle

Recommended Citation

Courtney, M. E., Okpych, N.
J., Mikell, D., Stevenson, B.,
Park, K., Harty, J., Feng, H., &
Kindle, B. (2016). *CalYOUTH
Survey of Young Adults' Child
Welfare Workers*. Chicago, IL:
Chapin Hall at the University of
Chicago.

© 2016 by Chapin Hall at the
University of Chicago
1313 East 60th Street
Chicago, IL 60637
www.chapinhall.org

ISSN:1097-3125

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank our public agency partners, the California Department of Social Services and the County Welfare Directors Association of California. This study would not have been possible without their cooperation and support. We also want to recognize our funders, the Stuart Foundation, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, the Zellerbach Family Foundation, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Lastly, we are deeply appreciative of time taken by the dedicated public servants who completed our survey, California's county child welfare workers.

The findings reported herein were performed with the permission of the California Department of Social Services. The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are solely those of the authors and should not be considered as representing the policy of the collaborating agency or any agency of the California government.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Study Background and Overview	3
Literature Review	3
Caseworkers’ Perceptions of Relationships and Engagement with Transition-Age Youth	3
Caseworkers’ Perceptions of Youths’ Challenges, Needs, and Preparedness during the Transition to Adulthood.....	4
Perceptions of Extended Care and Service Availability.....	5
Study Design and Methods.....	6
Survey Design	6
Sample Selection	7
Survey Administration	7
Response Rate	8
Survey Weights	9
Comparisons by County Groups and Youth Demographic Characteristics	10
Study Limitations	12
Results.....	13
Caseworker Characteristics	13
Youths’ Demographic Characteristics	16
Caseworkers’ Contact with the Youth	18
Youths’ Education and Employment	20
Education Characteristics of Youth.....	20
Youths’ Experiences in the Labor Market.....	22
Youths’ Living Arrangements	24
Youths’ Health, Mental Health, and Parental Status.....	26
Youth Health, Mental Health, and Safety Concerns.....	26
Youth Pregnancy and Parenthood	28
Youths’ Preparedness and Need for Services in Various Life Areas.....	30
Youth Preparedness	30
Youths’ Need for Services.....	31
Youths’ Motivation to Remain in Care Past Age 18.....	34

Availability and Helpfulness of Trainings and Services.....	36
Availability of Trainings and Services	36
Helpfulness of Trainings and Services	37
Availability of Housing Options.....	38
Appropriateness of Housing Options	39
Satisfaction with Collaboration with Other Systems	41
Supportiveness of Court Personnel.....	43
Attitudes toward Extended Foster Care	45
Views of Challenges to Effective Implementation of Extended Foster Care	48
Views of Nonminor Dependents.....	50
Summary and Next Steps.....	51
References.....	55

List of Figures

Figure 1. Caseworkers' Perceptions of Youths' Preparedness in Various Life Areas ^a	31
Figure 2. Caseworkers' Perceptions of Youths' Need for Services	33
Figure 3. Caseworkers' Perceptions of Availability of Trainings and Services for Older Youth.....	37
Figure 4. Caseworkers' Perceptions about Helpfulness of Trainings and Services for Older Youth	38
Figure 5. Caseworkers' Perceptions of Availability of Housing Options (<i>n</i> = 292).....	39
Figure 6. Caseworkers' Perceptions of Appropriateness of Housing Options (<i>n</i> = 288).....	40
Figure 7. Caseworkers' Satisfaction with Collaboration with Other Systems	42
Figure 8. Caseworkers' Views of Supportiveness of Court Personnel ^a	44
Figure 9. Caseworkers' Perceptions on whether Extending Foster Care to 21 Years Old Will Foster Dependency on the System.....	46
Figure 10. Caseworkers' Perceptions of Foster Youths' Needs for Services and Support beyond Age 18	46
Figure 11. Caseworkers' Perceptions of the Age at Which Young People can be Expected to Live on Their Own	47

List of Tables

Table 1. Completed Surveys, by County Group	11
Table 2. Caseworker Characteristics (<i>N</i> = 295).....	15
Table 3. Youths' Demographic Characteristics	17
Table 4. Caseworkers' Contact with Young Person	19
Table 5. Youths' Educational Characteristics.....	21
Table 6. Youths' Educational Preparedness and Need for Services	22
Table 7. Youths' Employment Status	23
Table 8. Youths' Current Living Arrangement.....	25
Table 9. Youths' Health Characteristics	27
Table 10. Youths' Pregnancy and Parenthood.....	29
Table 11. Caseworkers' Perceptions of Youths' Motivation to Remain in Care	35
Table 12. Caseworkers' Views of Challenges to Effective Implementation of Extended Foster Care	49
Table 13. Caseworkers' Views of Nonminor Dependents after Age 18.....	50

Introduction

Since the passage of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, 21 states and the District of Columbia have been approved to receive federal funding to provide foster care to young people over the age of 18. In nearly all cases, foster care is provided until age 21. Providing care and supervision to young adults in foster care is a brave new world for the vast majority of states that have chosen to do so (Courtney, 2009). Extending foster care to young adults challenges states and localities to rethink their provision of child welfare services, since the services they have historically provided may not work well for young adults. California is the state with the largest number of young adults in care and has established eligibility criteria for youth to remain in care that are very inclusive, making the state's experience implementing extended care potentially instructive to other states (Courtney, Dworsky, & Napolitano, 2013).

One of the new challenges faced by states that choose to extend foster care to young adults is how best to provide case management services for this population. Historically, public child welfare agencies have provided case management by employing child welfare workers as public employees or by contracting with nonprofit organizations for such services. In order to be in compliance with federal law, states are expected to arrange caseworker visits with children in care on a monthly basis; at least half of those visits are supposed to take place in the child's home. For minors in care, caseworkers typically provide support and some degree of oversight to other adults who have the primary responsibility for the child's day-to-day care (e.g., foster parents, kinship foster parents, and group care staff). In contrast, reflecting an age-appropriate desire to live on one's own, many young people who remain in care past their 18th birthday reside in settings without live-in adult supervision, meaning that caseworkers cannot routinely rely on other adults to be their "eyes and ears." For example, as of October 2015, over two-fifths (43.6%) of young adults in care in California lived in supervised independent living settings (Webster et al., 2016). For youth in these settings, the child welfare worker may be the only adult associated with the public

child welfare agency with whom the youth can expect regular contact. And regardless of where young adults on their caseload are living, caseworkers are expected to help young adults in care become familiar with and obtain help from a variety of adult-serving systems (e.g., the education, employment, and physical and behavioral health systems). Clearly, caseworkers play a central role in the success of efforts to support foster youths' transition to adulthood.

This report presents the results of the *CalYOUTH Survey of Young Adults' Child Welfare Workers*. It shares county child welfare workers' perceptions of the availability and helpfulness of services within their county, their perceptions of court personnel's supportiveness of extended care, their satisfaction with collaboration with other systems of potential support for youth, their own attitudes toward extended care, and their views of challenges to effective implementation of extended foster care in California. The report also provides the workers' description of youths' characteristics, including their functioning in key domains of well-being (e.g., educational attainment, employment and earnings, physical and behavioral health), living arrangements, preparedness for independent living, and need for services. The survey results highlight areas of progress and opportunities for continued improvement as California continues its development of foster care for young adults. Before turning to the description of the study methodology and presentation of study findings, we review prior research on caseworkers' perceptions of transition-age foster youth and the services they might need to experience successful transitions to adulthood. It is important to note that the purpose of this analysis is to describe, but not explain, differences in the service contexts, caseworker views, and youth outcomes around extended foster care. Explaining these differences will require the use of more sophisticated statistical analyses than the ones used in this report.

Study Background and Overview

Literature Review

Given that federal policy encouraging states to provide foster care to young adults is only five years old and that few states had prior extended care programs, little research exists on the views and experiences of professionals who are at the frontlines of implementing foster care for young adults. In this section, we summarize some of the research that has been done around child welfare workers' perceptions of transition-age foster youth and services available to these young people after they turn 18.

Caseworkers' Perceptions of Relationships and Engagement with Transition-Age Youth

Research on child welfare workers' perceptions of transition-age foster youth is sparse. Studies that include workers' perspectives often include the perspectives of other professionals, such as caseworker supervisors, nonprofit agency staff, and judges. The importance of relationships is a common theme in these studies, including the importance of adult connections, challenges caseworkers face engaging youth, and youths' continued and sometimes problematic connections with their birth families.

Professionals underscore that relationships between young people in foster care and the adults in their lives are a vital component of youths' positive development. In one study, caseworkers reported that youth desired to have relationships with adults who could be an important source of guidance and support (Geenen & Powers, 2007). However, caseworkers reported that these crucial youth-adult relationships are often compromised as the young people move through the foster care system. In some cases, youth become distant from or lose contact with their biological family, foster families, teachers, and community members (Geenen & Powers, 2007). Other caseworkers have expressed concern that the amount of time youth have before they age out of care may be insufficient to build trust and form meaningful relationships that last into adulthood (Greeson, Thompson, Ali, & Wenger, 2015).

Caseworkers sometimes encounter difficulties forming relationships with the transition-age youth on their caseload. In addition to time constraints, one source of difficulty is the caseworker's role as a paid professional, which leaves some youth questioning whether caseworkers are genuinely concerned about youths' well-being or are just doing their job (Greenson et al., 2015). Caseworkers also report that attempts to provide youth with guidance are sometimes perceived as being authoritative direction instead of guidance. Additionally, a lack of follow through or accountability is seen by some caseworkers as a barrier to youth engagement (Michalopoulos, Ahn, Shaw, & O'Connor, 2012).

Caseworkers view relationships with birth parents as an important, albeit complicated, issue for many youth transitioning to adulthood. Youth often contemplate returning, attempt to return, or actually do return to the homes of their birth parents after leaving foster care (Berzin & Taylor, 2009; Freundlich & Avery, 2005; Geenen & Powers, 2007). Two studies of child welfare professionals reported that workers felt the relationships youth had with their birth parents could be utilized to help support youth during the transition into adulthood. However, some agencies fail to use birth parents as a transition resource and some child welfare professionals are wary that incorporating family into the transition process could potentially have negative impacts on youth who are doing well (Freundlich & Avery, 2005; Geenen & Powers, 2007).

Caseworkers' Perceptions of Youths' Challenges, Needs, and Preparedness during the Transition to Adulthood

In some studies, caseworkers talked about risk factors and challenges experienced by some foster youth. Early parenthood, engaging in delinquent or oppositional behavior, substance use, and inadequate understanding of their own health and mental health needs were identified by caseworkers as obstacles that could interfere with youths' transition to adulthood (Leathers & Testa, 2006; Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick, & Painter, 2007). Larger systemic issues, such as inadequate housing, limited transportation, and neighborhood violence, were also identified by workers as challenges that could negatively impact foster youth (Courtney et al., 2014b; Napolitano & Courtney, 2014).

Not surprisingly given these and other challenges, some caseworkers feel that youth are often ill prepared to leave the foster care system and make the transition to adulthood. Berzin and Taylor (2009) reported that independent living caseworkers perceived youth as unprepared to live independently, since they do not have adequate supports. Similarly, in a survey of California child welfare workers serving youth who had turned 18, caseworkers generally believed that the young people in their care were not ready to live on their own (Courtney, Charles, Okpych, & Halsted, 2014). For example, while youth approaching age 18 generally reported feeling prepared to continue pursuing their education goals, most workers had doubts about youths' readiness to finish high school and ability to succeed in college (Okpych, Courtney,

& Charles, 2015). Moreover, some caseworkers and child welfare professionals are particularly concerned about youth with special needs, who may fare worse due to limited access to training and services (Geenen & Powers, 2007).

Perceptions of Extended Care and Service Availability

A majority of California child welfare workers acknowledge that there is a great need for services for youth in areas such as employment, money management, and housing (Courtney et al., 2014b). However, caseworkers express ambivalence about the role of extended foster care. On the one hand, about 90 percent of caseworkers in California working with transition-age foster youth agreed that foster youth have a need for services beyond age 18 (Courtney et al., 2014b). On the other hand, workers were also concerned about extended care increasing youths' dependence on the child welfare system. About four in five caseworkers expressed "a lot" or "some" concern that extended care would make youth more dependent on the system. In a similar vein, child welfare workers who were interviewed as part of a qualitative study also worried that depending on the care system would be detrimental to living independently later on (Geenen & Powers, 2007).

California caseworkers serving transition-age youth report variation in availability across service areas. For example, at least half of the workers said that there were "few" or "no" trainings or services in their county in the areas of alcohol and substance misuse and sexual and reproductive health (Courtney et al., 2014b). Likewise, half of workers reported that their county had "few" or "no" housing options for youth over 18 years old. The outlook was more favorable for areas such as education and employment. Only one-third of workers indicated that there were "few" or "no" services to help with completing secondary education, getting into and through college, and finding and keeping a job. Beyond availability, some child welfare workers have raised concern that trainings and services may be insufficient if youth do not establish lasting social connections (Freundlich & Avery, 2005).

Collaboration with other Systems

A common responsibility of child welfare workers is to interact with professionals from other systems and sectors who serve the foster youth on their caseloads. Previous studies found that workers stress the importance of cross-system coordination but acknowledge lack of communication and partnership between providers, compromising the effectiveness of service delivery (Geenen & Powers, 2007; Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick, & Painter, 2007). In a survey of California caseworkers, most respondents took a neutral stance when characterizing their collaboration with other systems, reporting that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the collaboration (Courtney et al., 2014b). However, a third or more of caseworkers expressed satisfaction with collaboration with professionals in the health, mental health, secondary education, employment, and housing service areas.

Study Design and Methods

This section provides an overview of the procedures used in the creation, administration, and analysis of the *CalYOUTH Survey of Young Adults' Child Welfare Workers*.

Survey Design

This survey was intended to solicit the views and attitudes of caseworkers nearly four years after the implementation of AB 12, the California Fostering Connections to Success Act (California Fostering Connections). The law went into effect on January 1, 2012. Two years ago, we administered a similar survey to California child welfare workers to capture their early views of California Fostering Connections and issues on the ground (Courtney et al., 2014b). In developing the items for this earlier survey, we incorporated recommendations from a broad range of stakeholders, such as state and county child welfare administrators and supervisors, youth in foster care, and our funding partners. This feedback was important to ensure that our questions were relevant and reflected current issues in the implementation of California Fostering Connections. We retained many of the questions in the current survey, both because their relevance still holds and because doing so allows us to compare caseworkers' perceptions of service contexts at the county level in 2013 and 2015.

One of the major differences between our 2013 caseworker survey and the present one is our strategy for selecting the sample. In the earlier survey, we solicited caseworkers across the state who recently had a young person on their caseload who had turned 18 years old. These caseworkers were selected from the population of caseworkers across the state. In contrast, in the present survey, our selection of caseworkers was tied to our longitudinal study of over 700 transition-age foster youth in California (Courtney, Charles, Okpych, Napolitano, & Halsted, 2014), who were first interviewed in 2013 when they were 17 years old, during the *Baseline Youth Survey*. In the *CalYOUTH Survey of Young Adults' Child Welfare Workers*, our aim was to survey caseworkers serving young people participating in the youth study that were still in foster care at age 19 or 20. In sum, the first caseworker survey includes a representative sample of California child welfare workers who had a youth on their caseload that had recently turned 18. The present caseworker survey includes child welfare workers serving a 19/20 year old from a representative sample of youth who were in California foster care at age 17.

Approximately half of the questions in the survey are about the caseworker and aspects of the service context for nonminor dependents in their county (part A). The other half of the questions ask specifically about the youth on their caseload who is enrolled in the CalYOUTH Study (part B). The *CalYOUTH Survey of Young Adults' Child Welfare Workers* and second wave of youth interviews occurred around the same time in 2015. Having input from both nonminor dependents and their caseworkers will (in future reports) allow us to compare youths' and caseworkers' perspectives on similar topics, such as how

prepared the youth is to be on their own. The current report summarizes the findings from the second caseworker survey.

The final version of the survey included 121 items. As noted above, the survey was comprised of two parts. Part A asked caseworkers about themselves (e.g., education and time working in child welfare), as well as about the needs of nonminor dependents in their county, the services available to these youth, their satisfaction with collaboration with other systems, and other topics. Part B asked questions about a specific youth on the caseworker's caseload who is participating in our longitudinal youth study. Workers supervising multiple qualifying youth completed the second part of the survey once for each youth. Part A was designed to take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete and part B was intended to take approximately 5 to 10 minutes. An electronic version of the survey was programmed into Qualtrics Research Suite survey software, a platform used for online administration of surveys.

Sample Selection

As stated earlier, our sample included caseworkers serving youth who participated in the *Baseline Youth Survey*, which involved a representative sample of 16.75 to 17.75 year olds who were in California foster care in 2013 and who had been in care for at least 6 months. A total of 727 youth participated in the baseline interview in the summer and fall of 2013 (see Courtney et al., 2014a for more information). Of these 727 respondents, we were able to access data on 713 youth from the California Department of Social Service's CWS/CMS data system. This allowed us to identify which of these young people were in foster care as of June 1, 2015.¹ Of the 713 youth, 516 were in care (72.4%). These 516 youth were supervised by a total of 306 child welfare workers in 47 counties across the state. We used the contact information available in the CWS/CMS system invite caseworkers to participate in the survey.

Survey Administration

Prior to the launch of the survey, and with the assistance of the California Child Welfare Directors Association, the CalYOUTH team established contact with an administrator from each participating county who would serve as a point of contact throughout the survey administration. These individuals played an important role in reinforcing the legitimacy of the survey, encouraging their staff to participate, verifying the employment status of workers, and troubleshooting problems as they arose. For example, of the 306 caseworkers in our sample, 17 were on leave, had been reassigned, or were no longer working at the agency at the time the survey was administered. In these instances the county contacts provided the

¹Thirteen baseline participants did not grant us permission to access their administrative data, including CWS/CMS data on their foster care status. These data were needed to determine youths' in-care status in June 2015 and to contact caseworkers of youth who were still in care about participating in the worker survey. In addition to these 13 youth, one youth had passed away by June 2015.

names and contact information for the replacement workers, who were then invited to complete the survey.

After notifying our county contacts about the survey, a separate e-mail was sent to caseworkers one week before the survey launch date. The e-mail provided them with advance notification about the survey. Survey administration opened on July 30, 2015 and closed on October 2, 2015. On the day of the survey launch, caseworkers received an e-mail with a description of the study, unique links that allowed them to access the online survey administered through Qualtrics, and contact information for the CalYOUTH project director if they had questions or encountered complications. Each worker received one unique link to part A and one unique link to part B for each eligible youth on their caseload. Thus, a worker with three eligible youth would be asked to complete one part A survey and three part B surveys. The name of the specific youth was programmed to appear in part B questions once respondents opened the survey in their Internet browser and respondents were asked to verify whether the youth was still on their caseload.² The unique links ensured that caseworkers could only complete a given survey once. During the nine-week period in which the survey was active, CalYOUTH staff sent weekly reminder e-mails to caseworkers who had either not started or partially completed the survey. Weekly e-mails were also sent to county contacts. The e-mails included the response rate for their county and the other counties in the study. About midway through the survey, county contacts were also provided with the names of caseworkers who had not yet completed the survey. This allowed the county contacts to encourage workers to complete the survey, and also enabled them to identify personnel changes and case transfers.

As an incentive to complete the survey, a group incentive was offered to counties that attained a response rate of 85 percent or higher for part B. If this benchmark was met, a Visa gift card in the amount of ten dollars for each completed part A and five dollars for each completed part B was sent to the county point of contact.³ The incentives could be used by the child welfare office in any way it deemed appropriate, such as an office sunshine fund or a contribution to a youth-serving charity or service provider.

Response Rate

A total of 295 of 306 caseworkers completed part A, yielding a response rate of 96.4 percent. For part B, workers completed surveys for 493 of the 516 youth on their caseloads who were in the sample, yielding

² As reported below in Table 3, about 11 percent of the youth were no longer on their caseload at the time the caseworker completed the online survey. These workers were asked to think back to the time the youth was still on their caseload when answering the survey questions.

³ Incentives were calculated separately for part A and part B because some caseworkers had to complete part B sections for multiple youth.

a response rate of 95.5 percent. Forty-two of the 47 counties met the response rate goal of completing 85 percent or more of part B surveys.

Survey Weights

Separate sample weights were created for part A and part B to adjust for effects of the sampling design and response rates, and to generalize findings to California populations of caseworkers and foster youth, respectively. Since the sampling of the caseworkers was based on the sampling of young people into the baseline youth survey, the weights take into account features of both the youth survey and the caseworker survey.

Part A of the caseworker survey asks questions about the workers and aspects of the county in which they work. The survey weights for part A generalize responses of the caseworkers to the California population of caseworkers serving non-minor dependents (about ages 19 or 20) meeting the *Baseline Youth Survey* criteria. We estimated that approximately 1,194 caseworkers were supervising the 1,834 youth who would still be in care in June 2015.⁴ Thus, findings from part A represent the views of about 1,200 caseworkers across the state who supervised nonminor dependents aged 19 to 20.

Part B asks questions about youth from a representative sample of youth who were in foster care in 2013 when they were 17 years old (i.e., participants in the *Baseline Youth Survey*) and who were in care in 2015 when they were 19 or 20 years old. The sample weights for part B expand the responses of the caseworkers about these nonminor dependents to the California population of caseworkers serving nonminor dependents (about age 19 or 20) meeting the study criteria of the *Baseline Youth Survey*. More specifically, the findings in part B represent the population of foster care youth who were roughly 17 years old in 2013, who had been in foster care for at least 6 months, and who were in care in June 2015 (see Courtney et al., 2014a for a more detailed description of the sample criteria). Our baseline youth sample represented the population of 2,583 foster care youth who met our study criteria, and we estimate that approximately 1,834 of these youth would still be in care as of June 2015.⁵ Thus, findings from part

⁴ Our strategy was to use the proportion of in-care youth in our sample to estimate the number of in-care youth in the CA population and then use the ratio of caseworkers to in-care youth in our sample to estimate the number of caseworkers in the population. Similar to the weights in Part B, we executed these calculations by county to come up with more precise estimates. For example, in one county 20 of 28 baseline participants were still in care in June 2015 (.714). These 28 youth represented 119 youth in the population in that county, and we would expect 85 of them to still be in care on June 2015 (119×0.714). In this county, there were 14 caseworkers serving the 20 youth in the sample who were still in care (0.70), and we would expect the 85 youth in the population who were still in care to be supervised by 59.5 caseworkers (85×0.70). Fourteen caseworkers in this county were selected into and completed a survey; each of these workers would represent roughly 4.25 workers in the population ($59.5/14$). Nonresponse rates were also addressed in our final Part A sampling weight for each county.

⁵ This statewide estimate was generated by calculating the proportion of youth in each county in our sample that was still in care on June 1, 2015, and then applying an expansion weight that took into account the stratified sampling design and nonresponse rates of each county. In addition to the expansion weight, our sampling weight also addressed nonresponse in the caseworker survey. Finally, while most caseworkers (over 60%) completed surveys for just one youth, some caseworkers completed surveys

B represent caseworkers' views of about 1,800 youth aged 19 or 20 who were in California foster care in 2015.

Throughout this report, the estimates (means and percentages) represent averages weighted to the population of California youth and caseworkers described above. We also provide unweighted sample sizes (denoted "unweighted *Ns*").

Some caseworkers either did not finish the entire survey or provided a "don't know" response to some questions, which were both counted as missing data. Of the 72 items analyzed in part A, 46 items were missing responses from one or more of the 295 caseworkers. However, most questions were missing responses from a small proportion of caseworkers. For example, 11 items were missing data from more than 5 percent of workers, and two items in part A were missing data from more than 10 percent of the respondents (availability of health education trainings/services and CASA worker attitudes about extended foster care). Part B, which included questions about 492 youth, also had missing data. Of the 54 items that were analyzed, most items had at least one caseworker who reported a "don't know" response or did not answer the question ($n = 51$). A total of 23 items were missing responses from more than 5 percent of respondents, and 10 items were missing responses from more than 10 percent of respondents. The items missing data from more than 10 percent of the caseworker respondents were around whether the youth ever received special education services, alcohol/substance use (use and degree of interference with daily functioning, ever been diagnosed with disorder, and need for services), pregnancy and parenting (ever pregnant/got someone else pregnant, preparedness to parent a child, need for services to help parent a child), and assessment about some of motivations of the youth remained in care (too young to be on their own, had no other options). Tables including a survey item missing more than 10% of possible responses have a footnote indicating the data is missing.

Comparisons by County Groups and Youth Demographic Characteristics

In addition to providing overall estimates, we also assessed whether significant differences exist between county groups. Four county groups were created based on population size and urbanicity: rural/largely rural (referred to as "rural" in this report), urban, large urban, and Los Angeles County. The rural group includes counties in which all of the municipalities within the county had fewer than 50,000 individuals. Sixteen counties, a total of 36 caseworkers, fell into the rural county group. The urban group includes counties that had at least one municipality with a population of 50,000 to 250,000 individuals. Eighteen counties, a total of 80 caseworkers, fell into the urban group. The large urban group includes counties that

for two or more youth. Although the impact of this clustering is likely slight, Stata's *svy* option addresses possible clustering effects by using a Taylor-series linearization of the variance covariance estimation (this is the equivalent of robust standard errors in a survey context).

had at least one municipality with a population of more than 250,000 individuals. Eleven counties, a total of 122 caseworkers, fell into the large urban group. Table 1 summarizes the unweighted number and weighted proportions of respondents in each county group. The left column presents the number of caseworkers who took the survey, and the right column presents the number of nonminor dependents who the caseworkers served. Finally, 57 caseworkers from Los Angeles County completed the survey. The sample weights described above were used for the analysis of between-group differences. *Only statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) between county groups are reported.* For questions that pertain to specific youth on workers' caseloads (part B), we also evaluated whether differences existed based on youths' gender and race/ethnicity.⁶ Sample weights were applied during these analyses, and only statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) are reported.

Table 1. Completed Surveys, by County Group

County Group	Number of Caseworkers (Part A)		Number of Youth (Part B)	
	n	%	n	%
Rural/Largely Rural	36	4.7	53	4.3
Urban	80	19.6	146	20.6
Large Urban	122	38.6	224	45.1
Los Angeles	57	37.1	69	30.1

Note: Unweighted frequencies and weighted percentages

The statistical test used to compare differences by county groups and youths' race/ethnicity (Chi-square) is an overall test of group differences. It does not test whether specific groups are significantly different from one another (e.g., rural counties vs. large urban counties).⁷ However, it would be impractical and unwise to run statistical tests for all possible comparisons of specific groups.⁸ Instead, when results from a Chi-square test indicate that there is a significant difference between the groups, we describe what we see as notable differences between specific groups that are likely contributing to the significant results. Although these descriptions of differences between specific groups are not formally tested, they are intended to provide some insight into where the differences may exist.

⁶ For race and ethnicity, we created a single variable that included the following categories: White, black/African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native, multiracial, and Hispanic. This information was taken from responses in our baseline youth survey. If youth indicated that they were Hispanic, then they were marked Hispanic on the single race/ethnicity variable.

⁷ Note that this is not an issue for group differences by youth's gender, since there are only two categories.

⁸ Running the hundreds of additional statistical tests that exhaust all of the possible group comparisons for each outcome would increase the likelihood of making Type I errors (i.e., reporting differences that were just due to sampling error). Conversely, some group comparisons may not have adequate statistical power, which would result in a Type II error (i.e., failing to identify true group differences).

Study Limitations

The study's sampling strategy, high response rate, and weighting of survey responses means that the descriptive statistics reported below are representative of what we would have found had we obtained responses from all eligible caseworkers in California. Nevertheless, several study limitations should be kept in mind when interpreting the findings of the *CalYOUTH Survey of Young Adults' Child Welfare Workers*.

- While fewer than 5 percent of eligible caseworkers did not respond to the two parts of the survey, we do not know the extent to which their responses to survey items would differ from those of caseworkers who did respond.
- The sample size does not provide adequate statistical power to reliably identify small between-group differences in caseworker responses. This is relevant to the between-group comparisons we make below concerning youths' gender, race/ethnicity, and county population size. While we do identify some differences in responses between these groups of counties, had our sample size been larger we might have identified additional differences.
- While the county groups we describe provide some sense of how counties with varying population sizes and densities differ in the characteristics of their caseworkers, the youth they provide care for, and their service context, the individual counties within any given grouping may differ significantly from each other in one or more of these areas.
- While child welfare workers supervising the care of young people in extended foster care are central players in the implementation of extended care, their perspective is not the only one that should inform implementation efforts. The views of other observers—such as the youth—might differ significantly from those reported here. The CalYOUTH surveys of youth, reported separately, provide their perspectives on nearly all of the topics reported here.
- It is important to keep in mind that this study only captures the perspectives of child welfare workers on the well-being of youth who remain in care at age 19 and the service context for such youth. The study provides no information about how youth who left care since our baseline survey and have remained out of care are faring.
- Implementation of extended foster care in California remains a work in progress; this report represents a snapshot of implementation efforts less than four years into a process that is still ongoing.

Results

Caseworker Characteristics

Table 2 presents demographic characteristics of the child welfare caseworkers who participated in this study. The caseworkers were diverse in age, with about half of the workers falling between 36 and 50 years old. Most of the caseworkers identified as white or African American, while the other one-third of caseworkers identified as another race. Slightly less than one-third of caseworkers characterized themselves as having a Hispanic/Latino/Spanish ethnic background. Over three-fourths of the caseworkers were female. In terms of education, about two-thirds of workers held a master's degree or higher. The most common credential was a master's degree in social work, which was held by just under half of caseworkers.

Caseworkers reported working in various capacities within the foster care system. Not surprisingly, almost 90 percent of caseworkers worked in specialized services for transition-age foster youth. About half were involved with arranging and maintaining permanent placements and one-third provided reunification services for children who were removed from their families. In addition to serving various work roles, the workers also reported working with children and youth of multiple age groups. Nearly all workers served nonminor dependents and most workers served adolescents between 13 and 17 years old. Nontrivial proportions of caseworkers who served these older youth also worked with younger children. Over 40 percent worked with youth aged between 6 and 12 and about one-third also had youth on their caseload in the birth to 5 years old age range. The caseworkers varied in how long they had been working in child welfare services, but about four in five had worked in child welfare for six or more years. Most had been with their current agency for six to ten years and over one-fifth had been with their current agency for 16 or more years.

Further analyses indicated that some caseworker characteristics varied by county group. Rural counties had a greater proportion of workers in the oldest age range. More than half of caseworkers in rural counties were 51 years old or older age (51.0%) but much smaller proportions were 51 or older in urban counties (26.2%), large urban counties (14.9%), and Los Angeles County (19.3%). There were also differences between counties by race, with larger proportions of white workers in rural and urban counties (67.6% and 60.0%, respectively) than in large urban counties and Los Angeles County (39.7% and 40.4%, respectively). Correspondingly, rural counties had a smaller proportion of African American workers (6.0%) than did urban counties (17.6%), large urban counties (20.8%) and Los Angeles County (28.1%). There were also differences by level of education. One of the largest differences was that only about half of the caseworkers in rural counties held a master's degree or higher as their highest level of education (49.3%), which was lower than the proportion of caseworkers in urban counties (65.7%), large urban counties (68.9%), and Los Angeles (64.9%) who held a master's degree or higher. Finally, there were also county differences in terms of area of work and ages of youth on caseload. Smaller proportions of workers in the large urban counties worked with children below the age of 12. For example, just under 20 percent of caseworkers in large urban counties served a child between the ages of 0 and 5 (19.7%), which was less than half the proportion of workers who served young children in the other three county groups (48.8% in rural, 42.3% in urban, and 45.6% in Los Angeles County). Additionally, workers in large urban counties (70.6%) and Los Angeles County (61.4%) were less likely to serve adolescents aged 13 to 17 than were workers in rural counties (96.2%) and urban counties (89.8%). In terms of work area, fewer caseworkers in large urban counties worked in family maintenance, family reunification, and permanency than workers in other county groups.

Table 2. Caseworker Characteristics (N = 295)

Age	#	%
22–35	90	30.3
36–50	140	49.3
51–61+	65	20.4
Race		
White	150	45.2
African American	52	22.2
American Indian/Alaskan Native	4	1.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	34	13.2
Other	43	15.3
Multiracial	12	3.0
Hispanic/Latino/Spanish	86	29.4
Gender		
Female	230	77.5
Education		
Less than Bachelor's	9	2.2
BSW	25	9.1
MSW	138	47.0
Bachelor's other	67	22.8
Master's other	52	17.2
Doctorate (J.D., Ph.D., Psy.D.)	4	1.6
Ages on caseload		
0–5	107	35.1
6–12	135	42.4
13–17	229	72.2
18+	289	98.7
Area of work		
Emergency response	23	7.9
Family maintenance	86	27.6
Family reunification	105	34.4
Permanent placement	162	51.3
Specialized services	265	88.9
Years in child welfare		
1–5	74	21.7
6–10	90	32.1
11–15	59	20.1
16–21+	72	26.1
Years in current agency		
1–5	92	26.8
6–10	82	30.4
11–15	58	20.0
16–21+	63	22.8

Note: Unweighted frequencies and weighted percentages.

Youths' Demographic Characteristics

Caseworkers reported the demographic characteristics of the youth on their caseloads, which appear in Table 3. More than four-fifths of the youth had not yet turned 20 at the time their caseworker took the survey, and rest of the youth were within a few weeks of their 20th birthday (max age is 20.3 years old).⁹ Over half of the youth were identified as multiracial, while another one-fourth were identified as white. About half of the youth were identified as having Hispanic/Latino/Spanish ethnic backgrounds. Just over three-fifths of the youth were female.

Some differences emerged in youth demographic characteristics between county groups. For example, in rural counties, about half of the youth were white (50.7%) and no youth were African American; in urban counties, about one-third were white (34.7%) and one-tenth were African American (11.9%); in large urban counties, one-quarter were white (27.4%) and one-fifth were African American (21.0%); and in Los Angeles County there were fewer white youth (13.6%) than African American youth (19.7%). Los Angeles County caseworkers reported the highest proportion of multiracial youth (63.6%), compared to

⁹ We were able to calculate the exact age of the youth at the time the caseworker took the survey for the 429 youth who were still being served by their caseworker at the time of the survey. The remaining 63 caseworkers reported that the youth was no longer on their caseload at the time they completed the survey (and were asked to respond to the questions based on when the youth was last on their caseload). Since we did not know the specific date the worker last worked with the youth, we were unable to calculate the exact age of these youth at the time the worker last worked with them. However, of these 63 youth, 41 were under the age of 20 at the time the caseworker took the survey, and thus were 19 when the caseworker last worked with them. The other 22 youth were 20 years old at the time their caseworker took the survey, but it is not possible to know whether they were 19 or 20 when their caseworker last worked with them. Thus, the age distribution at the top of Table 2 is based on 470 youth who we either had an exact age for or who we know were below age 20 at the time of the interview. As a sensitivity analysis, we calculated the weighted proportions if all of these 22 youth were 19 years old at the time their caseworker last served them (17.0% would be 19, and 83.0% would be 20) and if all of these 22 youth were 20 years old at the time their caseworker last served them (79.4% would be 19, and 20.7% would be 20).

the other counties where the percentages of multiracial youth fell between 42 percent (rural) and 50 percent (urban). In terms of ethnicity, rural counties had the smallest proportion of Hispanic/Latino/Spanish youth (31.8%), followed by urban counties (44.0%), large urban counties (46.4%) and Los Angeles (62.7%).

Table 3. Youths' Demographic Characteristics

	#	%
Age (at time when caseworker took the survey) (<i>n</i> = 470) ^a		
19 years old	384	82.4
20 years old	86	17.6
Race (<i>n</i> = 491)		
White	144	25.8
African American	70	17.8
Amer Indian/Alaskan	16	2.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	12	2.0
Multiracial	230	51.5
Hispanic/Latino/Spanish (<i>n</i> = 483)	224	50.1
Female (<i>n</i> = 492)	302	61.8

Note: Unweighted frequencies and weighted percentages

^a See footnote 9 for an explanation of the sample size and age calculation.

Caseworkers' Contact with the Youth

Information on the caseworkers' contact with the youth on their caseload is reported in Table 4. The majority of the youth were on the worker's caseload at the time they completed this survey. Almost one-half of the youth had been on their worker's caseload for less than one year. There was variation in the number of times caseworkers had met with their youth in the past six months; these responses only pertain to youth who have been on a caseworker's caseload for five or more months.¹⁰ Of these workers, half reported meeting with the youth approximately one time per month. Some caseworkers reported visiting with the youth more often than this. About one-fourth met with youth more than one time per month and almost one-fifth reported visiting with youth approximately twice per month.

County differences emerged in the length of time youth had been on caseworkers' caseloads. Workers in Los Angeles County reported the highest proportion of youth that had been on their caseload for less than one year (56.5%) compared to rural (37.1%), urban (37.9%), and large urban (40.6%) counties. Caseworkers in rural (38.8%) and urban (36.0%) counties reported more youth that had been on their caseload for over two years than did caseworkers in large urban counties (29.7%) and Los Angeles County (18.8%).

¹⁰ The response category for months on caseload was 5 to 8 months. Therefore, these findings likely include a small proportion of youth who were on the caseworkers' caseload for less than 6 months.

Table 4. Caseworkers' Contact with Young Person

	#	%
Youth is still currently on caseload (Yes) (<i>n</i> = 492)	429	88.6
Months that youth has been on caseload (<i>n</i> = 492)		
1 year or less	205	44.7
> 1 year to 2 years	130	27.3
> 2 years	157	28.1
Number of times caseworker met in person with youth in the past six months (<i>n</i> = 420)		
0 to 4 times (or < 1x/month)	39	7.9
5 to 7 times (or approximately 1x/month)	218	50.0
8 to 10 times (or > 1x/month)	89	23.6
11+ times (or approximately 2x/month+)	74	18.5

Note: Unweighted frequencies and weighted percentages

Youths' Education and Employment

Education Characteristics of Youth

Table 5 presents educational characteristics of the youth. Almost nine-tenths (84.7%) of the study youth were described by their caseworkers as being in school or employed at least part time. According to the caseworkers, about a third of youth were ever in special education. Nearly four-fifths had completed a high school credential or GED, with the vast majority of these having earned a high school diploma. Few of the young people had completed a college degree or earned a vocational certificate or license. More than half of the youth were enrolled in school, with the majority of enrollees attending full-time. Among the young people who were enrolled, roughly one-third were pursuing a secondary credential, vocational certificate, or had some other arrangement, while the other two-thirds were enrolled in college. Youth in college were more likely to be attending a two-year than a four-year institution.

County group differences and gender differences emerged in some of the youth educational characteristics. Caseworkers in Los Angeles County reported lower rates of special education enrollment for their youth (18.6%) than did caseworkers in rural (43.4%), urban (37.1%), and large urban (43.7%) county groups. Males were more likely than females to have been enrolled in special education (41.7% vs. 30.6%). Gender differences also emerged in current enrollment status. About half of males were not in school compared to about a third of females (49.3% vs. 36.8%), and while similar proportions of males and females were enrolled part-time (22.4% vs. 22.3%) males were less likely to be enrolled full-time than females (28.3% vs. 41.0%).

Table 5. Youths' Educational Characteristics

	#	%
Special education ¹¹	163	35.0
High school credential		
None	102	21.9
GED/equivalency certificate	21	3.6
Diploma	356	74.6
College degree (HS credential only, <i>n</i> = 377)		
None	370	98.5
Associate's or 2-year college degree	5	1.4
Bachelor's or 4-year college degree	1	0.2
License/certificate from vocational training	27	5.8
Current school enrollment		
Not in school	208	41.6
Enrolled part time	105	22.3
Enrolled full time	162	36.1
Enrollment type (enrolled only, <i>n</i> = 267)		
GED/ABE/Charter/Community school	22	8.7
High school	24	8.6
Vocational training	24	9.9
2-year college	159	59.6
4-year college	28	9.2
Other arrangement	10	3.9

Note: Unweighted frequencies and weighted percentages.

As displayed in Table 6, caseworkers reported that just under half of the youth were “prepared” or “very prepared” to pursue their educational goals. Caseworkers reported that most of the youth that had not yet completed a high school credential had a high need for receiving services to finish high school or an alternative credential. Among students who earned a high school credential or equivalent, over half were perceived as having a high need for receiving services to finish college (4 or 5 on a scale with 1 being “no need” and 5 being “high need”). At the county group level, just under half of youth in urban counties (48.1%), large urban counties (47.1%), and Los Angeles County (49.3%) were “prepared” or “very prepared” to continue their education, which was higher than the proportion of youth in rural counties (29.7%). Males (40.3%) were significantly less likely than females (54.5%) to be perceived as being “prepared” or “very prepared” to continue their education. Indeed, nearly one in five males were rated as

¹¹ Results for involvement with special education should be interpreted with caution (12.2% missing data).

being “not prepared” (18.8%) by their caseworker compared to under one in ten females (8.7%). Among youth with a high school credential, a larger proportion of males were reported as having high needs for services to complete college (66.4% for males vs. 53.3% for females).

Table 6. Youths’ Educational Preparedness and Need for Services

	#	%
Level of preparedness to continue education goals (<i>n</i> = 477) ^a		
Not prepared	60	12.4
Somewhat prepared	179	38.3
Prepared	119	28.8
Very prepared	88	20.5
Does not plan on completing additional education	31	—
Services needed (scale from 1, no need to 5, high need)		
To complete HS/GED/certificate (4 or 5) ^b	70	70.0
To complete postsecondary education (4 or 5) ^a	266	58.2

Note: Unweighted frequencies and weighted percentages.

^a Percentages exclude youth who did not plan on continuing their education (*n* = 31).

^b Excludes youth who already completed a high school credential (*n* = 377).

Youths’ Experiences in the Labor Market

The employment statuses of the youth are presented in Table 7. According to the caseworkers, a little more than one-fifth of youth were unemployed but not looking for work and about one-quarter of youth were unemployed and looking for work. The most common employment status for youth was working part time, with slightly more than one-third of youth working less than 35 hours per week. Less than one-sixth of the youth were working full time.

Race and ethnicity were associated with reported employment status. One noticeable difference was around the proportion of youth who were unemployed (whether looking or not looking for work). Multiracial (59.8%) and African American (56.9%) youth had the highest rate of unemployment, followed by Hispanic (44.9%) and white youth (43.5%), with the unemployment rate for the other groups below 30%. Slightly over one-fifth of Hispanic and white youth were unemployed and not looking for work; a similar proportion of each group was unemployed but looking for work. In contrast, over one-third of multiracial youth were unemployed and not looking and about one-fourth were unemployed and looking for work. A much smaller percentage of African American youth were unemployed and not looking for work (13.1%) than unemployed and looking (43.8%). There were also differences in working status among employed youth. Asian/Pacific Islander youth were more likely to be employed full time than part time, which was the reverse of all of the other racial groups. African Americans were the group most likely to be working part time as opposed to full time; for every one African American who was working full time, about 4.5 were working part time.

Table 7. Youths' Employment Status

	#	%
Employment ($n = 476$)		
Unemployed/not looking	107	22.6
Unemployed/looking	113	25.9
Part time	161	34.1
Full time	73	13.4
Other	22	4.0

Note: Unweighted frequencies and weighted percentages.

Youths' Living Arrangements

As shown in Table 8, respondents reported that youth lived in a variety of different settings. Nearly half of the youth (47.1%) reported living in Supervised Independent Living Placements (SILP). Over one in five youth resided in living arrangements supervised by Transitional Housing Placement-Plus (THP-Plus) or Transitional Housing Placement-Plus Foster Care (THP+FC) programs, which are licensed to provide transitional housing and a wide variety of supportive services. About one-fifth of youth lived in either a nonrelative foster home (8.4%) or the home of a relative (10.9%). The remaining youth lived in a variety of other arrangements.

To obtain a more nuanced picture of county group differences in youths' living arrangements, we examined counties separately if at least 10 workers had completed a survey for youth in their county. This left ten county groups: rural counties, urban counties, large urban counties, Los Angeles, Alameda, Orange, Riverside, San Diego, San Francisco, and Santa Clara. Significant differences in housing placements were found between these ten county groups. Although small sample sizes in some counties prohibit us from formally testing whether differences are statistically significant, our data suggest that there appears to be variation between counties and county groups in terms of where youth are living. One place where noticeable differences emerged is the proportion of youth living in SILPs. In Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, and Santa Clara counties more than half of the youth lived in SILPs (ranging from 57.9% of youth in Orange to 62.0% in Los Angeles), which is higher than the proportion of youths in SILPs in the other large counties (14.3% in Alameda, 25.9% in San Francisco, and 38.9% in Riverside) and the other county groups (35.3% in rural counties, 38.1% in urban counties, and 41.9% in the remaining large urban counties). There were also noticeable differences between counties in the use of THP-Plus and THP+FC placements. Of the large urban counties that were separated, Alameda (47.6%) and Santa Clara (35.3%) had the largest proportions of youth in transitional housing; Orange, San Diego,

and San Francisco had proportions between 20 and 30 percent, and Los Angeles and Riverside had fewer than 20 percent of youth in transitional housing placements. The rural counties had a larger proportion of youth in transitional housing (35.2%) than the urban (25.1%) and remaining large urban (23.2%) county groups. Noticeable differences were also apparent for youth placed in nonrelative foster homes, with roughly one-fifth of youth in this placement in Riverside (22.2%) and San Francisco (18.5%), less than one-tenth in Los Angeles (7.6%), and no youth in these placements in Alameda, Orange, San Diego, and Santa Clara. In terms of the county groups, around one-tenth of youth were living with nonrelative foster families (9.2% in rural counties, 11.0% in urban counties, and 9.2% in large urban counties).

Living arrangements also differed by gender. Males were more likely than females to live in a nonrelative foster home (14.5% vs. 4.7%). A higher percentage of females (54.3%) than males (35.4%) was living in a SILP.

Table 8. Youths' Current Living Arrangement

	#	%
Living arrangement (<i>n</i> = 478)		
Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP)	212	47.1
THP-Plus/THP+FC	120	22.2
Nonrelative foster home	39	8.4
Home of a relative	48	10.9
Home of nonrelated extended family member	19	3.7
Group home or residential treatment center	6	1.4
Couch surfing	14	2.2
Jail or prison	2	0.5
Hospital	1	0.2
Shelter or other temporary housing program	2	0.3
Other	15	3.2

Note: Unweighted frequencies and weighted percentages.

Youths' Health, Mental Health, and Parental Status

Youth Health, Mental Health, and Safety Concerns

Caseworkers were asked a variety of questions about the health and mental health characteristics of the youth they served, which are reported in Table 9. Caseworkers indicated that about half of the youth had “very good” or “excellent” physical health. Less than one percent of youth were reported to have difficulty using their hands, arms, legs, or feet. About one-quarter of youth were reported to have a diagnosed mental health disorder, with an additional one-tenth reported to have a possible undiagnosed disorder.¹² The most common condition was a depressive disorder, with about one-tenth of all youth having that diagnosis. The second and third most common mental health diagnoses were PTSD and anxiety disorders other than PTSD, with each affecting less than 10 percent of all youth. Bipolar disorder was reported to impact about 3 percent of youth. Caseworkers reported that about 4 percent of youth were diagnosed with some other mental health disorders not covered by these response categories. Caseworkers reported that the majority of youth (65.5%) did not use alcohol or other substances. However, about one-quarter of youth used alcohol or other substances without experiencing negative impacts and about one-tenth used them but experienced negative impacts. Fewer than one in eight of the youth were seen by their caseworker as having a diagnosed or potentially undiagnosed alcohol or drug disorder. In addition to health and mental health issues, caseworkers were asked whether youth experienced any safety issues

¹² It is important to keep in mind that caseworkers were asked about formal diagnoses of mental health disorders. Thus, the mental health prevalence rates reported here may be lower than prevalence rates reported in other studies of transition age foster youth, which use brief, structured screening tools to identify the presence of mental health disorders (but are not formal diagnoses). Additionally, research shows that the prevalence of mental health disorders generally declines after age 17 (Brown, Courtney, & McMillen, 2015).

(e.g., physical violence, stalking, harassment, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, gang or neighborhood violence, workplace exploitation, or sexual exploitation) since they began working with the youth. About one-fifth of youth were reported to have experienced a safety issue.

Table 9. Youths' Health Characteristics

	#	%
Physical health status (<i>n</i> = 482)		
Excellent	71	13.5
Very good	162	35.5
Good	183	39.1
Fair	56	9.4
Poor	10	2.5
Disability status (<i>n</i> = 486)		
Difficulty using hands/arms/legs/feet	4	0.7
Diagnosed mental health disorder (<i>n</i> = 467)		
Yes	121	23.5
No	296	65.2
No current diagnosis, but possible undiagnosed disorder	50	11.4
Mental health diagnosis (<i>n</i> = 121; can select more than one)		
Depressive disorder	50	9.0
Mania	1	0.2
Bipolar disorder	18	3.0
PTSD	41	6.9
Anxiety disorder other than PTSD	41	7.4
Other ^a	22	4.4
Substance/Alcohol Use (<i>n</i> = 409) ^b		
Did not use	244	65.5
Used without negative impact	126	25.2
Used with negative impact	39	9.3
Diagnosed alcohol or substance use disorder (<i>n</i> = 441) ^c		
Yes	27	5.9
No	384	88.1
No current diagnosis, but possible undiagnosed disorder	30	6.1
Safety issues (<i>n</i> = 469)		
Youth has had safety issues (Yes)	99	19.4

Note: Unweighted frequencies and weighted percentages.

^a These disorders included learning and attention problems, Antisocial Personality Disorder, developmental delays, mood disorders, unspecified personality disorders, and psychotic disorders.

^b Results for substance/alcohol use should be interpreted with caution (16.9% missing).

^c Results for substance/alcohol use disorder should be interpreted with caution (10.4% missing).

Some between-county differences were seen in the mental health characteristics of the youth. Young people from Los Angeles County were less likely to be diagnosed with PTSD (0%) than youth in rural (8.8%), urban (11.0%), and large urban (9.4%) counties. Similarly, Los Angeles youth were less likely to be diagnosed with bipolar disorder (0%) than were youth in rural (9.9%), urban (2.0%), or large urban (4.2%) counties. Larger proportions of African American (9.3%), multiracial (8.3%) and white (5.9%) youth than Hispanic youth (0.6%) were said to have a diagnosed mental health disorder. None of the Asian/Pacific Islander youth and Native American/Alaskan Native youth had any mental health disorder, but both of these groups had relatively small sample sizes and these results should be interpreted cautiously. There were also differences in alcohol and substance use between counties. Overall, about half of the youth in rural and urban counties used alcohol or substances, which was a higher rate than that reported in large urban counties (36.7%) and Los Angeles County (19.7%). Moreover, more youth in rural counties (18.8%) than youth in urban counties (9.7%), large urban counties (10.7%), and Los Angeles County (5.4%) were reported to have used alcohol or substances and experienced a negative impact. About one-tenth of youth in Los Angeles County had a purported safety issue (10.3%), compared to higher rates in rural (33.3%), urban (17.4%), and large urban counties (25.3%).

Youth Pregnancy and Parenthood

Table 10 displays the pregnancy and parenthood statuses of the youth. The relatively large percentage of missing data for these items reflects the fact that many workers were not aware of the pregnancy or parenting status of the youth nor, most likely, youths' past history of pregnancy and parenting. According to their caseworkers, over two-fifths of female youth had been pregnant at least once, and about eight percent were pregnant at the time of the survey. About one-tenth of male youth had ever gotten someone pregnant. Roughly one-quarter of female youth had given birth and nearly nine-in-ten female parents were living with their child(ren). In contrast, about one-tenth of males were reported to have fathered a child but fewer than half of the male parents lived with their child(ren). Among young fathers, a larger percentage of multiracial youth (23.8%) than the other racial/ethnic groups (all below 10%) had fathered a child. Additionally, while white and African American fathers were more likely to be living with all of their children than not, multiracial and Hispanic youth were less likely to be living with all of their children than not.

Table 10. Youths' Pregnancy and Parenthood

	#	%
Pregnancy status (females) (<i>n</i> = 260) ^a		
Currently pregnant	19	7.7
Not currently pregnant, but has been pregnant in the past	89	36.2
Never been pregnant	152	56.1
Pregnancy status (males) (<i>n</i> = 191) ^b		
Have gotten someone pregnant	20	9.0
Have never gotten someone pregnant	171	91.0
Parental status (females) (<i>n</i> = 296)		
Is a parent and all children reside with her	68	22.4
Is a parent and not all children reside with her	9	3.0
Have never given birth	218	74.2
Other	1	0.4
Parental status (males) (<i>n</i> = 175)		
Is a parent and all children reside with him	9	3.8
Is a parent and not all children reside with him	10	6.1
Have never fathered a child	155	89.8
Other	1	0.4

Note: Unweighted frequencies and weighted percentages.

^a Results for "never been pregnant" should be interpreted with caution (13.9% missing data).

^b Results for ever gotten female pregnant should be interpreted with caution (24.2% missing data).

Youths' Preparedness and Need for Services in Various Life Areas

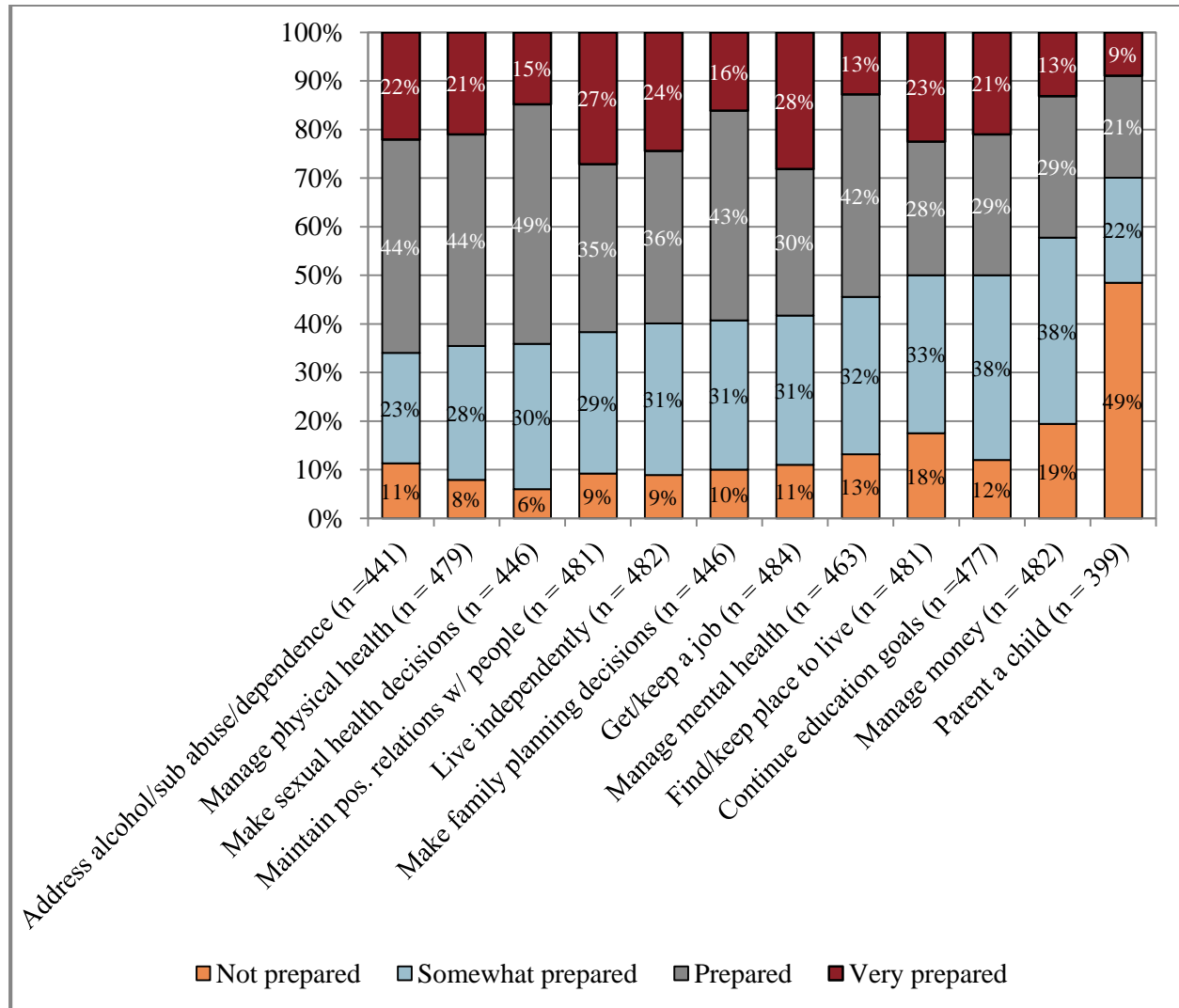
Youth Preparedness

Figure 1 presents caseworkers' perceptions of their youths' preparedness in various life domains. Participants ranked each of the 11 areas of preparedness on a scale of 1 ("not prepared") to 4 ("very prepared"). The areas are ordered left to right by the proportion of caseworkers who responded "prepared" or "very prepared." Caseworkers perceived a majority of youth to be either "prepared" or "very prepared" in the following life areas: addressing substance use problems; maintaining positive relationships with others; managing day-to-day tasks of living independently; engaging in family planning; and mental, physical, and sexual health. About half of the youth were "prepared" or "very prepared" to find and keep a place to live. The areas where caseworkers saw the smallest proportions of youth being "prepared" or "very prepared" involved continuing their education goals, managing money, and parenting a child.

In all but one area, there were no county differences in the perception of youth preparedness. A smaller proportion of caseworkers in rural counties (46.9%) than workers in the other county groups (62.3% in urban counties, 62.6% in large urban counties, and 76.7% in Los Angeles County) felt that youth were "prepared" or "very prepared" to manage substance use problems. In several domains, genders differed in their levels of perceived preparedness. Overall, females were perceived as being as more prepared than males in all of the domains except for getting and keeping a job and maintaining positive relationships with people who are important to them. Differences in race and ethnicity emerged in caseworkers' perceptions of youths' ability to find and keep a place to live. At least half of the youth in all racial/ethnic

groups were believed to be “prepared” or “very prepared” except for African American (40.0%) and multiracial (34.0%) youth.

Figure 1. Caseworkers’ Perceptions of Youths’ Preparedness in Various Life Areas^a



^a Results for preparedness to address alcohol/substance use problems (10.3% missing data) and parent a child (18.9% missing) should be interpreted with caution. Results for “Continue education goals” exclude youths who, according to their caseworker, did not plan on completing additional education (n = 31).

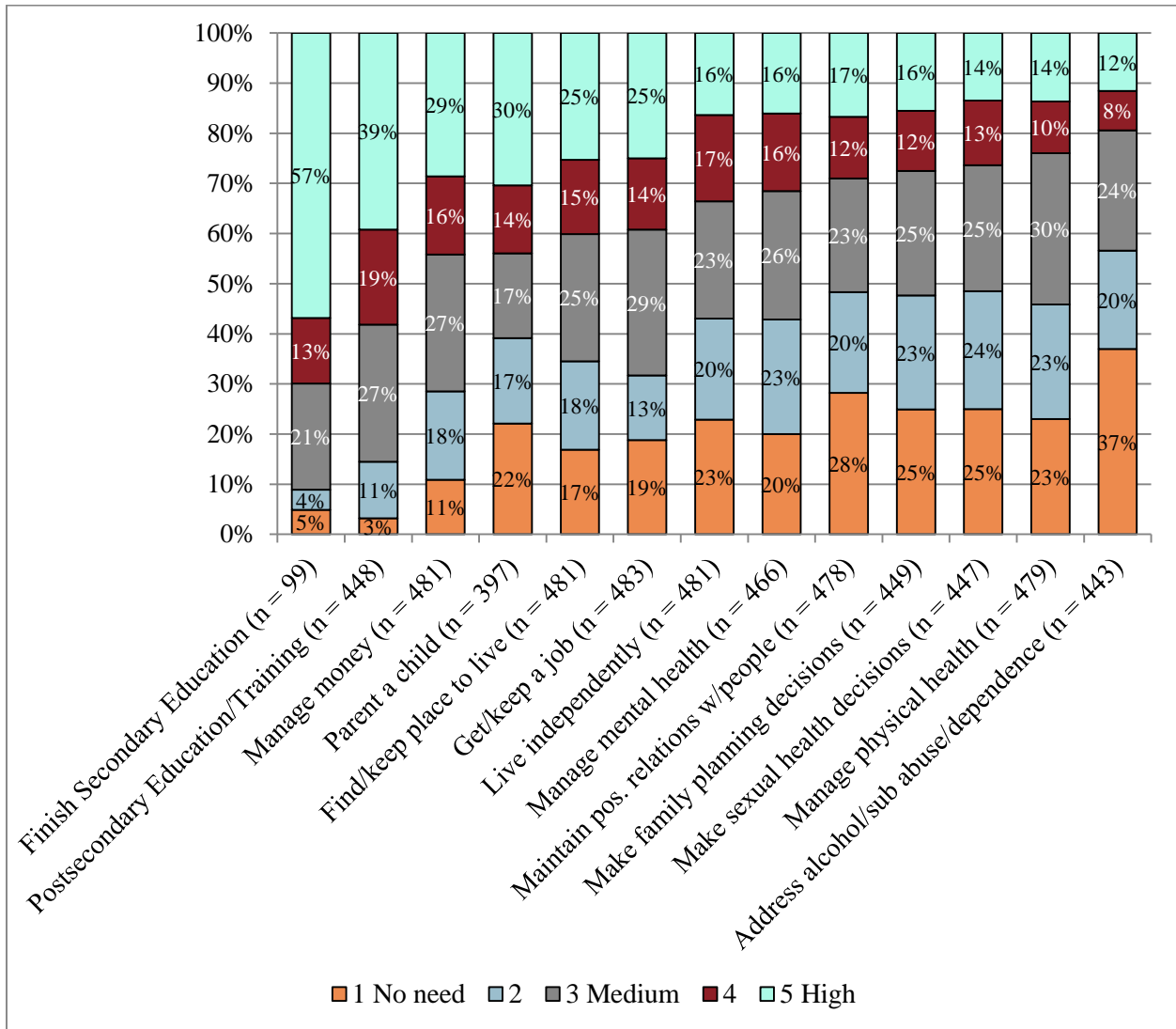
Youths’ Need for Services

Figure 2 shows workers’ perceptions of their youths’ need for services in the same 11 life areas. Workers ranked the youths’ need for services on a scale of 1 (“low need”) to 5 (“high need”). The life areas are ranked from left to right by the proportion of caseworkers marking a 4 or 5, signifying higher than moderate need for services. Areas where the greatest proportions of youth had high needs for services involved completing a high school diploma or equivalency certificate (among youth who had not finished a secondary credential) and completing postsecondary education or training (among youth who planned

on completing education/training beyond secondary school). Other high need areas included practical tasks around money management, parenting a child, finding and keeping a residence, employment, and living independently. About one-third or fewer of the youth had a substantial need for services that involve substance use, mental health, physical health, sexual health decisions, family planning decisions, and maintaining positive relationships with people who are important to them.

Mental health was the only life area where county group differences were present. According to caseworkers, larger proportions of youth in rural counties had a greater than moderate need for mental health services (53.8%) than urban counties (28.4%) and large urban counties (37.0%). A smaller proportion of youth in Los Angeles County (21.8%) had a need for mental health services than the county groups. Gender differences were present in need for services in about half of the life areas. Compared to females, a higher proportion of males had a need for services in the areas of managing money (36.6% vs. 23.6%), finding and keeping a place to live (30.8% vs. 21.9%), living independently (24.8% vs. 11.2%), parenting a child (41.0% vs. 23.9%), managing physical health (20.3% vs. 9.6%), and addressing areas of substance problems (16.7% vs. 8.3%). Differences among racial and ethnic groups in the perceived need for services appeared in three areas. In general, greater proportions of African American and multiracial youth were perceived as having a higher than moderate need for services in the areas of managing money, getting and keeping a job, and finding and keeping a place to live. For example, over half of African American (62.9%) and multiracial (58.9%) youth needed money management services, compared to 42.1 percent of white youth, 35.3 percent of Hispanic youth, 27.0 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander youth, and 25.4 percent of American Indian/Alaskan Native youth.

Figure 2. Caseworkers' Perceptions of Youths' Need for Services^a



^a Results for need for services to parent a child should be interpreted with caution (19.3% missing data). Results for “Finish secondary education” include youth who had not finished their secondary credential. Results for “Postsecondary education/training” exclude youth who, according to their caseworker, did not plan on completing additional education (n = 31).

Youths' Motivation to Remain in Care Past Age 18

Caseworkers were asked to rate several reasons the youth on their caseload chose to remain in care past age 18, which are displayed in Table 11. Workers rated each of the eight reasons to remain in care on a scale of 1 (“not a motivation”) to 5 (“strong motivation”). The table below reports the proportion of caseworkers who selected a 4 or 5. By far, continued receipt of housing and other material resources was the most common motivation for youth to remain in care, with nearly nine-tenths of caseworkers saying that this was a strong motivating factor for their youth. More than half of the youth were motivated to remain in care to receive help in achieving their educational goals or because they had no other options. About two-fifths of youth were strongly motivated to remain in care because they were happy in their current placement or felt they were too young to be on their own. Smaller proportions of youth were motivated by the ability to continue to meet with his or her county social worker, to continue to meet with his or her attorney, or to live with a relative or friend who needed the payment.

County group differences were present in the youths' perceived motivations to remain in care. Education was a strong motivating factor for a large proportion of youth in Los Angeles County (66.7%), followed by urban counties (51.4%), large urban counties (48.3%), and rural counties (36.8%). Continuing to have an attorney and living with a friend or relative who needed foster care payments were two motivations that were positively associated with county size. For example, just 5.7% of youth in rural counties were perceived to be motivated by having an attorney, which was lower than the proportion in urban (15.0%) and large urban (28.6%) counties. The proportion was slightly higher in Los Angeles County (33.3%). In terms of gender differences, higher proportions of females than males were motivated to remain in care to

continue to receive support to help them achieve their educational goals (59.5% vs. 45.4%) and to continue to meet with a caseworker (37.8% vs. 27.1%).

Table 11. Caseworkers' Perceptions of Youths' Motivation to Remain in Care

Reasons to remain in care(5-point scale: 1 = not a motivation, 5 = strong motivation) ^a	#	% (4 or 5)
Continue receiving housing and other material support	422	88.3
No other options	243	55.4
Receive help achieving educational goals	247	54.1
Felt too young to be on his/her own	169	41.2
Happy in current placement	176	39.7
Continue meeting with county social worker	152	33.7
Continue having an attorney representing his/her legal interests	97	26.0
Live with a relative/friend who needs the payment	93	23.4

Note: Unweighted frequencies and weighted percentages.

^a Results for the following motivations should be interpreted with caution: too young to be on their own (10.8% missing data) and having no other options (12.2% missing data).

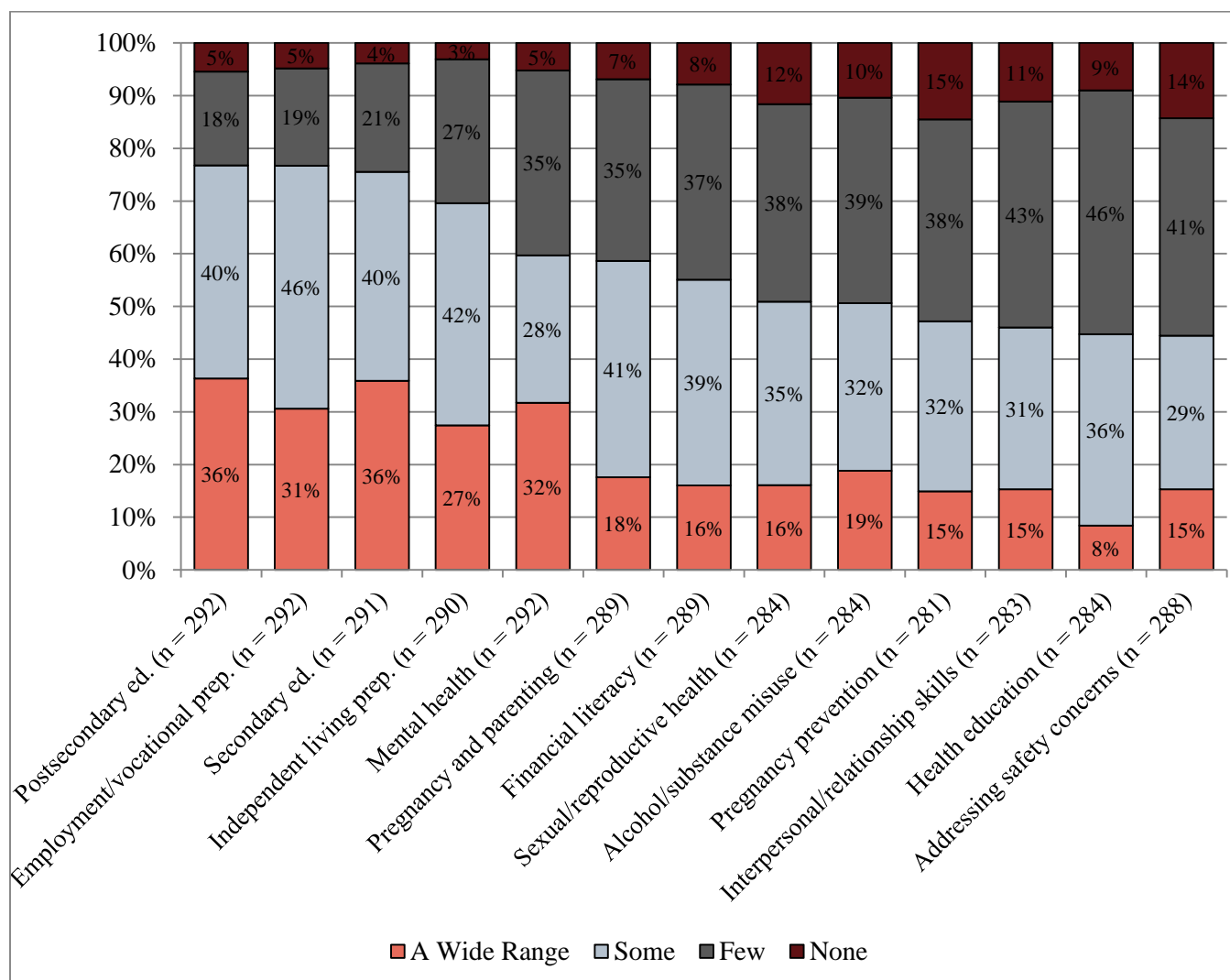
Availability and Helpfulness of Trainings and Services

Availability of Trainings and Services

We asked caseworkers about their perceptions of the availability of trainings and services in their county across a number of domains. Caseworkers selected among four response categories that ranged from 1 (“none”) to 4 (“a wide range”). Figure 3 displays the service areas that were perceived as being most widely available (combining “some” and “a wide range”) from left to right. More than three-quarters of workers reported that there were either “some” or “a wide range” of services in their county in the areas of postsecondary education, employment preparation, and secondary education. Areas with the smallest proportions of available services included safety concerns, health education, relationship skills, and pregnancy prevention.

Significant differences between county groups in training and service availability only appeared in the area of sexual health. Rural counties (40.7%) and Los Angeles (38.5%) had smaller proportions of workers reporting “some” and “a wide range” of services when compared to workers in urban (52.3%) and large urban (62.5%) counties. In addition, a greater proportion of caseworkers in Los Angeles County (19.2%) reported that there were no trainings in or services for sexual health than caseworkers in rural (4.8%), urban (7.0%), and large urban (8.0%) counties.

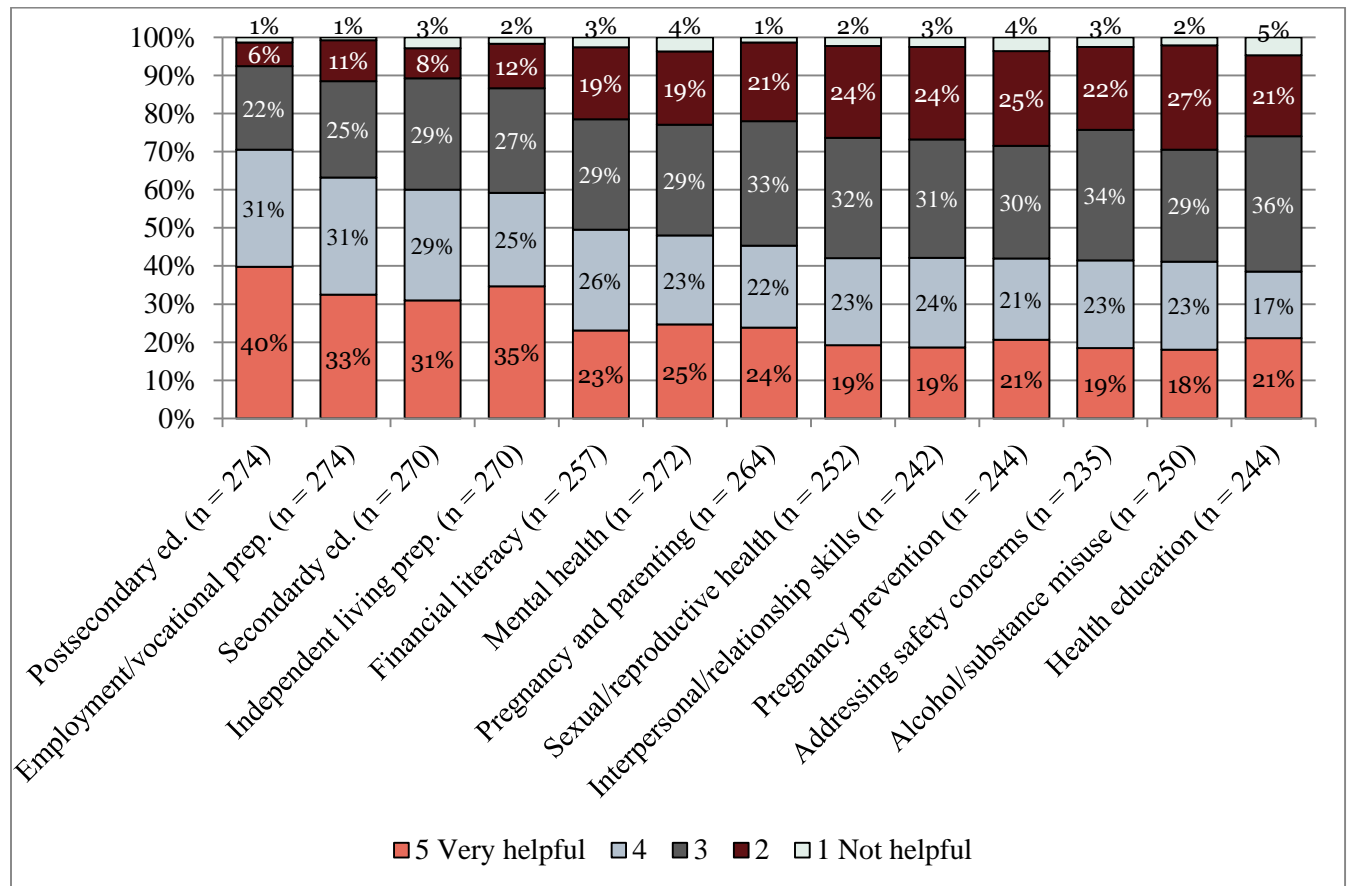
Figure 3. Caseworkers' Perceptions of Availability of Trainings and Services for Older Youth



Helpfulness of Trainings and Services

Caseworkers were then asked about how helpful the trainings and services were for nonminor dependents in their counties. Caseworkers rated the helpfulness of each service domain on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (“not at all helpful”) to 5 (“very helpful”). Figure 4 shows the service areas in order of how helpful they were, with the most helpful trainings and services (sum of 4 and 5) on the left. Similar to earlier findings on the availability of services, caseworkers reported that services in the areas of education, employment, and independent living preparation were the most helpful. The areas of trainings and services rated the least helpful were health education, alcohol and substance use, addressing safety concerns, and pregnancy prevention.

Figure 4. Caseworkers' Perceptions about Helpfulness of Trainings and Services for Older Youth



^a Results for Helpfulness of Trainings and Services in Health Education should be interpreted with caution (10.9% missing data).

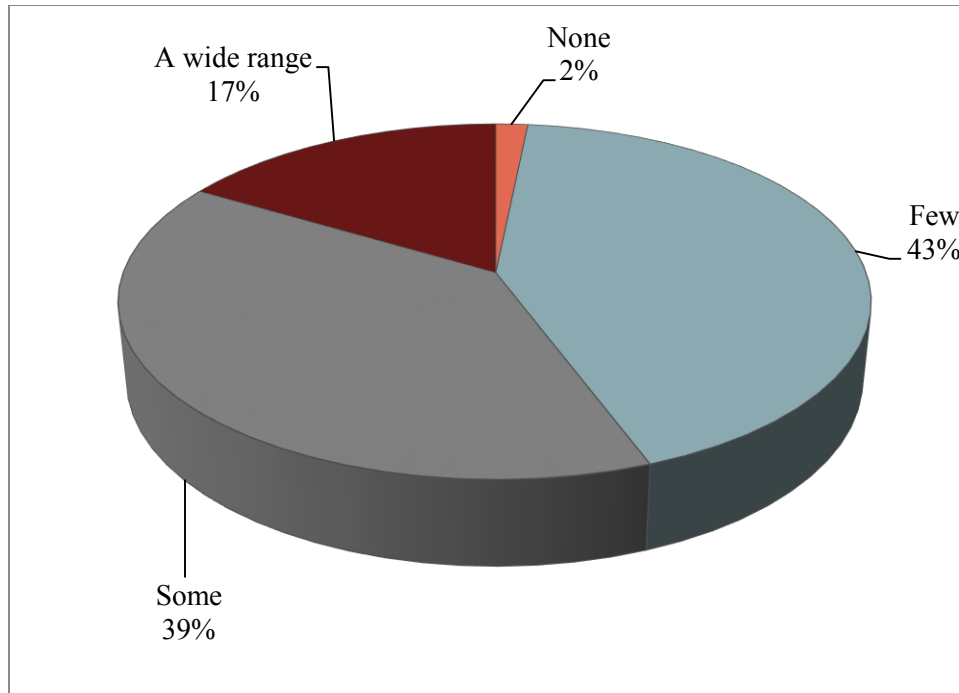
Availability of Housing Options

Caseworkers were also asked about the availability and appropriateness of housing options for nonminor dependents. As seen in Figure 5, about 45 percent of all workers reported that there were no or few housing options for nonminor dependents in their county, while another 40 percent reported having just some options. Only about one in six workers reported that there was a wide range of housing options in their county.

Similar to the earlier analysis of youths' living arrangements, large counties with over 10 respondents were broken out in the analysis of county group differences. Among the county groups, about one-quarter of caseworkers in rural counties reported having “some” or “a wide range” of housing options (25.1%), which was lower than for the urban and large urban groups (both about 59%). Among the large counties analyzed separately, above 85 percent of caseworkers in Alameda, Orange, and Riverside counties reported that there are “some” or “a wide range” of housing options. The percentages were lower in the

other counties (San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Clara, and Los Angeles), ranging from a high of 56 percent in San Diego to a low of 38 percent in Los Angeles.

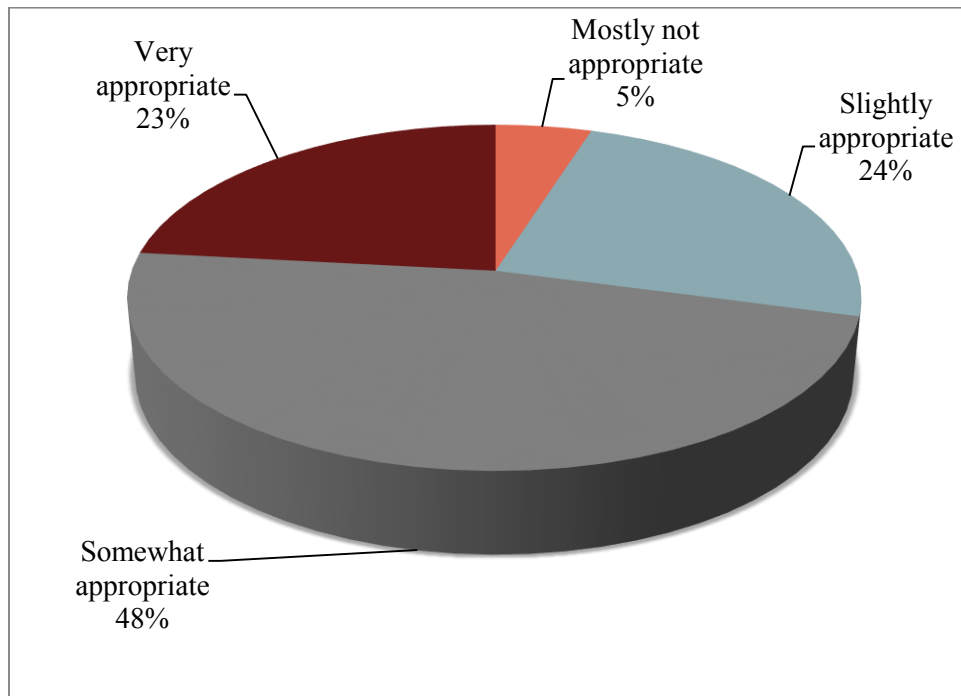
Figure 5. Caseworkers' Perceptions of Availability of Housing Options (n = 292)



Appropriateness of Housing Options

Figure 6 presents caseworkers' views on the appropriateness of housing options for nonminor dependents, excluding workers who reported that there were no housing options available in their counties. Nearly one in four caseworkers believed the options were "very appropriate" and almost half believed the options were "somewhat appropriate." Only a small percentage of workers reported that the options in their counties were "mostly not appropriate" for nonminor dependents.

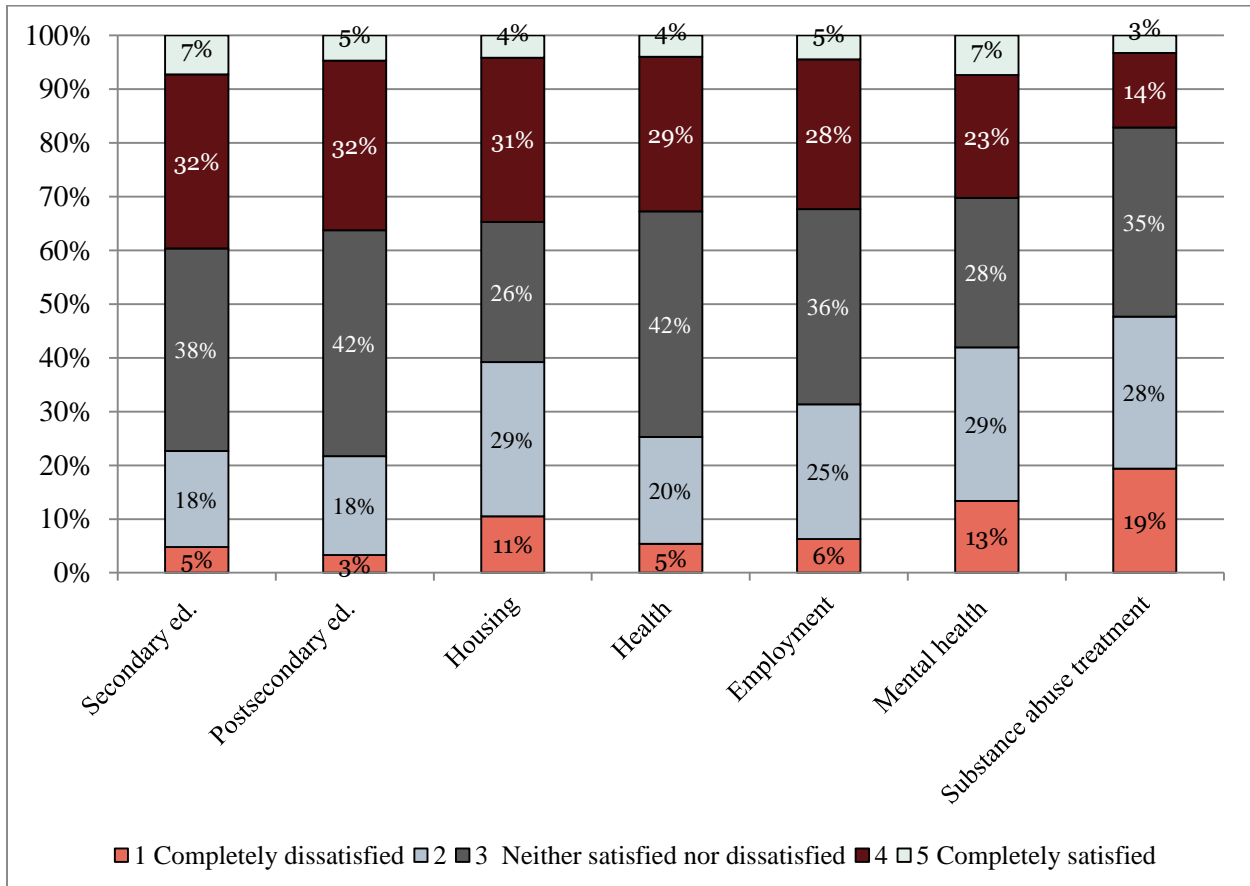
Figure 6. Caseworkers' Perceptions of Appropriateness of Housing Options (n = 288)



Satisfaction with Collaboration with Other Systems

Caseworkers were asked about how satisfied they were with the collaboration they had with individuals working in other service settings with respect to assisting nonminor dependents in extended foster care (see Figure 7). Caseworkers most commonly reported being “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” with the collaboration they experienced. However, a third or more of caseworkers reported high levels of satisfaction (4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5) in the areas of secondary education, postsecondary education, and housing support services. More than 40 percent of caseworkers reported being dissatisfied (1 or 2) with the collaboration with mental health and substance abuse treatment services. County group differences were present in the areas of employment and housing. Workers from rural counties and Los Angeles tended to be less satisfied with the collaboration with the employment and housing systems than workers in urban and large urban counties.

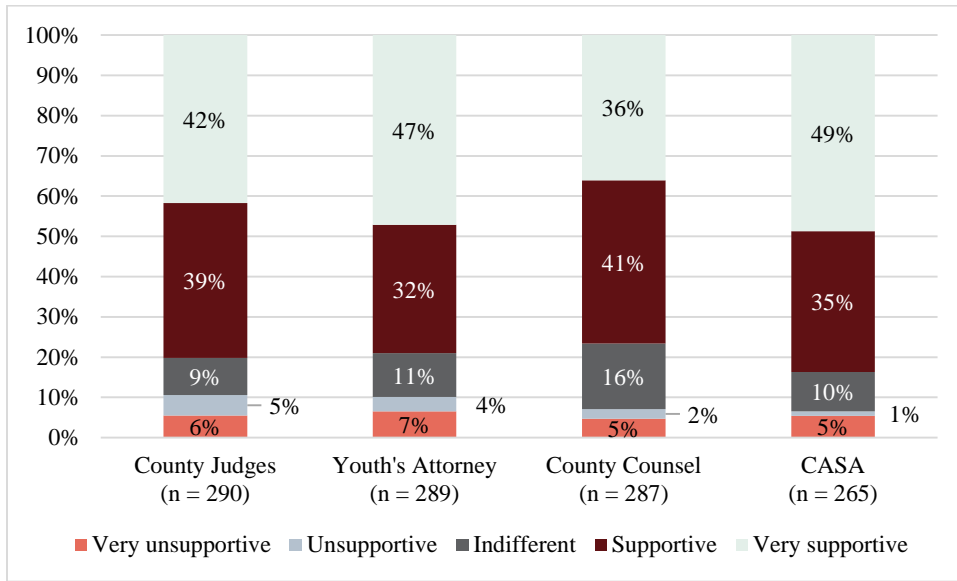
Figure 7. Caseworkers' Satisfaction with Collaboration with Other Systems



Supportiveness of Court Personnel

Caseworkers were also asked about their perceptions of various court personnel’s supportiveness of extending foster care beyond age 18 (Figures 8 through 11). Overall, the caseworkers saw court personnel as being supportive of extended care, with more than three-quarters of workers seeing county judges, youths’ attorneys, county counsels, and court-appointed special advocates (CASAs) as being “supportive” or “very supportive.” The professionals responsible for advocating for nonminor dependents in court, youths’ attorneys, and court appointed special advocates (CASAs), were viewed by caseworkers as particularly supportive, with just under half of workers viewing these professionals as “very supportive.” About 10 percent or fewer of the workers saw each of the four types of court personnel as being “unsupportive” or “very unsupportive” of extended care.

Figure 8. Caseworkers' Views of Supportiveness of Court Personnel ^a



^a Results for CASA workers' perception of extended foster care should be interpreted with caution (10.2% missing data)

Attitudes toward Extended Foster Care

Caseworkers were asked about whether they thought extended foster care would foster dependency on the system among youth who remain in care past age 18. This was a concern for the majority of caseworkers. As shown in Figure 9, over three-quarters of caseworkers expressed concern that the extension of foster care will lead to “a lot” or “some” dependency on the system. We also asked caseworkers whether they thought youth needed the services and support available through extended care. As Figure 10 illustrates, almost 90 percent of workers thought that these services and supports were needed (selected 4 or 5 on a scale from 1 = “absolutely unneeded” to 5 = “absolutely needed”). Conversely, only about two percent of workers felt that these services and supports were not needed (selected 1 or 2). Finally, caseworkers were asked to offer their opinion about the age at which young people in their county could be expected to live on their own. Figure 11 shows that only about one-fifth of caseworkers believed that foster youth could be expected to live on their own before the age of 21. Furthermore, about one-quarter of workers believed that youth were not ready to be on their own until age 25 or older.

Differences were found between county groups in caseworkers’ perceptions about the extent to which services and support are needed beyond age 18. All caseworkers in rural counties indicated that supports and services were needed beyond the age of 18 (selected 4 or 5), which was slightly higher than proportions in urban (92%) and large urban (96%) counties. A smaller proportion of caseworkers in Los Angeles saw the support and services beyond age 18 as needed (76%), with a relatively large proportion of Los Angeles caseworkers indicating they were neutral on this topic (23%).

Figure 9. Caseworkers' Perceptions on whether Extending Foster Care to 21 Years Old Will Foster Dependency on the System

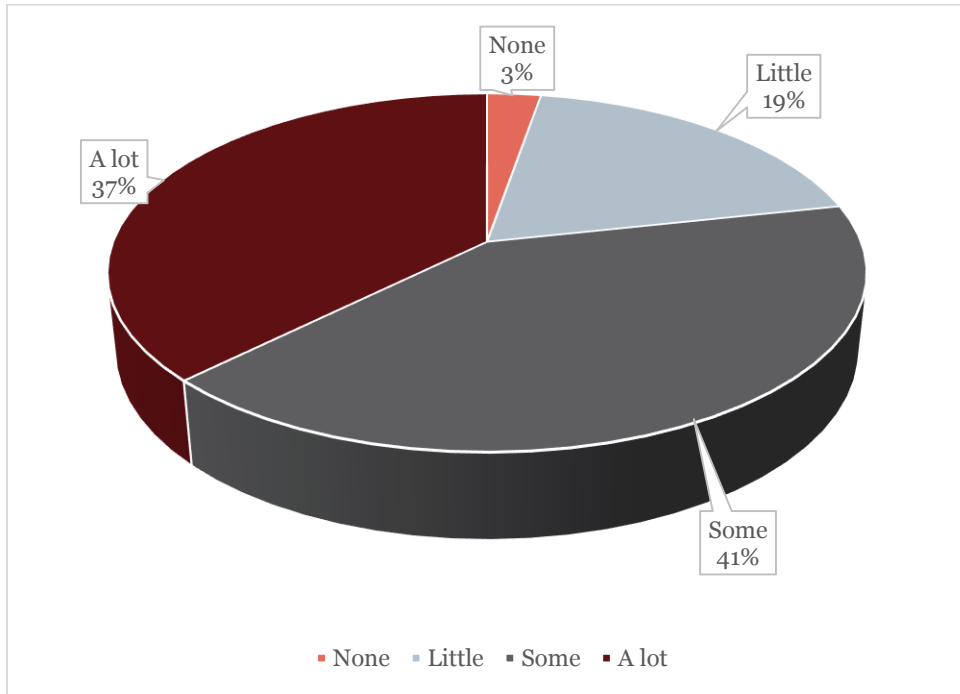


Figure 10. Caseworkers' Perceptions of Foster Youths' Needs for Services and Support beyond Age 18

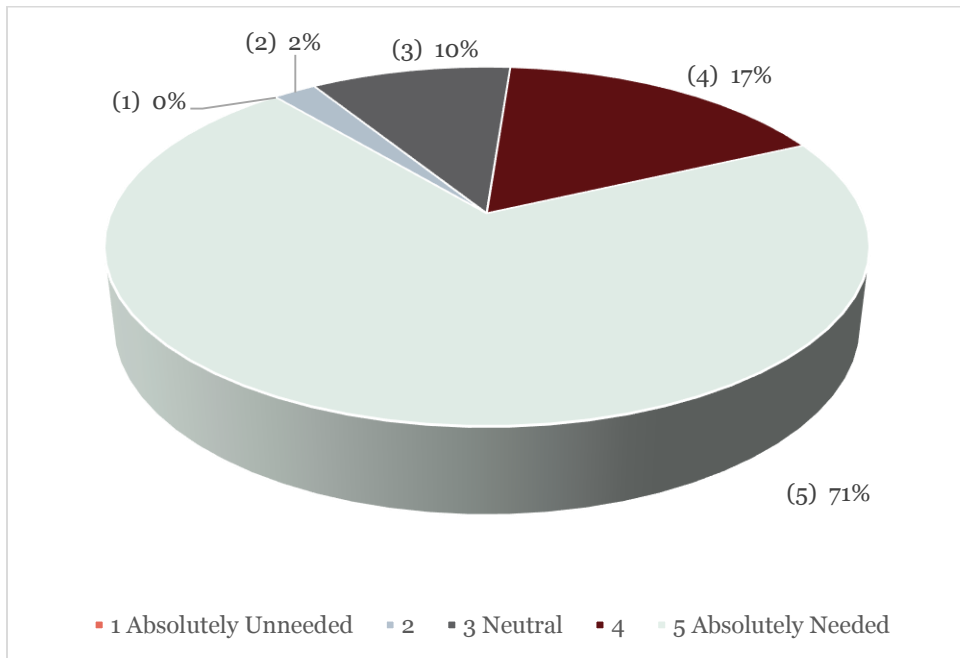
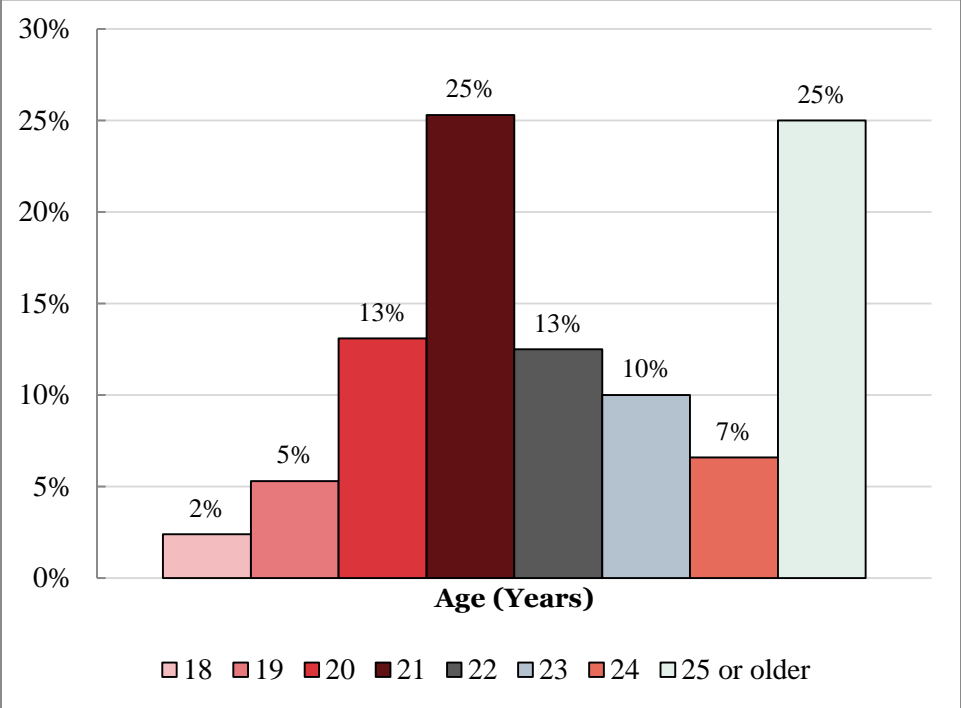


Figure 11. Caseworkers' Perceptions of the Age at Which Young People can be Expected to Live on Their Own



Views of Challenges to Effective Implementation of Extended Foster Care

We asked caseworkers about different challenges to the effective implementation of extended care, which are reported in Table 12. Participants ranked each of the 10 challenges from a scale of 1 (“not a challenge”) to 5 (“a great challenge”), and the proportions of workers who reported either a 4 or 5 are listed below. The biggest perceived challenge was a lack of placement options, with more than eighty percent of workers reporting that this impeded the implementation of extended care. About two-thirds of workers reported that a lack of services was a barrier, and half or more of the workers expressed concerns about lack of coordination with other systems, appropriateness of services available to foster youth, lack of support from foster care providers, and a lack of clarity in policies and procedures. Fewer caseworkers saw a lack of support from county administrators, court personnel, and county caseworkers as an impediment. Additionally, less than one-third of workers saw a lack of interest from older adolescents in care as preventing the implementation of extended care. The only difference between county groups was in the perception of support by court personnel. Fewer caseworkers in rural (18.2%) and urban counties (13.9%) than those in large urban counties (34.7%) and Los Angeles County. (32.1%) saw lack of support from court personnel as a problem.

Table 12. Caseworkers' Views of Challenges to Effective Implementation of Extended Foster Care

Extent to which each is a challenge (5-point scale: 1=not a challenge, 5=a great challenge)	#	% ranking 4 or 5
Not enough placement options	239	83.3
Not enough services	179	65.2
Lack of coordination between county CW agencies and other systems (e.g., education, housing, employment, health)	141	54.4
Available services are not appropriate to needs of county's youth	144	53.3
Lack of support by foster care providers	132	50.5
Lack of clarity in policies and procedures of extended care	141	50.0
Lack of support by county administrators	92	37.9
Lack of interest from youth approaching age 18	75	31.3
Lack of support by court personnel	72	29.0
Lack of support by county caseworkers	36	14.3

Note: Unweighted frequencies and weighted percentages.

Views of Nonminor Dependents

Table 13 displays caseworkers' views about options and actions of non-minor dependents in their counties after turning 18. Less than a third of respondents thought that it was “likely” or “very likely” that youth would move outside of the county after turning 18. A similar proportion said it was “likely” or “very likely” for youth to find employment within the county. A smaller proportion of workers were confident about youths' housing prospects after turning 18; only 15% thought that youth would be “likely” or “very likely” to find safe and affordable housing in their county.

Table 13. Caseworkers' Views of Nonminor Dependents after Age 18

Likelihood of Nonminor Dependents to...	Very Unlikely (%)	Unlikely (%)	Neutral (%)	Likely (%)	Very Likely (%)
Move outside of the county after 18 (<i>N</i> = 291)	11.9	27.9	31.5	21.5	7.3
Find employment within county after 18 (<i>N</i> = 288)	7.2	22.0	37.6	28.8	4.4
Find safe/affordable housing within county after 18 (<i>N</i> = 290)	23.2	35.2	25.8	11.3	4.6

Note: Unweighted frequencies and weighted percentages.

Summary and Next Steps

The *CalYOUTH Survey of Young Adults' Child Welfare Workers* provides an important snapshot of how key agents in the implementation of extended foster care in California perceive the young people they serve and the context of the services provided to those young people. Below we summarize the survey findings and how the data generated by the *CalYOUTH Survey of Young Adults' Child Welfare Workers* will be used going forward.

In general, child welfare workers supervising young adults in foster care in California are experienced (e.g., nearly 80% have worked in child welfare services more than five years), highly educated (e.g., nearly two-thirds has a postgraduate degree), racially and ethnically diverse, and overwhelmingly female. The caseworkers are somewhat less racially and ethnically diverse than the youth on their caseloads. Workers in rural counties tended to be older, less racially diverse, and less educated than workers in counties with larger urban population centers.

The characteristics of the caseloads served by these caseworkers and the extent of their contact with the young adults they serve raise questions about the workers' ability to focus on the unique needs of young adults in care. As noted above, many young adults live in settings without direct adult supervision and need to learn to navigate and rely on public institutions that serve adults. Child welfare agencies have long struggled with how to best provide case management to transition-age youth in foster care, recognizing that traditional case management models may not be appropriate for this group. Since at least the 1990s, child welfare jurisdictions have experimented with case management approaches that rely on caseworkers specially trained to work with transition-age youth, generally with smaller caseloads than those carried by other caseworkers (Scannapieco, Schagrin, & Scannapieco, 1995; Waldinger & Furman, 1994). Moreover, intensive case management programs targeting transition-age foster youth are among the handful of programs shown through rigorous experimental evaluation to have positive impacts on

outcomes for youth transitioning from foster care (Courtney, Zinn, Johnson, & Malm, 2011; Valentine, Skemer, & Courtney, 2015). Although some counties in California have created specialized casework units to supervise young adults in care, our findings indicate that the vast majority of California child welfare workers supervising the care of young adults also supervise the care of minors. Over 40 percent of child welfare workers supervise preadolescents and over one-third supervise children under six years old. Developing specialized casework in rural counties is particularly challenging given the small number of transition-age youth in those counties at any point in time. However, our findings suggest that counties with larger foster care populations vary considerably in the extent to which they attempt to provide young adults with caseworkers who focus on transition-age youth. Interestingly, we found no variation between county groups in the extent of workers' contact with the young adult(s) they served. Consistent with federal requirements, caseworkers generally reported meeting with young people on their caseload about once per month, with fewer than 20 percent seeing youth as often as twice per month. Statewide, over half of the caseworkers had supervised the care of the young adults on their caseload for at least one year, though that was much less often the case for caseworkers in Los Angeles County than for caseworkers elsewhere in the state.

Caseworkers' descriptions of the functioning of the young adults on their caseloads illustrate young people's strengths as well as the challenges they face. The eligibility requirements for extended foster care under both federal and state law emphasize the importance of young adults being "connected" to education, the labor market, or both. Fully 84.7 percent of the study youth were described by their caseworkers as being in school or employed at least part time. According to their caseworkers, nearly 80 percent of the youth participating in the CalYOUTH study have obtained a high school diploma or GED, and most that have yet to do so are enrolled in programs that would provide them with a diploma or its equivalent. Indeed, nearly 60 percent of the youth are enrolled in some kind of education or training; 40 percent are enrolled in a two- or four-year college. However, most caseworkers expressed doubts about how well prepared the youth were to successfully continue their education.

According to their caseworkers, over 40 percent of the youth are employed at least part time and another quarter are looking for work. However, over two-fifths of the youth were described by caseworkers as being only "somewhat prepared" or "not prepared" to find and keep a job. Caseworkers' concern about the economic self-sufficiency of these young adults is also reflected in their perception that nearly 60 percent of the youth are either only "somewhat prepared" or "not prepared" to manage their own money.

Caseworkers' descriptions also raise some concern about the physical and behavioral health of many young adults in extended foster care. Less than half of the youth were described by their caseworkers as being in good physical health. About one-quarter of the youth were described as having a diagnosed

mental health disorder with an additional 10 percent or so having a disorder that had not yet been diagnosed. Fewer than one in eight of the youth were seen by their caseworker as having a problem with alcohol or other substances. In contrast, about 20 percent of the youth were described as experiencing one or more threats to their safety. Workers perceived most youth to be “prepared” or “very prepared” to take care of their physical and mental health and to maintain positive relationships with others, though in each of these areas workers described between one-quarter and one-third of the youth as only “somewhat prepared” or “not prepared.”

Since our baseline interviews when the youth were 16 and 17 years old, many of the young people have had children. According to their caseworkers, over 40 percent of the young women have become pregnant at some point in their lives and one-quarter of them have given birth to at least one child. About one in ten of the young men have gotten someone pregnant and a similar proportion has fathered a child. The caseworkers report that the young women are much more likely than the young men to be living with their children. Of all the areas of functioning we asked about, parenting is the area that caseworkers were most concerned about with respect to youths’ preparedness for independent living; caseworkers reported that nearly half of the young people were “not prepared” to be a parent and fewer than one in ten were “very prepared.”

The results of the caseworker survey provide guidance for efforts to improve the availability and helpfulness of supports and services for young adults in foster care in California. Caseworkers were most concerned about the availability and appropriateness of housing options; over 40 percent of the caseworkers reported that there were few or no housing options in their county for youth in extended foster care and only about one-quarter viewed the available housing options as “very appropriate.” Concern about youths’ housing options was greatest in rural counties and in some urban and large urban counties. Caseworkers were generally most positive about the availability and helpfulness of services to support youths’ education and employment. They were most concerned about a lack of reproductive and physical health education and a lack of services to address youths’ safety concerns, relationship skill building and substance abuse. Obtaining many of these services can be a function of the degree of collaboration between the county child welfare agency and other service systems. Caseworkers generally reported being most satisfied with their collaboration with the secondary and postsecondary education systems and housing support services. They were least satisfied with collaboration with mental health and substance abuse treatment services.

It is encouraging that child welfare workers were very supportive of the policy of extended foster care, though they report continuing challenges to effective implementation of the policy. While most caseworkers believed that extending foster care to age 21 would foster at least some dependency on the

child welfare system among youth in care, over 70 percent believed that services and support beyond age 18 were “absolutely needed” by the youth. Caseworkers also perceived the various court personnel they interacted with as being generally supportive of extended foster care. However, over 80 percent of caseworkers see continuing lack of appropriate placement options as a significant challenge to implementation of extended foster care. Nearly two-thirds see a general lack of services as a challenge and over half see poor coordination with other systems, having inappropriate services available to foster youth, lack of support from foster care providers, and a lack of clarity in policies and procedures as major challenges.

This report on the *CalYOUTH Survey of Young Adults’ Child Welfare Workers* provides insight into how child welfare workers in California perceive the young adults whose care they supervise and the context of care provision. Going forward, we will examine workers’ perceptions of the youth they serve and the service context in more depth. In addition, we will link the data obtained from caseworkers about the functioning and service needs of youth on their caseloads to the survey responses of the youth themselves. The youth survey responses were obtained at approximately the same time in 2015 that the workers were surveyed. By sharing the perceptions of the professionals involved in implementing California’s Fostering Connections Act, and the experiences of the young people the new law is intended to help, CalYOUTH will continue to provide timely information about California’s ambitious implementation of extended foster care.

References

- Berzin, S. C., & Taylor, S. A. (2009). Preparing foster youth for independent living: Collaboration between county independent living programs and community-based youth-serving agencies. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 3(3), 254–274.
- Brown, A., Courtney, M. E., & McMillen, J. C. (2015). Behavioral health needs and service use among those who've aged-out of foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 58, 163-169.
- Child Welfare League of America. (1999). *CWLA Standards of Excellence for Family Foster Care*. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.
- Courtney, M. E. (2009). The difficult transition to adulthood for foster youth in the US: Implications for the state as corporate parent. *Social Policy Report*, 23(1), 3–18.
- Courtney, M. E., Charles, P., Okpych, N. J., Napolitano, L., & Halsted, K. (2014a). *Findings from the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (CalYOUTH): Conditions of foster youth at age 17*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.
- Courtney, M. E., Charles, P., Okpych, N. J., & Halsted, K. (2014b). *California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (CalYOUTH): Early findings from the Child Welfare Worker Survey*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.
- Courtney, M. E., Dworsky, A., & Napolitano, L. (2013). *Providing foster care for young adults: Early implementation of California's Fostering Connections Act*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.
- Courtney, M., Zinn, A., Johnson, H., and Malm, K. (2011). *Evaluation of the Massachusetts Adolescent Outreach Program for Youths in Intensive Foster Care: Final report*. OPRE Report #2011-14.

Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Freundlich, M., & Avery, R. (2005). Planning for permanency for youth in congregate care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 27(2), 115–134.

Geenen, S., & Powers, L. (2007). Tomorrow is another problem. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 29(8), 1085–1101.

Greeson, J. K., Thompson, A. E., Ali, S., & Wenger, R. S. (2015). It's good to know that you got somebody that's not going anywhere: Attitudes and beliefs of older youth in foster care about child welfare-based natural mentoring. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 48, 140–149.

Leathers, S., & Testa, M. (2006). Foster youth emancipating from care: Caseworkers' reports on needs and services. *Child Welfare*, 85(3), 463–98.

Michalopoulos, L., Ahn, H., Shaw, T. V., & O'Connor, J. (2012). Child welfare worker perception of the implementation of family-centered practice. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 22(6), 656–664.

Napolitano, L., & Courtney, M. E. (2014). *Residential settings of young adults in extended foster care: A preliminary investigation*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

Napolitano, L., Sulimani-Aidan, Y., & Courtney, M. E. (2015). *Extended foster care in California: Youth and caseworker perspectives*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

Okpych, N. J., Courtney, M. E., & Charles, P. (2015). Youth and caseworker perspectives on older adolescents in California foster care: Youths' education status and services. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

Scannapieco, M., Connell-Carrick, K., & Painter, K. (2007). In their own words: Challenges facing youth aging out of foster care. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 24(5), 423–435.

Scannapieco, M., Schagrin, J., & Scannapieco, T. (1995). Independent living programs: do they make a difference? *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 12, 381–389.

Valentine, E. J., Skemer, M., & Courtney, M. E. (2015). Becoming adults: One-year impact findings from the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation. New York, NY: MDRC.

Waldinger, G., & Furman, W. (1994). Two models of preparing foster youths for emancipation. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 16, 201–212.

Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., . . . Romero, R. (2016). *CCWIP reports*. Retrieved from http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare

About Chapin Hall

Chapin Hall is an independent policy research center at the University of Chicago focused on providing public and private decision-makers with rigorous data analysis and achievable solutions to support them in improving the lives of society's most vulnerable children. Chapin Hall partners with policymakers, practitioners, and philanthropists at the forefront of research and policy development by applying a unique blend of scientific research, real world experience, and policy expertise to construct actionable information, practical tools, and, ultimately, positive change for children, youth, and families.

Established in 1985, Chapin Hall's areas of research include child and adolescent development; child maltreatment prevention; child welfare systems; community change; economic supports for families; home visiting and early childhood initiatives; runaway and unaccompanied homeless youth; schools, school systems, and out-of-school time; and youth crime and justice.