

Transition Programs in Indian Country

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August 2001



Acknowledgements

Casey Family Programs and the National Indian Child Welfare Association gratefully acknowledge all of the input and feedback received from individuals, tribal programs, and federal agencies in connection with this publication. Their contributions have helped us to provide accurate and reliable information on the needs and availability of supports and services for transitioning Indian youth.

The grantee wishes to acknowledge that these materials are made possible by a grant and support from Casey Family Programs. In addition, the authors wish to express special thanks to interviewers Sonciray Bonnel, Laura Ellenwood, and Jaime Golden and editors Jody Becker-Green and Zapoura Calvert.

Design, typography, and pre-print production: Design Studio Selby
Cover Photography: Vanessa Calvert

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Contents

ABSTRACT	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
TO BEGIN—A STORY	10
INTRODUCTION	11
BACKGROUND	12
LITERATURE REVIEW	15
Existing Research on Transition Services	15
Research on Youth Transitioning from Foster Care	16
Transition Service Policy	17
Current Practices/Services	20
Independent Living Programs	21
Evaluation of Independent Living Programs	22
Gaps in Services	23
American Indian Cultural Beliefs about Transitions	24
METHODOLOGY	26
Research Design	26
Participants	26
Survey Procedure	26
Sampling Procedure	28
Sample	28
Data Analysis	29
Results	29
Information about the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999	41
Additional Services Agencies Would Like to Provide	45
Services to Add	48
Staffing as a Barrier to Adding Services	48
Other Barriers to Adding Services	49
Information Needed to Add Services	49
Returning Youth or Young Adults	49
Qualitative Context for Returning Youth	51
Qualitative Information from the Interviews	51
Need for Transition Services	52
Challenges for Existing Programs	52
Collaboration	53
DISCUSSION	55
Strengths	55
Limitations	55
Conclusions	56
Research	56

RECOMMENDATIONS	58
Policy	58
Research	58
Practice	59
REFERENCES	60
APPENDICES	64

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Sampling Summary	27
Table 2: Distribution of Urban Agencies by BIA Region	29
Table 3: Transition Services and Delivery Methods for All Agencies	35
Table 4: Transition Services and Delivery Methods for Tribal Agencies	37
Table 5: Transition Services and Delivery Methods for Alaskan Native Villages	38
Table 6: Transition Services and Delivery Methods for Off-Reservation Urban Agencies	39
Table 7: X ² Test of Independence for Type of Agency (Tribal, Alaskan Village, and Urban) by Service (Provided, Provided & Contracted or Referred, Contracted, Contracted & Referred, Referred Only, No Services)	40
Table 8: Additional Services for Tribal Agencies	45
Table 9: Additional Services for Alaskan Native Villages	46
Table 10: Additional Services for Off-Reservation Urban Agencies	46
Table 11: Source of Youths Seeking Services after Leaving Another Agency or Social Service System	51

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Estimates of Total Youth Served in Previous 12 Months Compared to Estimated Regional Enrollment	31
Figure 2: Distribution of Youth Served by Age and BIA Region	32
Figure 3: Distribution of Transition Services for Youth 13 to 21 Provided, Provided but Not Directly, and Not Provided	33
Figure 4: Transition Services Provided by Agencies and Services Not Provided	36
Figure 5: Percentage of Agency Child Welfare Directors Receiving Information about the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999	42
Figure 6: Agencies Receiving or Not Receiving Information about the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 and Source of Information	43
Figure 7: Source of Information about the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 Considering Multiple Sources for 33 Agencies Identifying Information Sources	44
Figure 8: Agencies Report on Young Adults Returning for Services	50

Abstract

The Transition Programs in Indian Country research project provides an initial understanding of programs available to American Indian youth and services provided within American Indian communities. This report represents a beginning look at how child welfare agencies in Indian Country help American Indian youth leave foster care and begin successful adult lives. Current descriptions and definitions of independent living programs are provided. Policies pertaining to the development and delivery of independent living services are presented and reviewed relative to Indian child welfare values and practice. Findings from a telephone survey conducted with 67 tribal, 8 Alaskan Native, and 11 off-reservation urban child welfare agencies are presented. Major findings include: 1) over half of the agency representatives do not report being informed of recent legislation and funding for independent living programs; 2) American Indian child welfare agencies use a variety of methods to assist youth transitioning out of foster care; 3) agency directors stress cultural awareness and agencies provide cultural services to help prepare youth for adult living; and 4) most agencies would like to develop additional services and better transition programs.

Executive Summary

Introduction

There is little information available in the literature that describes participation of American Indian youth in programs that help them transition from foster care to independent living¹. Nationally, it is estimated that about 1% (possibly 550) of the youth served in Title IV-E funded independent living programs are American Indian, while approximately 2% (8,910) of the youth reported to be in Title IV-E funded state foster care programs are American Indian (Children's Bureau, 1999). Although it is difficult to make estimates on percentages in the 1% to 2% range, it appears that American Indian youth are underrepresented and underserved in programs that transition youth from foster care.

The passage of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (Pub. L. No. 106-169), which established the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (referred to hereafter as the Chafee Independence Program), has created new opportunities to provide transition services to American Indian youth (Children's Bureau, 2000). This Act amends Section 477 of the Social Security Act (Pub. L. No. 99-272) and provides states with double the previous level of funding, increasing the annual level of funding from \$70 million to \$140 million. This Act also provides greater flexibility for states to carry out programs designed to help youth make the transition from foster care to self-sufficiency (Children's Bureau,

2000). This law is important for the Indian child welfare field because of requirements for states to consult with Indian tribes and consider the needs of Indian children in the development of state 5-year plans for programs that assist youth in transitioning out of foster care (Clemens, 2000).

A lack of data on available services, combined with the implementation of new policy, created an urgent need to understand the array of services agencies currently offer to provide foster care youth opportunities for independent living or for a successful transition out of foster care and into adult life. The Transition Programs in Indian Country research project provides an initial understanding of programs available to American Indian youth and services provided within American Indian communities.

Method

The research was conducted through structured telephone interviews with American Indian child welfare directors or their designated representatives. After randomly selecting agencies, research assistants, who were primarily American Indian social work graduate students with knowledge about Indian child welfare, contacted each agency to ask if they would be willing to participate in the telephone interview. Potential participants were faxed a copy of the interview and later contacted by telephone to conduct the interview. The interviews began in late December 2000 and ended in May 2001.

Sample

The sample consists of 67 tribal child welfare agencies, 8 Alaskan Native village² child welfare agencies, and 11 off-reservation urban Indian programs for a total of 86 Indian child welfare agencies. The combined enrollment of the tribes in the sample is 477,266 with tribal enrollments ranging from under 20 to over 200,000. The average enrollment is 6,363 with a median enrollment of 771.

Results

The tribal and Alaskan Native child welfare agencies surveyed were almost evenly split regarding the provision of transition services to American Indian youth, with 41.3% (n = 31) responding they provide services and 45.3% (n = 34) responding they did not provide transition services to youth ages 13 to 21. Ten of the agencies (13.3%) responded “other,” indicating they arranged for some transition services for their youth, but did not have a formal program to provide transition services.

The situation was different for the urban agencies responding to the survey. Only four (36.4%) indicated they provided transition services for urban Indian youth while seven (63.6%) responded they did not provide transition services. Aside from this difference and a few other exceptions, patterns of service delivery and numbers of youth served or not served were similar across types of agencies (tribal, Alaskan Native,

and urban) and similar between BIA regions.

A total of 8,759 American Indian and Alaskan Native youth received some form of transition services in the previous 12 months from all surveyed agencies. The range was from 0 to 2,000 youth receiving services with a mean of 103 and a median of 24. Sixteen of the 86 agencies (18.6%) reported they had no youth receiving transition services in the past 12 months.

These 86 agencies report providing equal child welfare services to youth under age 12 and to youth ages 13 and over. The number of youth ages birth to 12 receiving child welfare services in the past 12 months from all the agencies is 4,729. The mean is 58 and the median is 20. Ten (11.6%) of the agencies indicate they provided no child welfare services to youth ages birth to 12 in the prior 12 months. The number of youth ages 13 to 21 receiving child welfare services in the past 12 months from all the agencies was 4,752. The mean is 58 and the median is 15. Nine (10.5%) agencies indicated they provided no child welfare services to youth ages 13 to 21 in the prior 12 months. Indian child welfare agency directors or their representatives could identify 848 American Indian youth who were not receiving any transition services from any source. They estimated they provided transition services to 2,598 youth and that an additional 1,400 youth were not receiving transition services directly from their agency but might be receiving services from another source.

The agencies provided services in a variety of ways, including directly providing services, contracting services with other agencies, and referring youth to services from other agencies.

Information about the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999

Although the Act requires states to consult with tribal representatives in the development of state 5-year plans to serve youth through the Chafee Independence Program, only 37 (43.0%) of the tribal child welfare agency directors contacted reported receiving information about the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, and only 17 (19.8%) reported receiving that information from state officials. The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) was the most common source of information about the Act with 25 agencies (29.1%) reporting they received information from NICWA about this Act.

Services Wanted

The agencies reported they wanted to expand and increase the array of transition services they provided. Of all agencies surveyed, urban agencies may be less likely to want to add services that are primarily considered to be child welfare focused. Core components of transition service provision (life skills, social skills, and mentoring) are the services that tribal and Alaskan Native child

welfare agency directors would like most to add to their programs.

Youth Returning

Only 33 (38.4%) of the agency directors or their representatives indicated they had youth or young adults who came to their organization for transition services or independent living services after leaving another agency or social service system. Most of the agency directors (54.7%) indicated that youth did not come to them for services after leaving another program.

Summary of Findings

There are three major findings of this research. First, Indian child welfare agencies strive to meet the needs of Indian youth leaving foster care and entering adulthood. Agencies provide services whenever possible, often on a case-by-case basis, but they would like to expand services and provide more formal, structured, and in-depth transition services. The services most likely to be missing and the services many agency directors would like to add are basic transition services. These services include life skills, social skills, mentoring, and subsidized transitional housing.

Second, the agency directors interviewed are interested in potential funding available through the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 and Chafee Independence Program. A majority of agency representatives report not being contacted

about this legislation and report they do not have access to the funding.

Third, cultural awareness services are consistently offered by most tribal programs, off-reservation urban programs, and Alaskan Native programs. This is a major strength of Indian child welfare that has value for mainstream programs because mainstream programs have been found to lack culturally appropriate services.

Recommendations

Priority recommendations from this report are as follows:

Policy

- o Indian child welfare practice and values should lead mainstream child welfare practice with a move away from policies and legislation based on concepts of “independent living” toward transition policies congruent with American Indian standards in order to help foster care youth connect or reconnect with supportive families and communities.
- o State and federal agencies should demonstrate efforts to comply with the requirements of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 to consult with each tribe in a given state. The chief executive officer of each state and federal agency should enforce the requirement that plans reflect consultation with all tribes in a given state.
- o Young adults should receive continuing services based on need and developmental level rather than on age limitations. This would mean extending foster care beyond age 21.

Research

- o The next research step should be to investigate model transition service programs in Indian Country regarding how cultural activities support transitions and what service delivery systems work best for American Indian youth.

Practice

- o The importance of cultural awareness services and rites of passage programs should be noted in transition policy and practices.
- o State and federal officials should respect and support cultural services provided by tribes and urban Indian programs.
- o To connect with tribes and Alaskan Native villages and corporations, state child welfare personnel will need to recognize and engage tribes as sovereign and independent nations while at the same time being culturally sensitive to the methods tribal representatives use to conduct business.

To Begin—A Story

Lake Chelan is one center of the traditional lands of the Chelan people, who are possibly referred to as the “Tsill-ane” people in their original language. A miracle body of water in a high and arid land, Lake Chelan was also a center for other tribes and bands now collected together as members of the Colville Confederated Tribes.

If you need a map to find it, you can locate Lake Chelan close to the center of the state of Washington. The clear, cold waters of Lake Chelan come from 27 glaciers and 59 streams. It is possible to canoe the long narrow lake, which is one and a half miles across at the widest point, from Chelan at the south end to Stehekin at the north end. Depending on the weather, with a number of stops (these days there are convenient campsites), the journey can be made in less than a week.

Landmarks can be seen from the canoe—jagged mountain peaks and large pine trees that mark the distance. The air and water are clear, so everything seems close, and it seems at first that the canoe will reach any given landmark within a few minutes or a few hours, but no distance is gained without a lot of paddling. Sitting in the canoe, paddling until arms seem like they will fall off, it takes a long time until the distance between the canoe and the landmark is even perceptibly changed. Still, the number of paddle strokes it takes to move a canoe across the distance of the lake is unknown, and most of the time, it seems like the canoe is not moving forward at all, just standing still in the deep water.

Introduction

In Indian Country, a storyteller rarely, if ever, concludes by giving the moral of the story. The person who listens to the story must decipher the meaning. Reflecting on the canoe story, this report is an attempt by the research team, our supporters at the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) and Casey Family Programs, and the many people who answered our questions, to get the canoe into the water and start paddling. The research reported here begins an examination of what resources are available and what resources are still needed to help American Indian youth who have been in foster care leave foster care and return to their families and communities with the ability to have successful adult lives.

Establishing the background for this research, the following sections will review the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (Pub. L. No. 95–608), describe what is known about the status of American Indian youth in foster care, and discuss Indian values around preparation of youth for adulthood. The literature review provides a synopsis of research on emancipation of foster care youth, transition service policies, independent living practice, evaluation of independent living programs, and gaps in services, especially those related to cultural and rites of passage programs. It is important to note the limited information available on American Indian youth transitioning from foster care. The research section includes the methods used to conduct the research (i.e., survey procedure, sampling procedure, and sample data

analysis). The results section emphasizes services currently being provided by tribes, Alaskan Native villages, and off-reservation urban Indian programs. This section also describes the type of information child welfare providers have received about recent legislation and funding for independent living programs and details additional services agencies would like to provide and the barriers that often prevent them from providing those services. Following the results section, there is a review of the strengths and limitations of the research and a brief discussion of the findings and recommendations for changes in policy, research, and practice related to transition services.

Background

The Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978

Indian tribes had the ability to exercise the right to be responsible for the protection of children and to guard the welfare of their children restored with the passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (Cross, 1986). The focus of Indian child welfare practice has been (1) to identify Indian children when they enter the child welfare system, (2) to prevent their removal from home, and (3) to notify tribes and involve tribes in the care of children who cannot safely remain at home (Jones, 1995; McCarthy, 1993). The Act reads, “The objective of every Indian child and family service program shall be to prevent the breakup of Indian families and, in particular, to insure that the permanent removal of an Indian child from the custody of his parent or Indian custodian shall be a last resort” (Indian Child Welfare Act, 25 U.S.C. § 1931.1978). The goals Congress stated at the outset of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) were to reduce adoptive and foster care placements of American Indian children. The overarching goal of this legislation was to protect and preserve Indian tribes and their resources. The Act recognizes that children are vital to the continued existence and integrity of Indian tribes (Indian Child Welfare Act, 25 U.S.C. § 1901.1978).

With the passage of ICWA, Congress recognized that a high percentage of Indian families were

experiencing unwarranted removal of their children. Congress found a high percentage of the children being removed were placed in non-Indian foster and adoptive homes and institutions (Indian Child Welfare Act, 25 U.S.C. § 1901.1978). Under ICWA, Congress set forth minimum federal standards for the removal of Indian children from their families and attempted to guarantee the placement of Indian children in foster or adoptive homes that reflect the unique values of Indian culture. The law also authorizes funding for Indian tribes and off-reservation child welfare programs to operate child and family service programs (Indian Child Welfare Act, 25 U.S.C. § 1902.1978). However, funding for off-reservation child welfare programs stopped in the mid 1990s.

For the most part, ICWA provides preventive remedies. These remedies do not provide for return of youth in custody to their birth families. These remedies do not guarantee funding or compliance with the Act to ensure that youth who grow up in foster care will have the financial, spiritual, cultural, or emotional resources to be able to return home to their families and tribal communities. Indian child welfare practice and policy is heavily focused on the early stages of the foster care process when ICWA requirements involving notification, active efforts, and returning children to or placing children in Indian homes must be met (Jones, 1995). The emphasis has not been on the needs of youth transitioning from foster care.

Status of Indian Children in Foster Care

American Indian youth continue to enter foster care in either state child welfare foster care or tribal foster care at high rates. MacEachron, Gustavsson, Cross, and Lewis (1996) estimate the state foster care placement rate of American Indian children was reduced from approximately 20.02 placements per 1,000 Indian children, six times the rate of non-Indian children in 1975, to approximately six placements per 1,000 Indian children, about three times higher than the placement rate of non-Indian children, in 1986. Cross, Earle, and Simmons (2000), using Child Welfare League of America 1996 survey data from 34 state welfare agencies, estimate 12.5 out of every 1,000 American Indian children are placed in substitute care compared to 6.9 of every 1,000 children from all races. This would be a placement rate about twice the rate of non-Indian children in 1996.

Independent Living, Transitions, and American Indian Values

Most programs to help prepare youth who are transitioning from foster care are described by the term “independent living” (Children’s Bureau, 1999; Courtney and Barth, 1996; Mallon, 1998; McMillen, Rideout, Fisher, and Tucker, 1997; Pasztor, Clarren, Timberlake, and Bayless, 1986; Scannapieco, Schagrin, and Scannapieco, 1995;

Sims, 1988). The independent living designation is not used to describe transition programs in this report because it neither reflects the reality of what happens when youth leave foster care nor fits with the cultural views of many American Indian people.

One of the reasons the “independent living” designation is not appropriate is that many youth, upon exiting from foster care, return to live with their families. “Although programs are often described to help young people ‘live independently’ after they leave out-of-home care, some studies suggest that youth in such programs may be more likely to return home or live with relatives” (McMillen and Tucker, 1999, p.343). Courtney and Barth (1996) found that many of California’s youth who spent a long time in foster care away from their families nevertheless returned to their families at exit from care. Mallon (1998) reports 21% of the youth in a New York City independent living program were discharged to their families, but at follow-up, the percentage still living with their families declined to 15%. In one Midwestern state, most youth left foster care to live with relatives, some through planned reunification and some through unplanned reunification (McMillen and Tucker, 1999).

An emerging term used to describe the living situations of youth transitioning from foster care is “interdependent” living. Unlike “independent living,” “interdependent living” (Courtney and Barth, 1996) describes young adults learning to

live with the support of parents and community members. Pasztor et al. (1986) encourage support and rehabilitative services for birth families because these services are crucial to help birth families develop support networks for their adolescents when they return from foster care.

Independent living is not a goal in most American Indian communities and cultures. Instead the goal is interdependent, collaborative relationships or continued connections with extended family and community. Interdependence and the theme of interconnectedness are prevalent throughout Native American cultures and have a central role in healing and growth (McCormick, 1997).

Interdependent living for Indian child welfare practice means a focus on reunification with family. Indian child welfare stresses family and maintaining connections with family and community resources. Red Horse, Martinez, Day, Day, Poupart, and Scharnberg (2000) reported the importance of family preservation. Red Horse (1982) emphasized the need to understand American Indian family spiritual resources, group identity, family structures, and important extended family connections. Participating in family chores and engaging in cultural and spiritual activities and ceremonies is a part of becoming active in tribal life. Becoming active in tribal life is a sign of a successful transition into adulthood for Indian youth (Ramasamy, 1996).

Being prepared to participate in cultural activities of the tribe is important because culture and

tradition have sustained First Nations people throughout their histories (Brave Heart and DeBruyn, 1998). This is the reason culturally appropriate foster care placements are important to Indian child welfare practice—because these homes will help Indian youth learn or retain skills that allow them to successfully connect or reconnect with families and supportive communities (Mannes, 1993). McMahon and Gullerud (1995) stress that American Indian child welfare agencies have the advantage of connections to cultural resources, including family support and foster home recruitment, when providing services to Indian youth.

Literature Review

Existing Research on Transition Services

Research on American Indian Youth

Nationally, it is estimated that approximately 1% (possibly 550) of the youth currently served in Title IV-E funded independent living programs are American Indian, while approximately 2% (8,910) of the youth reported to be in Title IV-E funded foster care programs are American Indian (Children's Bureau, 1999). Between 1987 and 1996, the number of American Indian youth reported served in Title IV-E funded independent living programs ranged between 3 youth in 1987 to 561 youth in 1995, with an estimated 395 youth in 1996 (Children's Bureau, 1999). During this time span, approximately 2% of the youth in Title IV-E funded state foster care were reported to be American Indian (Children's Bureau, 1999).

Of course, estimates of American Indian youth participation and statistics about American Indian youth are likely to be unreliable given differing definitions of who is American Indian and varying data collection methods that usually do not include youth served by American Indian tribes³. (For a full discussion of related methodological issues, see Goodluck and Willetto, 2000, and Earle, 2000). Also, it is difficult to make estimates on percentages in the 1% to 2% range since there is possible estimation error. Still, it seems likely that American Indian youth are underrepresented and under served in programs that help youth transition from foster care.

While information about youth of color is noted in transition literature, discussions of American Indian youth and transition programs are almost nonexistent. Researchers may omit identification of American Indian youth in their studies to protect their anonymity. If one or two American Indian youth participate in a study, they could be identified by their separate responses and confidentiality could be compromised. Unfortunately, this may mean little information specific to Indian youth is available to help understand their needs and their unique situations.

Researchers provide information on racial and ethnic status for most youth without including American Indian youth as a separate category. Barth (1990) interviewed 55 young adults in the San Francisco Bay area who left foster care. Barth reported that 72% of the participants were White, 13% were Black, and 9% were Latino. Mallon (1998) reported on participation in an independent living program in New York by youth with diverse backgrounds. Ninety-three percent of the youth in this program were youth of color: 67% African American; 20% Latino; 9% multiracial; and 4% Caucasian. In both of these surveys, none of the youth were identified as American Indian. In addition, McMillen, Rideout, Fisher, and Tucker (1997), McMillen and Tucker (1999), Mech, Ludy-Dobson, and Spann Huiseman (1994), and Pasztor et al. (1986) all report sample demographics from studies of youth transitioning from foster care without noting the inclusion of American Indian youth.

For American Indian youth, there is scarce information describing their transition from foster care. There is a report on transition and Job Corps and post-school employment that may offer a glimpse of their situation. Fore and Chaney (1998) report on a population similar to foster care youth, a sample of 13 male and 6 female “at-risk” American Indian high school seniors and recent graduates participating in Job Corps. The youth who went on from Job Corps to pursue further education seemed to have a greater ability to recognize, accept, and correct their academic deficiencies. They were also more likely to report the presence of a person or persons who strongly supported their academic goals (Fore and Chaney, 1998).

Ramasamy (1996) found a scarcity of research about the post-school employment of American Indian youth: “To date, there has been no comprehensive follow-up study to assess the employment situation of Native American youth” (p.174). Ramasamy (1996) provided results of interviews of 132 Apache youth who exited from Alchesya High School in Arizona from 1988 through 1992. Although 79% of the youth graduated from high school, 71% were unemployed. Given this situation, Ramasamy (1996) concludes that culturally appropriate employment-related transition services are sorely needed.

Since there is a dearth of information about American Indian youth moving into adulthood from foster care, it is important to consider the information that is available in the research—the

status of the general population of foster care youth who transition from foster care.

Research on Youth Transitioning from Foster Care

A general sense of dismay surrounds the fates of thousands of foster care youth currently leaving foster care systems for bleak futures including homelessness, poverty, and incarceration (Stoner, 1999). Many youths who enter foster care remain in foster care until they are 18 years old and, in most states, eligible for emancipation (Stoner, 1999). Courtney and Barth (1996) predict a high proportion of youth leaving foster care in the beginning of the 21st century will leave for interdependent living. Stoner (1999), reflecting on the results of data on 695 youth exiting foster care in the county of Los Angeles, found that for most youth, plans to stay with family or friends on exit do not last long.

Barth (1990) found that after leaving foster care most of the 55 youth surveyed in the San Francisco Bay area had no exposure to life-skills education. Only 35% indicated some tutoring in high school, and 22% did not know how to use public transportation when they left foster care (Barth, 1990). These youth experienced poor health, housing problems, substance abuse, and arrests. All the youth surveyed had high depression scores on the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) (Barth, 1990). Similarly, Cook (1994), summarizing findings

from the National Evaluation of Title IV-E Independent Living Programs, found that youth who leave foster care more closely resemble 18- to 24-year-olds living below the poverty level in education, young parenthood, and use of public assistance than 18- to 24-year-olds in the general population.

McMillen and Tucker (1999) found that in one Midwestern state, most youth left foster care without a job or a high school diploma and many left with neither. The most common living arrangement for youth at the time they left foster care was with relatives, some through planned reunification and others through unplanned reunification. McMillen and Tucker found the majority of the youth exited out-of-home care in unplanned ways.

Stoner (1999) provides a literature review of the connections between life in foster care and homeless status as an adult. National studies indicate that between 15% to 39% of homeless adults surveyed were in foster placements in their childhood (Stoner, 1999). The Wisconsin study of youth discharged from foster care found 14% of males and 10% of females reported being homeless at least once since discharge from foster care (Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, and Nesmith, 1998).

Continuing gloomy statistics on the status of youth leaving foster care have not gone unnoticed by Congress. Since 1986, a series of policy initiatives have been implemented in an effort to

improve the quality of life for youth involved in the foster care system.

Transition Service Policy

The most important new federal legislation impacting the development and delivery of independent living services is the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, which established the Chafee Independence Program (Children's Bureau, 2000). This Act amends Section 477 of the Social Security Act and provides states with double the previous level of funding for independent living services, increasing the level of annual funding from \$70 million to \$140 million. The Act also provides greater flexibility for states to carry out programs designed to help youth make the transition from foster care to self-sufficiency (Children's Bureau, 2000). The Act is important for the Indian child welfare field because the request for proposals from states requires each state to consult with American Indian tribes and consider the needs of American Indian children in the development of state 5-year plans for programs that assist youth in transitioning out of foster care (Clemens, 2000). This is the first transition law to explicitly take notice of the needs of American Indian youth.

The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 is the latest in a series of federal transition initiatives attempting to improve the ability of foster care youth to make what Stoner (1999) aptly describes as "a smooth and successful transition from foster

care to sufficiency” (p.160). The need for programs to smooth the transition of youth from foster care to adult life has been recognized for more than 15 years. The 1986 Independent Living Initiative (Title IV-E Section 477 of the Social Security Act) authorized \$45 million to provide independent living services to adolescents between 16 and 18 years of age in foster care (Mech, 1994). The federal independent living program attained permanent status as an entitlement in 1993 (Mech, 1994). The Independent Living Initiative remained in force and came close to doubling available funding to \$70 million in 1996 (Stoner, 1999).

Independent living policy developed parallel to policy changes in the field of disabilities, where special attention has been paid to the need for development of transition policies, programs, and services for youth with disabilities that allow them to make successful transitions from school to adult life (Hasazi, Furney, and Destefano, 1999). Major federal legislation focusing on transitions for youth includes the Carl Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act (Pub. L. No. 101–392); the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Pub. L. No. 101–476); the Vocational Rehabilitation Act (Pub. L. No. 102–569); and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act (Pub. L. No. 103–239) (deFur, and Taymans, 1995; Hasazi, Furney, and Destefano, 1999).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) amends the Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments (National Transition Network, 1996). Several sections of IDEA pertain to the transition of students from school to adult life. IDEA seeks to involve student, family, school, and outside agencies in the planning process. Student transition services should start when students are at least 16 years of age (National Transition Network, 1996). Congress expects consideration to be given to the need for transition services for some students by age 14 or younger. Age 16 may be too late for many students, such as those at risk for dropping out of school and those with the most severe disabilities (National Transition Network, 1996).

Hasazi, Furney, and Destefano (1999) find local implementation of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) to be an important link for school-based transition programs. A connection between vocational education and work life is necessary and beneficial to students with and without disabilities (Hasazi, Furney, and Destefano, 1999). Vocational education classes have been demonstrated to have some “holding power” over students with disabilities, lowering their probability of dropping out (Evers, 1996, p. 60). Students with disabilities who take vocational courses or participate in work experience programs tend to have fewer absences, succeed in their courses, and graduate from high school. The Tech-Prep Education Act, which is part of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998 (Pub. L. No. 105–332),

requires that vocational programs deliver academic and job-related information to students in curricula that are clearly related to the workplace (Evers, 1996).

Examining international policies to assist youth transitions, Curley and Sherraden (2000) report that most industrial nations and many developing nations offer children's allowances. Children's allowances, in place in 89 countries, are cash grants from the government to families with children (Curley and Sherraden, 2000). In the United States, allowances could be adapted in the form of children's savings accounts. Children's savings accounts could improve the well-being and long-term development of children. If children's savings accounts were put in place, children would have an endowment they could use for education, business, or home ownership when they reach adulthood. Curley and Sherraden (2000) recommend that children's savings accounts be created for all children under 18 years of age with each children's savings account beginning with a "start in life" deposit of \$1,000 from the federal government. Each young person would receive \$500 annually. In time, children's savings accounts would be an important step toward a broader domestic policy based on asset accounts (Curley and Sherraden, 2000).

These federal educational and disability policies are additional resources to guide Indian child welfare practice to help youth be prepared to leave foster care. The existence of federal policies with similar aims in education, vocational rehabilitation, child welfare, and disability services suggests

that interagency collaboration on state and local levels is necessary to meet the goals of these policies. Unfortunately, barriers to effective interagency collaboration and a lack of appropriate services and community networks for youth and adults with disabilities often result in uneven implementation of federal transition mandates (Hasazi, Furney, and Destefano, 1999). Barriers or challenges include limited opportunities for students labeled "emotionally disabled" (Hasazi, et al., 1999), which may be an important obstacle for youth leaving foster care. The other challenges identified by Hasazi et al. (1999) include

- limited participation by students in transition planning;
- limited use of outcome evaluation measures;
- few services in the schools and following school for students with a range of disabilities;
- few services for students ages 18 to 21;
- limited funding for students with disabilities beyond the funds provided within the educational system; and
- tensions between IDEA reforms and special education.

Developing transition policies has largely been a federal initiative with policy implementation based on federal directives to the states. Relatively few states have used additional state legislative mandates to promote transition services (Katsiyannis, deFur, and Conderman, 1998). In responding to federal initiatives, many states have developed innovative educational transition programs (Katsiyannis, et al., 1998) and creative independent living resources for foster care youth (Stoner, 1999).

Current Practices/Services

Koroloff (1990) identified nine components as parts of successful local implementation of transition policies for youth:

- A mechanism for interagency planning and coordination at the local level.
- Adult service agencies that are involved before the time the youth leaves.
- Processes to identify and initiate transition planning for children should begin at an early age.
- Processes should be automatic and not depend on a unique request for each youth.
- A variety of settings should serve as the points of identification and initiation of transition planning.
- A person or system must be identified to take responsibility for planning and delivering services over a period of time, specifically past the age where the youth must leave the child system.
- Parents and youth should be explicitly included in planning and implementing the transition process.
- There should be an interdepartmental mechanism at the state level for planning and coordination of services and for resolving disputes.
- The concept of transition services must be broadly construed to include all aspects of successful independent adult living (p. 81).

The importance of collaboration is continually emphasized in descriptions of transition policy

implementation. Abilities to coordinate, communicate, and collaborate are rated as the most important competencies for professionals to have in order for them to provide effective transition services (deFur and Taymans, 1995).

In an upcoming document that will be published by Casey Family Programs in the fall of 2001, *Es Mi Vida (It's my life)*, Casey presents a youth-centered framework to guide transition services for young people who "age out" of foster care and other substitute care. The principles and practices described in this document serve as the foundation of Casey Family Program's national transition strategy, which aims to provide youth with the skills, knowledge and supports they need to become self-supporting by age 25.

Casey outlines the following strategies that service providers can use to help youth achieve their goals and dreams for a good life, for example

- helping youth and young adults in transition channel their energy, strengths, and power to develop and achieve a vision of successful adulthood;
- identifying areas in which their program, community and/or state can develop new services and strengthen existing services to provide a comprehensive system to support youth transitioning from care;
- developing strategies to facilitate effective and timely implementation of improved services and a comprehensive system of support at the local and state levels;
- identifying and implementing agency, system, and

public policies that promote collaboration among agencies, encourage youth involvement in planning and programming, and prepare caregivers to help youth gain independent living skills.

Independent Living Programs

Independent living programs can take many forms, from the use of foster parents who gradually help children take on adult living tasks to specialized workshops that teach life skills. To provide an understanding of the range of programs possible, three programs with published descriptions are presented below. This is followed by recommendations for features that should be included in transition programs.

Project Stepping Out, a demonstration project in Baltimore County, uses six service components to meet the project's objectives. Project social workers use strengths-based needs assessments to document youth strengths. The project includes task groups and support from volunteers. The project provides youth with apprenticeship opportunities and a 1-day workshop covering housing, vocational skills, and independent living skills. Project social workers also provide thinking, feeling, and doing exercises for youth to practice adult roles and social networking (Pasztor, et al., 1986).

Important program elements of the Kaleidoscope independent living program in Chicago include matching the participant and the program carefully, helping youth gain access to the Department of Rehabilitation Services, providing job leads, and teaching youth to apply for jobs

(Stehno, 1987). This program focuses on reconnection with biological families and disconnection from negative peer influences, such as gangs and drugs. The Kaleidoscope Program also emphasizes teaching participants advocacy skills so they learn to advocate for themselves and others (Stehno, 1987).

Brickman, Dey, and Cuthbert (1991) describe the Supervised Independent Living Orientation program (SILO) of Huron Youth Services in Ann Arbor, Michigan. SILO includes a series of living skills classes. This program is a 3-stage process moving youth from more structured to less structured activities and supervision. The first stage includes finding a place to live, getting a job, observing a curfew, turning in a schedule, and meeting with a caseworker on a daily basis. As youth in the SILO program move toward independence, therapy is made available to them to help them sort through some of their underlying emotional issues. The transition-out stage includes less formal contact with the staff, locating leisure activities, and finding community resources for support and daily living needs (Brickman, Dey, and Cuthbert, 1991).

Transition programs need to help youth cope with emotional issues associated with emancipation (Beyer, 1986). Other elements that transition or independent living programs need to include are decision-making skills, how to accept responsibility, and how to make peace with biological families (Beyer, 1986).

Caseworkers, foster parents, and childcare workers can play a crucial role in helping adolescents to overcome emotional obstacles they face as they enter adult life (Beyer, 1986). Kools (1997) interviewed 17 adolescents from an urban area in California and found that they felt others belittled them for being in foster care. Their sense of being stigmatized was made worse by being socially isolated and missing family connections (Kools, 1997). To be able to cope with loneliness and bias, foster care youth need additional support such as patient instruction on how to predict their feelings, and they need support to overcome chronic depression (Beyer, 1986).

Independent living skills training must begin earlier than age 16 and be interwoven into the daily lives of foster care youth (Kools, 1997). Departure from foster care needs to be seen as a significant emancipation process rather than a termination event (Lammert and Timberlake, 1986). The emancipation process requires cognitive and behavioral problem-solving skills as well as development of feelings skills including the ability to cope with separation and loss (Lammert and Timberlake, 1986).

It should be noted that most, if not all, of these independent living programs are urban programs with the resources and employment opportunities available in large metropolitan areas. Rural areas, where the majority of the tribal Indian child welfare programs exist, may present different challenges.

Evaluation of Independent Living Programs

Mech (1994) found that the child welfare system is uncertain about how to best prepare youth for self-support and responsible adulthood, and most independent living programs, services, and interventions remain untested. Evaluations of independent living programs have begun, and several evaluations indicate these programs have promise.

Cook (1994), in a national evaluation, found that youth who received skills training did appear to have better outcomes in four areas: money management, credit, consumer education, and employment. Mallon (1998) used the Green Chimneys Life Skills Assessment Tool, case records, and interviews with former clients to evaluate the outcome of a New York City independent living program. Of the youth who participated in this program, 75% completed high school or obtained a GED, and 72% had full-time employment at discharge. Sixty-five percent had savings accounts; this decreased to 39% at follow-up two to five years later (Mallon, 1998).

Scannapieco et al. (1995) used case record analysis to compare 44 teens who went through an independent living program with 46 foster care teens who did not participate in the program. The youth who participated in the independent living program were more likely to complete high school, have employment history and employment at discharge, and were more likely to be self-supporting at the closing of their case.

McMillen et al. (1997) conducted focus groups with youth to get their views of participation in independent living programs. The youth found that skill classes and stipends for independent living were helpful, that instruction in managing a budget was particularly valuable, and that independent living services lessened the stigmatization and isolation of being in care. Foster parents and specialized independent living workers eased the transition out of care, but regular public child welfare caseworkers were not helpful in this regard. The young people reported that being in care was difficult to tolerate and that the transition out of care was often abrupt and difficult to manage.

Placements rated as low in restrictiveness (i.e., foster family homes and transitional apartments) are probably the most effective settings in which to prepare youth in foster care for independence (Mech and Fung, 1999). Two-thirds of the youth in less restrictive placements attended post-secondary education, compared to one-third who were placed in highly restrictive settings. Overall, nearly 85% of the enrollees in post-secondary education or training programs came from placements rated as low in restrictiveness (Mech and Fung, 1999). The family life experience associated with foster homes may be the most beneficial transition preparation for youth in foster care. Benedict, Zuravin, and Stallings (1996) found no statistically significant differences in education, current employment, physical and mental health, risk-taking behaviors, and stresses and supports

between youth raised in family foster homes and youth raised in family kinship care homes.

Mech et al. (1994) believe there is a need to improve life skills abilities in all placement settings and to use subsidized transitional housing in addition to apartment placements to supplement foster home, group home, and institutional placements. Clark and Foster-Johnson (1996) recommend that transition plans for youth begin early and definitely include participation by youth ages 16 and older. Family involvement and family role resolution is important. Transition plans should include employment, education, and independent living. Transition programs should include flexible wraparound services as well as interagency collaboration (Clark and Foster-Johnson, 1996). Over the past two decades, practice and policy developments have described the qualities that should be included in transition services. Knowing what should be included leads to an understanding of what is being left out.

Gaps in Services

Early in the development of independent living programs and policy, Stehno (1987) recognized the danger that services would be extended to only a small number of eligible foster care youth. Stehno (1987) also recognized that age-limited services ending at the age of 18 or 21 would not account for developmental delays that some foster care children experience and would result in ending services for youth who were emotionally and

mentally not prepared to be adults. Stehno (1987) advocated for a continuing public guardianship of youth who aged out of the child welfare system but could not support themselves or turn to friends or family for support.

The recognition of people's continuing needs for community, family, and social support, without emphasis on specific age divisions is consistent with Indian child welfare and American Indian community-based social service delivery models. This is consistent with Stoner's (1999) conclusion that communities cannot be relieved of their jurisdictional and moral obligation to youth in foster care until it can be demonstrated that young adults have obtained stable living situations with full employment and permanent housing.

The absence of cultural awareness activities is recognized as a gap in service delivery for independent living programs (Children's Bureau, 1999). Existing cultural awareness activities appear limited in scope and service (Children's Bureau, 1999). There also does not seem to be a body of literature on culturally specific programs to assist American Indian youth transitioning from foster care.

Gavazzi, Alford, and McKenry (1996) describe a rite of passage program designed for urban African American youth in foster care as an adjunct to their independent living program. This program, the AA-RITES program, is designed to enhance the commitment of African American youth to family, race, community, and nation and to bring about self-responsibility and self-mastery.

The outcome for many participants was an "Eastern world view" (p. 172) with participants describing elements important to them including discussion of collective action, harmony, intrinsic values, inner peace, and learning from mistakes (Gavazzi, et al., 1996).

American Indian Cultural Beliefs about Transitions

Providing youth with cultural assets and skills to prepare them to become successful participants in Indian communities is a central aspect of Indian child welfare practice. American Indian child welfare programs operated by tribes draw upon Indian role models to provide formal child welfare services while using the natural helping mechanisms handed down by their elders (Cross, 1986).

Service providers who assist Indian youth in transition programs need to understand and appreciate diversity within American Indian populations. In addition, they also need to know the history and culture of these populations, be aware of their own biases, be willing to learn, and value social justice (Weaver 1999).

For most American Indian youth, transition to adult life will not be seen as a process of separation and independence. Cross (1998) speaks and writes about a relational worldview common to most First Nations people in North America. The relational worldview perceives health and wellness

as a balance of four major factors; these factors can sometimes be understood as the spirit, the context, the mind, and the body. Spirit includes spiritual practices and teachings, dreams, symbols, stories, gifts, intuition, grace, protecting forces, and negative forces. Context includes family, culture, work, community history, and environmental factors including climate and weather. Mind includes intellect, emotion, memory, judgment, and experience. Body includes chemistry, genetics, nutrition, substance use and abuse, sleep and rest, and age and condition (Cross, 1998). Of course, this description of these factors and their contents is only an example and does not represent the whole relational worldview (Cross, 1998).

For most Indian youth, their relational worldview (Cross, 1998) will lead them to seek interdependence and connections between people and their environment. Family is a central part of context in this relational worldview (Cross, 1998). Families transmit rich histories and heritage and provide strategies about how to cope with the dynamics of difference and oppression (Cross, 1998). An American Indian's sense of belonging depends on an understanding of his or her place or responsibility within an intricate web of kinship relationships (Red Horse, et al., 2000). Therefore, moving from foster care to adulthood should include methods to connect youth with their families.

Culturally appropriate transition programs for American Indian youth may be most easily added to programs with a definite cultural foundation. For example, Casey Family Programs and the Yakama Nation developed the Native American Kinship Care Program (Casey Family Programs—Yakima Division 2000). This program strives to build a collaborative network of services and to prevent non-kinship, out-of-home placements, including adoption of American Indian children. Services include crisis intervention, case management, respite care, support groups, family group conferences, legal assistance, educational assistance, transportation, and referrals. The program supports tribal and cultural teachings and teaches tribal and cultural sensitivity to service providers (Casey Family Programs—Yakima Division 2000).

The collaboration necessary to provide Indian child welfare services seems likely to provide a good foundation for transition programs. The following sections discuss how the research team sought to find what transition programs are currently available in Indian Country and the information child welfare directors could provide about those programs.

Methodology

Research Design

The research team conducted a national telephone survey with the goal of obtaining information from 88 tribal Indian child welfare agencies and 12 off-reservation urban agencies. The mission of the research was to understand the availability of resources for youth emancipating from foster care in Indian Country. The literature review helped determine what services were most often recommended for transition programs. Survey questions were adapted from the services section of the Washington State Office of Children's Administration Research Foster Youth Transition to Independence Study (Office of Children's Administration, n.d.) and the Ansell-Casey Independent Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) (Nollan, Wolf, Ansell, Burns, Barr, Copeland, and Paddock, 2000).

The research team asked Indian child welfare agency directors if they provide transition services to foster care youth, what types of services they provide, what types of services they would like to provide, and whether they had heard about the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 and the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. This research was conducted between December 2000 and May 2001.

Participants

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) recognizes approximately 570 American Indian

tribes/Nations in the United States. The research team used BIA regions as the framework to randomly select 78 tribes for the sample. A breakdown of the number of nations sampled from each area is included in Table 1. The sample is designed to be representative of the numbers of Native American Nations in the lower 48 states. The choice of ten Alaskan villages for the sample was arbitrary. An enrollment of 1,000 members was chosen as a median split. The research team did not randomly select the twelve urban Indian service agencies. The research team sought urban Indian service agencies in major metropolitan settings. Within those tribes and agencies, each interviewer sought out the person best able to answer the survey questions. The first priority was to interview the Indian child welfare program director or the person designated to handle Indian child welfare cases. Where specific transition services were available, the interviewer asked for the heads of those programs or departments. Where services or programs were not available, the interviewer asked for a tribal leader or employee who was most knowledgeable about social services delivered by the agency.

Survey Procedure

American Indian interviewers with a specific tribal affiliation conducted all interviews, with the exception of a few urban Indian programs. All research staff members were trained in culturally appropriate interviewing techniques and Indian child welfare.

Initially, interviewers contacted tribal and urban agencies in the sample by telephone to determine the person who could best answer the interview questions. That person was then invited to participate in a 20-minute interview (Appendix A) and was faxed a copy of the questions. This was accompanied by a letter introducing the project and signed by Terry L. Cross, executive director of the National Indian Child Welfare Association and Lucille Echohawk, Indian child welfare specialist for Casey Family Programs (Appendix B). Once the potential participant had time to review

the material in the fax, he or she was contacted again and invited to participate in the interview. In most cases, the interview was completed over the telephone with both the interviewer and the respondent referring to a paper copy of the interview. In a few cases, the respondent chose to complete the interview form in writing and fax back the response. In those cases, the interviewer discussed the content of the interview before ending the telephone call and called back if clarification was needed in any of the faxed responses.

TABLE 1: SAMPLING SUMMARY

BIA Service Areas	NUMBER OF AGENCIES SAMPLED			
	Actual Sample Completed	Proposed Sample	Under 1,000 Enrolled (Actual/ Proposed)	Over 1,000 Enrolled (Actual/ Proposed)
East	6	6	3/3	3/3
Muskogee	5	5	1/1	4/4
Minneapolis	6	8	2/2	4/6
Aberdeen	5	4	0/0	5/4
Albuquerque	6	6	2/2	4/4
Phoenix-Navajo	10	12	7/7	3/5
Anadarko	6	6	1/1	5/5
Sacramento	12	17	10/15	2/2
Portland	10	11	5/5	5/6
Billings	1	2	0/0	1/2
Juneau	8	10	7/9	1/1
Urban	11	12		
TOTAL	86	100	38/47	37/41

Sampling Procedure

One hundred tribal agencies and urban centers were originally sampled; 107 interviews were assigned to interviewers. As some of those agencies chose not to participate in the study, they were replaced in the sample by a randomly selected tribe similar in size and within the same BIA region. In this replacement process, a tribe was selected to replace a tribe that eventually did respond to the survey. Therefore, one more tribe than was originally planned is in the Aberdeen region.

From the 107 interviews assigned, 103 were faxed to respondents and 86 were completed. Four agencies did not respond to interviewer attempts to contact them, so a fax could not be sent. Seventeen tribal agencies declined to participate in the survey. Most of the agency representatives who declined to participate gave the reason that they did not have time to complete the interview. Eleven agencies did not respond to repeated contacts, and one agency provided information that was incomplete, contradictory, and not usable. Seven agencies were randomly selected from representative BIA regions for addition to the sample to replace agencies in the sample that declined, provided unusable data, or could not be contacted.

Interviewers noted situations where they were unable to reach a tribe or an Alaskan Native village. For a few of the tribes, especially those with enrollments under 100 members, interviewers were unable to get through on the telephone, or

the listed telephone number did not work. In the majority of cases where an interviewer did not complete an interview, the person they needed to talk to was extremely busy, always out of the office and not available to complete the interview, or not available at times scheduled to complete the interview. One potential respondent refused to participate in the survey because she did not believe that there would ever be increased child welfare funding for tribes.

Some of the surveys contain minimal information. One Indian child welfare worker explained, "We have such a small tribe; we don't have many child welfare cases." This worker answered "no" to most of the questions in the survey because of the absence of child welfare cases. Another respondent only stated that the tribe did not have any social service agencies or child welfare services available for tribal members.

Sample

The sample consists of 67 tribes, 8 Alaskan Native villages, and 11 urban Indian programs for a total of 86 Indian child welfare agencies. The combined enrollment of the tribes in the sample is 477,266 with tribal enrollments ranging from under 20 to over 200,000. The average enrollment is 6,363 with a median enrollment of 771 and a modal enrollment of 150. The sample was randomly selected from 12 Bureau of Indian Affairs regions, although the Navajo region, which includes only the Navajo Nation, was combined with the Phoenix region (See Table 1).

Distribution of the urban agencies by BIA region is provided in Table 2. Interviewers were more likely to reach someone in tribes with more than 1,000 enrolled members, where 37 out of 41 tribes in the sample were contacted, than tribes under 1,000 members, where 38 out of 47 tribes were contacted.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Statistical significance of the quantitative survey data was determined using chi-square, analysis of variance ANOVA procedures, and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) procedures. Qualitative

analysis of participant comments during the survey is provided for a more in-depth understanding of the quantitative data where appropriate.

Results

The tribal and Alaskan Native village child welfare agencies surveyed were evenly split regarding the provision of transition services to American Indian youth. Thirty-one agencies (41.3%) responded “yes,” they provide transition services, and 34 agencies (45.3%) responded “no,” they did not provide transition services to youth ages 13 to 21. Ten agencies (13.3%) responded “other” indicating that they arranged for some

TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF URBAN AGENCIES BY BIA REGION

BIA SERVICE AREAS	NUMBER OF URBAN AGENCIES
East	1
Muskogee	0
Minneapolis	1
Aberdeen	1
Albuquerque	2
Phoenix-Navajo	2
Anadarko	1
Sacramento	2
Portland	1
Billings	0
Juneau	0
TOTAL	11

transition services for their youth but did not have a formal program to provide transition services. The situation was a little different for the urban agencies in the survey; four (36.4%) indicated that they provided transition services for urban Indian youth while seven (63.6%) did not provide transition services. There was not a statistically significant difference between agency types (i.e., tribal, Alaskan Native, and urban) for the provision of transition services ($X^2 = 2.28$, $df = 4$, $p = .68$).

Service provision, except for the direct provision of “other” services, also does not seem to vary by the number of members enrolled in a tribe or Alaskan Native village. The 22 tribal child welfare agencies that provide transition services beyond those listed in the survey have a mean enrollment of 178,189 members compared to a mean enrollment of 1,858 members for the 52 tribes that do not provide other transition services (ANOVA, $df = 1$, $f = .03$). If the tribe with the largest enrollment is excluded from the sample, the average enrollment for 21 tribes providing “other” services was 6,827, which remains statistically different from the average 1,858 enrollment of tribes not providing other transition services ($df = 1$, $f = .003$).

A total of 8,759 American Indian and Alaskan Native youth received some form of transition services from all agencies surveyed in the previous 12 months. The range was from 0 to 2,000 youth receiving services with an average of 103 youth

served by a tribe or agency. The median is 24, meaning half of the agencies served less than 24 youth. Sixteen (18.6%) of the agencies reported they had no youth receiving transition services in the past 12 months. The distribution of youth served by BIA region is illustrated in Figure 1. A disproportionate percentage of services seems to be provided in the East region. The disparity may be a result of the “luck of the draw” or the way the sampling distribution occurred. No statistically significant difference exists between regions for youth served or not served (MANOVA, $df = 54$, $f = .23$). A likely explanation is that while youth ages 13 to 21 are enrolled in tribes in different regions, they live in the East where there may be more employment opportunities (see Figures 2 and 3). Another possible reason for the disparity is that at least one of the on-reservation programs in the East may have the advantage of access to urban services. Qualitative comments from some program directors (detailed later) suggest that for many rural areas, geographic isolation limits ability to provide services. Future research may need to investigate differences between geographic regions and ability to provide transition services.

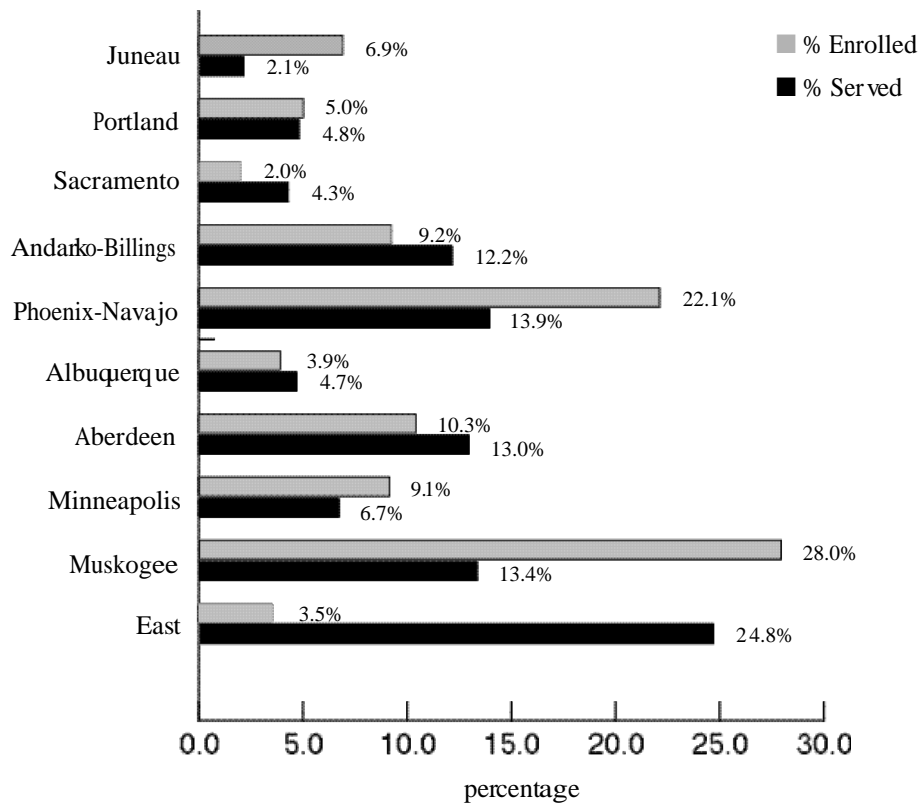
Across all regions, the 86 agencies surveyed provided equal child welfare services to youth under age 12 and to youth ages 13 and over. The number of youth ages birth to 12 receiving child welfare services in the past 12 months from all agencies is 4,729. The mean is 58, and the median is 20. Ten (11.6%) of the agencies reporting these data indicated they provided no child welfare

services to youth ages birth to 12 in the prior 12 months. The number of youth ages 13 to 21 receiving child welfare services in the past 12 months from all agencies was 4,752. The mean is 58, and the median is 15. Nine (10.5%) of the agencies reporting these data indicated they

provided no child welfare services to youths 13 to 21 in the prior 12 months.

Indian child welfare agency directors or their representatives identified 848 American Indian youth on their caseloads who were not receiving any transition services from any source. They

FIGURE 1: ESTIMATES OF TOTAL YOUTH SERVED IN PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS COMPARED TO ESTIMATED REGIONAL ENROLLMENT



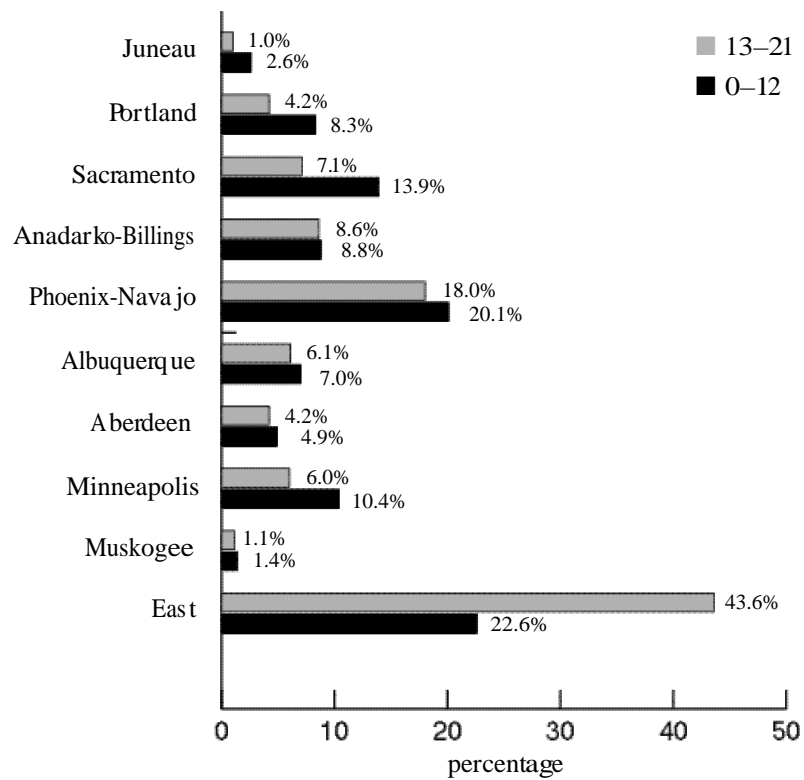
Note: Includes off-reservation urban agencies; some regions have been combined to maintain confidentiality of regions where only one tribe was surveyed.

estimated they provided transition services to 2,598 youth ages 13 to 21. An additional 1,400 youth in this age range were reported as not having transition services directly provided from their agencies. However, these youth might be receiving

services from another source. The distribution of youth served by BIA region is illustrated in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

The agencies provided services using a variety of methods including directly providing services, contracting services with other agencies, and

FIGURE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF YOUTH SERVED BY AGE AND BIA REGION

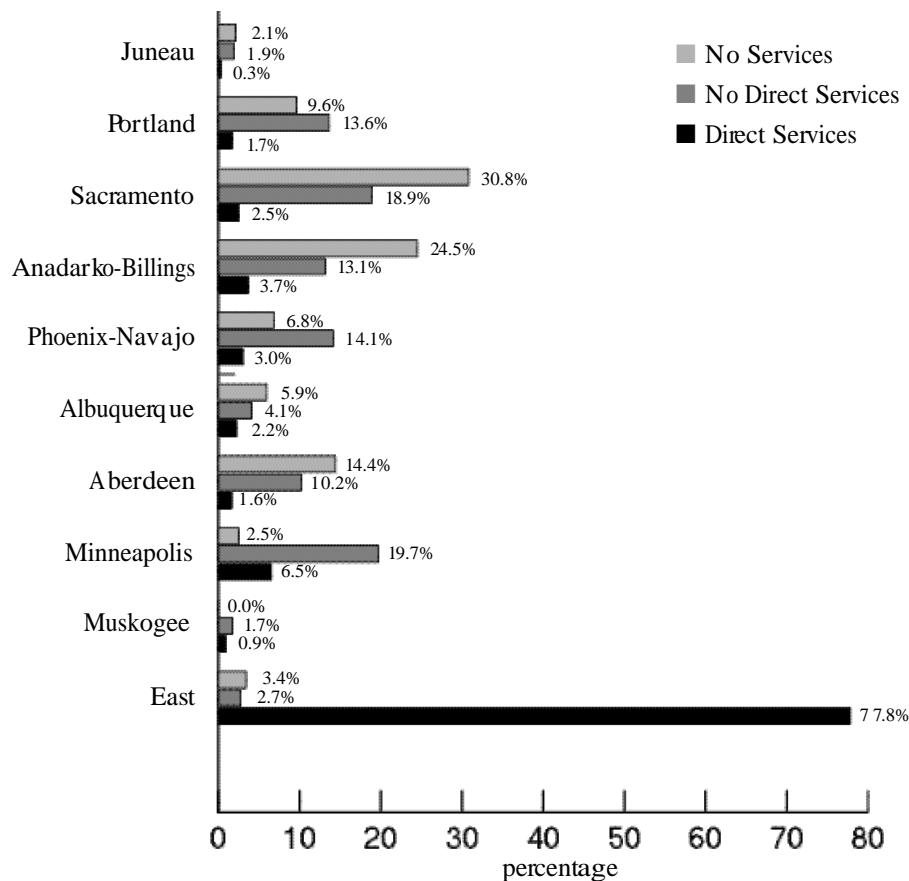


Note: Includes off-reservation urban agencies; some regions have been combined to maintain confidentiality of regions where only one tribe was surveyed.

referring youth services to other agencies (See Tables 3–6). A glance over these tables shows differences in service delivery patterns, but because of the small numbers of Alaskan Native villages and off-reservation urban agencies in the sample, apparent differences may be misleading. There are

no significant statistical differences when types of agencies are compared by service provision categories (See Table 7). The only difference that approaches statistical significance is provision of educational services to assist youth in continuing their education in vocational schools or in

FIGURE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF TRANSITION SERVICES FOR YOUTH AGES 13 TO 21 PROVIDED, PROVIDED BUT NOT DIRECTLY, AND NOT PROVIDED



Note: Includes off-reservation urban agencies; some regions have been combined to maintain confidentiality of regions where only one tribe was surveyed.

college. Tribes may be more likely to directly provide post-high school educational services than off-reservation urban or Alaskan Native village child welfare agencies ($X^2 = 16.96$, $df = 10$, $p = .07$).

The most common services for all of the agencies combined were enrollment services and cultural awareness. Over half of the agency directors reported providing social skills, life skills, and educational support services. The service that agencies are least likely to provide is mentoring, with 36.0% of the agencies having no provision for mentoring services for youth (See Table 3 and Figure 4).

Drug and alcohol treatment was the most common “other services” identified by tribal and urban agencies with nine (10.5%) of the agencies providing substance abuse treatment. Six agencies (7%) indicated they also provided family counseling or family support services. Five agencies (5.8%) added some form of financial assistance. Additional services listed by agency directors were housing (four agencies), domestic violence coun-

seling (two agencies), therapeutic foster homes, residential treatment centers or group homes (two agencies), juvenile delinquency diversion program or gang prevention (two agencies), and literacy programs including family literacy (two agencies).

Other services identified by one agency each include:

- social work case management,
- transportation,
- emergency disaster assistance (food, shelter, clothes, and relief for flood, wind, fire, and plumbing damage)
- indigent burial assistance,
- evaluations for parents,
- providing a mailing address and phone for client use,
- behavioral coaching,
- economic development enterprises,
- child abuse prevention,
- Boys & Girls Club, and
- support groups.

TABLE 3: TRANSITION SERVICES AND DELIVERY METHODS FOR ALL AGENCIES

(n = 86)

SERVICE	Provide Only	Provide & Refer or Contract	Contract Only	Contract & Refer	Refer Only	No Services	Missing
Enrollment	75.6%	9.3%	0.0%	0.0%	3.5%	8.1%	3.5%
Cultural Awareness	65.1%	14.0%	1.2%	0.0%	2.3%	14.0%	3.5%
Social Skills	33.7%	22.1%	5.8%	0.0%	12.8%	20.9%	4.7%
Education	32.6%	24.4%	8.1%	3.5%	17.4%	10.5%	3.5%
Life Skills	31.4%	19.8%	4.7%	2.3%	16.3%	22.1%	3.5%
Mentoring	30.2%	14.0%	0.0%	1.2%	15.1%	36.0%	3.5%
Employment	25.6%	18.6%	8.1%	0.0%	29.1%	14.0%	4.7%
Mental Health	24.4%	23.3%	9.3%	3.5%	24.4%	10.5%	4.7%
Medical Care	23.3%	16.3%	11.6%	2.3%	33.7%	8.1%	4.7%
Dental Care	22.1%	15.1%	12.8%	3.5%	34.9%	8.1%	3.5%
Other Services	19.8%	11.6%	0.0%	2.3%	3.5%	58.1%	4.7%

FIGURE 4: TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED BY AGENCIES AND SERVICES NOT PROVIDED
(n = 86)

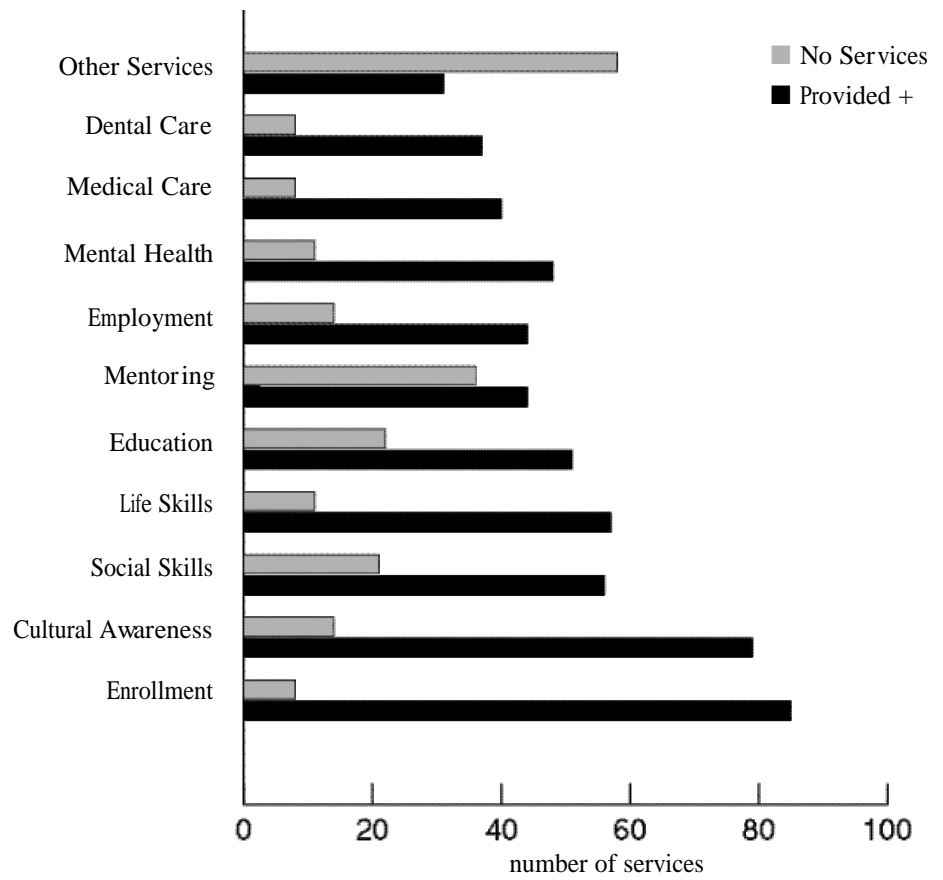


TABLE 4: TRANSITION SERVICES AND DELIVERY METHODS FOR TRIBAL AGENCIES

(n = 67)

SERVICE	Provide Only	Provide & Refer or Contract	Contract Only	Contract & Refer	Refer Only	No Services	Missing
Enrollment	79.1%	9.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	9.0%	1.5%
Cultural Awareness	67.2 %	13.4%	1.5%	0.0%	1.5%	14.9%	1.5%
Education	40.3%	20.9%	9.0%	4.5%	14.9%	9.0%	1.5%
Social Skills	31.3%	25.4%	7.5%	0.0%	11.9%	22.4%	1.5%
Life Skills	29.9%	22.4%	4.5%	3.0%	16.4%	22.4%	1.5%
Mentoring	28.4%	13.4%	0.0%	1.5%	16.4%	38.8%	1.5%
Mental Health	26.9%	23.9%	10.4%	4.5%	20.9%	10.4%	3.0%
Medical Care	26.9%	19.4%	13.4%	3.0%	26.9%	7.5%	3.0%
Dental Care	26.9%	17.9%	14.9%	3.0%	26.9%	9.0%	1.5%
Employment	26.9%	14.9%	9.0%	0.0%	31.3%	16.4%	1.5%
Other Services	16.4%	13.4%	0.0%	3.0%	3.0%	61.2%	3.0%

TABLE 5: TRANSITION SERVICES AND DELIVERY METHODS FOR ALASKAN NATIVE VILLAGES
(n = 8)

SERVICE	Provide Only	Provide & Refer or Contract	Contract Only	Contract & Refer	Refer Only	No Services	Missing
Enrollment	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%
Cultural Awareness	50.0%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%
Social Skills	25.0%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	12.5%	25.0%
Mental Health	25.0%	12.5%	12.5%	0.0%	37.5%	0.0%	12.5%
Other Services	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	62.5%	12.5%
Employment	12.5%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	37.5%	0.0%	12.5%
Life Skills	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	0.0%	25.0%	25.0%	12.5%
Mentoring	12.5%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	50.0%	12.5%
Medical Care	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%	62.5%	0.0%	12.5%
Dental Care	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%	62.5%	0.0%	12.5%
Education	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	12.5%	12.5%

TABLE 6: TRANSITION SERVICES AND DELIVERY METHODS FOR OFF-RESERVATION URBAN AGENCIES
(n = 11)

SERVICE	Provide Only	Provide & Refer or Contract	Contract Only	Contract & Refer	Refer Only	No Services	Missing
Cultural Awareness	63.6%	18.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	9.1%
Enrollment	54.5%	18.2%	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	9.1%	9.1%
Mentoring	54.5%	18.2%	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	9.1%	9.1%
Social Skills	54.5%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	18.2%	9.1%
Life Skills	54.5%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	18.2%	9.1%
Other Services	36.4%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	36.4%	9.1%
Employment	27.3%	27.3%	9.1%	0.0%	9.1%	9.1%	18.2%
Education	9.1%	45.5%	9.1%	0.0%	9.1%	18.2%	9.1%
Mental Health	9.1%	27.3%	0.0%	0.0%	36.4%	18.2%	9.1%
Medical Care	9.1%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%	54.5%	18.2%	9.1%
Dental Care	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%	9.1%	63.6%	9.1%	9.1%

The service category that Indian child welfare representatives discussed the most was cultural awareness services. The following quotations illustrate the importance they gave to providing cultural content and connections:

- “It is important for youth to stay connected to their tribal culture.”
- “I believe when our children are in non-Native foster care it is of great importance to keep our children connected to their cultural heritage as well as their Native people and tribes.”

- “Especially in urban areas, services need to be culturally sensitive, especially in retaining child’s clan identity. Many non-Native adoptive parents and non-Native social workers don’t understand the need to keep a child’s tribal identity intact.”

The common provision of cultural awareness services does not necessarily mean there is agreement within or between tribes about what those services should be. One program director explained,

TABLE 7: X² TEST OF INDEPENDENCE FOR TYPE OF AGENCY (TRIBAL, ALASKAN NATIVE VILLAGE, AND URBAN) BY SERVICE (PROVIDED, PROVIDED & CONTRACTED OR REFERRED, CONTRACTED, CONTRACTED & REFERRED, REFERRED ONLY, NO SERVICES)

SERVICE	X ² Value	Degree of Freedom	Significance
Education	16.96	10	.07
Dental Care	15.26	10	.12
Medical Care	12.72	10	.24
Enrollment	7.11	6	.31
Employment	7.51	8	.48
Mentoring	6.98	8	.54
Other Services	6.32	8	.61
Social Skills	6.27	8	.62
Life Skills	7.26	10	.70
Cultural Awareness	5.34	8	.72
Mental Health	7.04	10	.72

“Dealing with the cultural awareness and cultural connection services this tribe is very divided. Some want culture to carry on traditions (they appreciate and value their culture); some want to focus on acculturation. An executive councilman, the main decision maker, is against cultural awareness. The ones who appreciate and value their culture want to include a spiritual package in that process. The primary thing that has held the tribe back is that there is no middle ground. It is either extreme cultural connections or full acculturation. The council members can't agree to disagree.”

This research indicates that Indian child welfare directors are interested in this new source of funds for transition services. The majority of directors interviewed were interested in Chafee funds and were able to endorse services they would add or expand if the funding was available to them.

Information about the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999

The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 requires, “A certification by the chief executive officer of the State that each Indian tribe in the State has been consulted about the programs to be carried out under the plan; that there have been efforts to coordinate the programs with such tribes; and that benefits and services under the programs will be made available to Indian chil-

dren in the State on the same basis as to other children in the State” (Foster Care Independence Act of 1999).

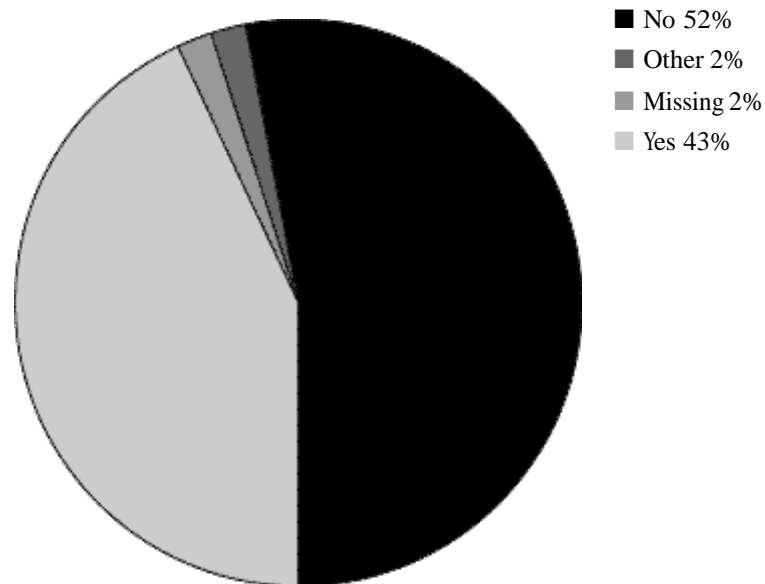
Despite this provision in the law, only 37 (43.0%) of the tribal child welfare agency directors contacted had received information about the Foster Care Independence Act, and only 17 (19.8%) had received that information from state officials. Forty-five (52.3%) agency directors had not been provided information about the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (See Figure 5).

The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) was the most common source of information about the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 with 25 agencies (29.1%) reporting they received information from NICWA about the Act; 52 agencies (60.5%) reported they were not aware of receiving information from NICWA about the Act (See Figure 6). Federal sources provided information to 17 agencies (19.8%), while 60 agencies (69.8%) reported they were not aware of receiving federal information about the Foster Care Independence Act. State sources provided information to 17 agencies (19.8%), while 60 agencies (69.8%) reported they were not aware of receiving state information about the Act. Seven agencies (8.1%) reported receiving information about the Act from other sources including a BIA headquarters office, a speaker, and a state Indian child welfare providers' association (See Figure 6).

Naturally, agency directors could receive information from multiple sources, and when this is considered, the influence of NICWA is even more apparent (See Figure 7). NICWA was the sole source of information for 11 of the 34 agency directors who identified the source of their information about the Foster Care Independence Act, and NICWA is included as a source of information along with federal, state, or other sources for 13 agencies. Just over 70% of the agency directors who reported receiving information about the Act counted NICWA as one of the sources of information.

Agency directors familiar with NICWA may have been more likely to respond to the survey since the introduction letter for this research came from NICWA and from Casey Family Programs. NICWA reports providing information to Indian child welfare agencies before this survey was conducted and during the time the survey was being conducted. In May 2000, NICWA mailed a letter to all tribal child welfare programs in the United States announcing the new Foster Care Independence Act and the accompanying state plan requirements relating to tribal youth. A copy of the publication Frequently Asked Questions

FIGURE 5: PERCENTAGE OF AGENCY CHILD WELFARE DIRECTORS RECEIVING INFORMATION ABOUT THE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE ACT OF 1999



about the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 and the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (National Foster Care Awareness Project, 2000) was included with this letter. In addition, NICWA conducted regional conference calls regarding the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 and the Chafee Independence Program from September 28 to October 17, 2000. NICWA posted the publication *Improving Access to Independent Living Services for Tribes and American Indian Youth* (Clemens, 2000) on their website during the month of March 2001. This report, and summaries from the conference calls

were distributed to a national audience early in April 2001. Coinciding with the dissemination of the independent living information, NICWA also circulated a series of research reports focused on Indian child welfare issues and posted these reports on their website. One report in particular, *Tribal/State Title IV-E Intergovernmental Agreements: Facilitating Tribal Access to Federal Resources* (Brown, Whitaker, Clifford, Limb, and Munoz, 2000), includes a recommendation that tribes have direct access to Chafee funds along with IV-E foster care funds.

FIGURE 6: AGENCIES RECEIVING OR NOT RECEIVING INFORMATION ABOUT THE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE ACT OF 1999 AND SOURCE OF INFORMATION

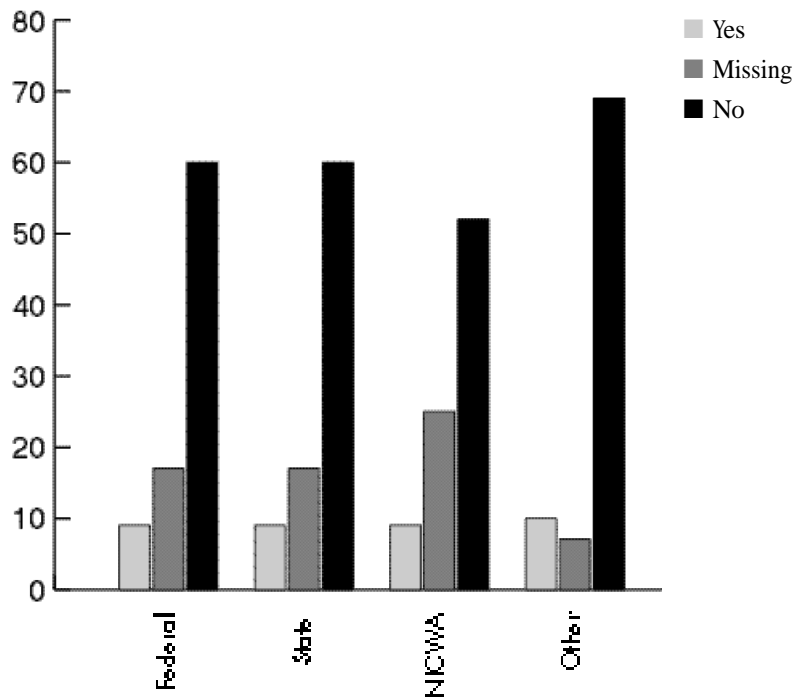
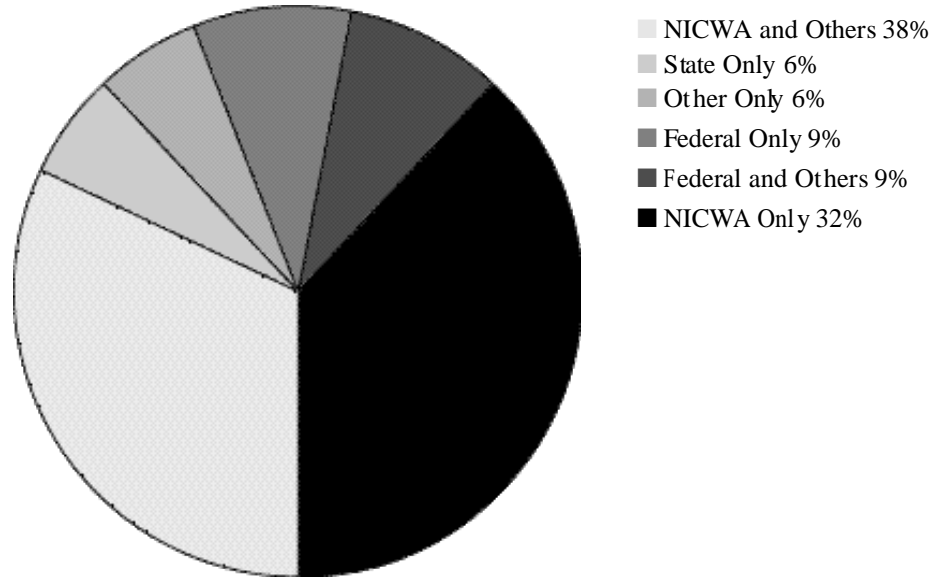


FIGURE 7: SOURCE OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE ACT OF 1999
CONSIDERING MULTIPLE SOURCES FOR 33 AGENCIES IDENTIFYING INFORMATION
SOURCES



Additional Services Agencies Would Like to Provide

Indian child welfare directors reported they wanted to expand their services to increase provision of

most transition services (See Tables 8–10). One director who wanted to add services even though the agency already provided most transition services explained, “All of these services are provided, but they may need to be provided at a higher level.”

TABLES 8–10: SERVICES AGENCIES WOULD LIKE TO ADD

Survey question: What ADDITIONAL services would you like to be able to provide through your tribe/organization to youth preparing to leave foster care or aging out of the foster care system?

TABLE 8: ADDITIONAL SERVICES FOR TRIBAL AGENCIES

n = 67

SERVICE	YES	NO	MISSING
Life Skills	82.1%	13.4%	4.5%
Social Skills	80.6%	14.9%	4.5%
Mentoring	77.6%	16.4%	6.0%
Subs Trans Housing	76.1%	19.4%	4.5%
Cultural Awareness	74.6%	20.9%	4.5%
Kinship Care	74.6%	19.4%	6.0%
Employment Services	71.6%	23.9%	4.5%
Education Services	68.7%	26.9%	4.5%
Mental Health Care	67.2%	28.4%	4.5%
Plans for Med/Dental	67.2%	28.4%	4.5%
Enrollment Services	62.7%	32.8%	4.5%
Medical Care	59.7%	35.8%	4.5%
Dental Care	59.7%	35.8%	4.5%
Other Services	40.3%	50.7%	9.0%

TABLE 9: ADDITIONAL SERVICES FOR ALASKAN NATIVE VILLAGES

n = 8

SERVICE	YES	NO	MISSING
Life Skills	87.5%	12.5%	0%
Social Skills	87.5%	12.5%	0%
Mentoring	87.5%	12.5%	0%
Employment Services	75.0%	25.0%	0%
Education Services	75.0%	25.0%	0%
Subs Trans Housing	62.5%	37.5%	0%
Cultural Awareness	62.5%	37.5%	0%
Mental Health Care	62.5%	37.5%	0%
Plans for Med/Dental	62.5%	37.5%	0%
Enrollment Services	62.5%	37.5%	0%
Kinship Care	50.0%	50.0%	0%
Medical Care	50.0%	50.0%	0%
Dental Care	50.0%	50.0%	0%
Other Services	50.0%	50.0%	0%

TABLE 10: ADDITIONAL SERVICES FOR OFF-RESERVATION URBAN AGENCIES

n = 11

SERVICE	YES	NO	MISSING
Other Services	27.3%	63.6%	9.1%
Social Skills	45.5%	45.5%	9.1%
Mentoring	45.5%	45.5%	9.1%
Cultural Awareness	45.5%	45.5%	9.1%
Mental Health Care	45.5%	45.5%	9.1%
Kinship Care	45.5%	45.5%	9.1%
Life Skills	36.4%	54.5%	9.1%
Employment Services	36.4%	54.5%	9.1%
Education Services	36.4%	54.5%	9.1%
Subs Trans Housing	36.4%	54.5%	9.1%
Enrollment Services	36.4%	54.5%	9.1%
Plans for Med/Dental	27.3%	63.6%	9.1%
Medical Care	27.3%	63.6%	9.1%
Dental Care	27.3%	63.6%	9.1%

Statistically significant differences exist between agency types around the services they would like to add. Higher percentages of tribes (82%) and Alaskan Native villages (87.5%) want to add life skills services than off-reservation urban agencies (36.4%) ($X^2 = 11.89$, $df = 2$, $p = .002$). Similar significant differences can be observed in Tables 8 through 10 and apply to mentoring services ($X^2 = 5.89$, $df = 2$, $p = .052$); subsidized transitional housing ($X^2 = 7.45$, $df = 2$, $p = .024$); plans for medical and dental services ($X^2 = 6.16$, $df = 2$, $p = .046$); and kinship care ($X^2 = 6.10$, $df = 2$, $p = .047$). Urban agencies may be less likely to want to add services considered to be primarily child welfare services than agencies based on tribal reservations or in Alaskan Native villages. This does not mean that urban agencies as a whole do not want to provide transition services, since 27% to 45% of the urban agencies would still like to add life skills, kinship care, mentoring, and subsidized transitional housing.

Core components of transition services such as life skills, social skills, and mentoring, are the services tribal and Alaskan Native agency directors would most like to add to their programs. When asked to identify other services to add, beyond the list of services provided in the questionnaire, tribal agency directors or representatives chose

- drug and alcohol treatment (8 agencies),
- homeless or emergency shelters (3 agencies),
- indigenous language classes,

- religious involvement,
- more support groups,
- recreation, including summer camp,
- higher education and college support services,
- budgeting,
- a rehabilitation unit for disabled children,
- teen parent classes,
- elder contact,
- suicide prevention,
- cultural pride, and
- court advocacy.

Other services Alaskan Native directors would like to add include subsistence support for food and rent, help with college, and traditional counseling, including drug and alcohol counseling. The other services urban agency directors would like to add include independent living, proctor and foster care, more life skills and financial management training, and money for youth to travel to conferences and traditional cultural events.

The tables capture a sense of what Indian child welfare agencies would like to add to their existing programs, but the tables cannot capture the unique needs of each agency. Comments from the service providers interviewed, qualitative data, are included in the following sections to provide an understanding of how each agency strives to add services to fit its own situation.

Services to Add

Indian child welfare service providers explained the reasons they had for adding services specific to their unique situation(s). For example, one participant stated that the tribe needs “subsidized housing for a new group home that is being started. Youth currently do not have anything like that to help them after they have ‘aged out.’” Another said, “We see a need for mentoring programs within the Native American community to help with career exploration/development and the teaching of life skills. Many foster children making the transition do not understand the basics of money management.”

Medical services and transportation to medical care can be difficult to access in rural locations. One Indian child welfare worker explained that the nearest Indian Health Services medical and dental care clinic is 75 miles away. Similarly, an Indian child welfare worker explained, “Although there are programs in a nearby urban area, we need a program based here in our rural area. It is hard to get people to go there to the city. We need the service providers to come here out to the country.”

One director commented that the funding support must be there to really provide the services youth need; this means “money that is worthwhile so that youth are taken care of long enough to adjust to independent living.”

A tribal agency director summarized the need for

added services in this way: “We need awareness in the non-Indian community of the importance of kinship, culture, and the need for the services listed in this question.”

Sometimes there are service delivery problems when the tribal service area does not correspond to state or county borders and service areas. One agency director explained that youth who live in one part of the reservation could not use services 15 miles away because it would mean that they would have to cross the state border, and they cannot cross the state border to obtain services.

Staffing as a Barrier to Adding Services

The qualitative responses also suggest that staffing difficulties prevent agencies from offering more services. For example, an agency has one staff member to provide mental health services including alcohol and drug treatment, anger management, and marriage and family counseling. The other provider for this agency is a community health representative who dedicates his time to serving elders and adults in general.

Statements reflecting this problem include:

“Because of the isolation and the lack of educated Indian members, it is very difficult to recruit and hire staff. Trained personnel are hard to retain because of the severe issues of isolation, discrimination, and poverty” and

“We do not currently have staff qualified to provide child welfare services.”

Other Barriers to Adding Services

There are unique situations in Indian Country that impact the ability of agencies to provide transitional services to their young adults. One Indian child welfare worker explained that tribal benefits may reduce service eligibility: “Over 18 years and a high school grad or completed GED youth are eligible for per capita payments, making them ineligible for transition services.” A director explained that it is hard to provide transition services in her community because the tribal code doesn’t allow custody after age 18: “It is hard to get 18-year-olds into transition services. Also, 18-year-olds get large trust funds, but many are not savvy about money matters.”

One agency was able to cover life skills and social skills under diabetes health services, but the agency does not have a specific designated program for life skills and social skills.

Information Needed to Add Services

Agency directors were interested in finding out what services other Indian child welfare agencies provided so that they could use those programs as models to develop services and also for referrals to youth and families living out of their service delivery area. One director said, “Our program would like to be kept informed of any program that provides these services so we can get an idea of how it can be done.” Another stated, “It would

be interesting to find out what other tribes are doing with their transitional programs.”

One tribal representative wanted to know what transition services were available to Indian youth in urban areas, so if Indian youth living outside the reservation contacted her for referrals, she would have someplace to refer them.

Returning Youth or Young Adults

The survey posed the question, “When youth leave foster care or graduate or emancipate from child welfare services, do they return to their tribe or Native community for assistance?” Only 33 (38.4%) of the agency directors or their representatives indicated they had youth or young adults who came to their organization for transition services or independent living services after leaving another agency or social service system. Most of the agency directors (54.7%) indicated they did not see youth come to them for services after leaving another program (See Figure 8). One director commented, “After they leave, they do not return.”

The directors who reported youth or young adults returning to them for services reported these youth or young adults came from a variety of service sources (See Table 11). The only statistically significant differences were for youth returning from tribal foster care and contracted foster care where the Alaskan Native villages have no youth returning (tribal $X^2 = 6.06$, $df = 2$,

p. = .048; contracted $X^2 = 7.67$, $df = 2$,
p. = .021). One possible explanation is that
Alaska is a state affected by Public Law 280.
Alaska was added to Public Law 280 coverage in
1958 (Earle, 2000). Under this law, the state of
Alaska assumed jurisdiction over foster care (Pub.
L. No. 280, § 7, 67 Stat. 588, 590, 1953).
Therefore, Alaskan Native villages do not report
children returning from tribal foster care or con-

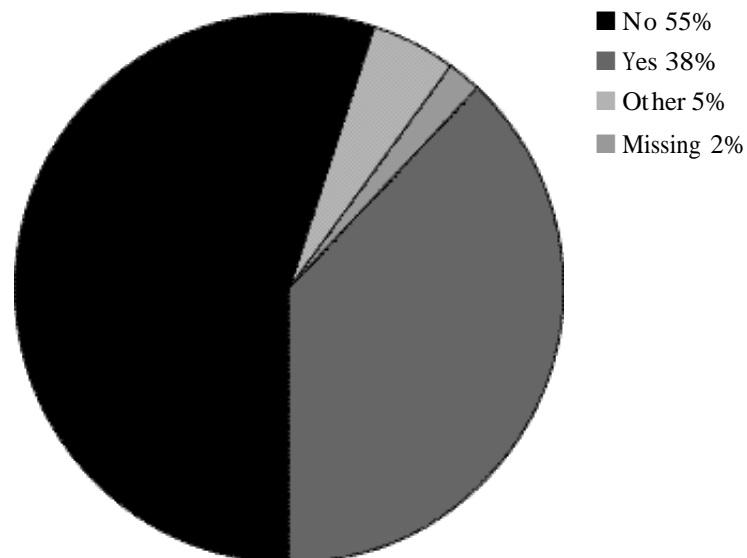
tracted foster care because they do not currently
have jurisdiction over foster care services.

This research is not able to provide estimates for
the percentage or number of youth coming to
Indian child welfare agencies from services
including state foster care and adoptions.
Unfortunately, the questions about percentages of
youth returning were confusing to the people
interviewed and did not yield reliable information
(See question 10 in Appendix A).

FIGURE 8: AGENCIES REPORT ON YOUNG ADULTS RETURNING FOR SERVICES

Question in Interview: Do you have youth or young adults who come to your tribe/organization for transition services or independent living services after leaving another agency or social service system?

(n = 86)



Qualitative Context for Returning Youth

An Indian child welfare director explained that returning young adults were a part of “a lot of movement back and forth from living on and off the reservation. Once they have returned to the reservation, they seek out services, and we have minimal services to offer. The tribal members who choose to stay here are very isolated.” On the same theme, another Indian child welfare director

said, “These youth have come back because they don’t have any other options for services. They cannot get away from the reservation.”

Qualitative Information from the Interviews

Interviewers were instructed to listen to Indian child welfare directors and providers and record their observations about transition services. Child welfare directors and providers were asked, “What

TABLE 11: SOURCE OF YOUTH SEEKING SERVICES AFTER LEAVING ANOTHER AGENCY OR SOCIAL SERVICE SYSTEM

(n = 33 agencies reporting they encountered such youth)

YOUTH COMING FROM	% of Agencies Encountering Youth Seeking Services		
	TRIBAL (n = 26)	ALASKAN NATIVE (n = 3)	URBAN (n = 4)
Family or Relative	92.3%	66.7%	75.0%
In-Patient Alcohol & Drug	88.5%	66.7%	25.0%
Juvenile Corrections	84.6%	33.3%	75.0%
Tribal Foster Care	73.1%	0.0%	50.0%
Contacted Foster Care	69.2%	0.0%	75.0%
State Foster Care	65.4%	66.7%	50.0%
Private Residential Treatment	65.4%	33.3%	50.0%
Adoption	61.5%	33.3%	75.0%
Mental Health Care Facility	61.5%	33.3%	50.0%
BIA Boarding Schools	57.7%	33.3%	50.0%
Job Corps	46.2%	33.3%	75.0%
Military/National Guard	11.5%	33.3%	75.0%
Other	11.5%	100.0%	50.0%

other issues, comments, or suggestions do you want to make about providing transition services to American Indian/Native American/Alaskan Native youth?" Their answers and comments have been combined in three themes: the need for transition services, challenges for existing programs, and collaboration.

Need for Transition Services

An Indian child welfare director described transition services as a "vital need in our service continuum to make sure that services are complete for people." Other comments included the following:

"We need independent living resources on the reservation. Nothing is available on the reservation, and once they leave, they lose the tribal connection."

"We need a stronger orientation program, i.e., youth in foster care are unprepared for life after high school. They come out of boarding schools etc., without knowledge of budgeting, finances, how to get into college, etc. They need someone to provide footwork given that Native American youth are often too intimidated to ask for assistance or help."

"Native people have been colonized, and they need to get back to tradition and learn how to care for their own children. There are currently not enough transition services. We need respect and cultural sensitivity by grantors to understand that Native people do not cut their children loose at 18. It's okay to care for them as adults. Also, 90% of children who

transition out are not conditioned/responsible enough to make it on their own. We lose a lot to suicide/drug abuse. We need parent training to reduce kids in foster care to end the cycle of abuse."

Challenges for Existing Programs

Indian child welfare workers and program directors described numerous challenges to existing service delivery systems. One challenge is the task of providing skills to youth without offending foster parents. A worker described how some foster parents react: "When approached, they say they have done a good job, [they] feel offended." Other foster parents "don't have the time; don't feel it's their job." The challenge for Indian child welfare workers is often how to present the idea of transition services without offending the people who provide foster care.

Another challenge is how to keep youth involved with available services:

"If a child stays in school, services are provided, but there's a glitch because this is overlooked for some youth. A youth who is emancipated at age 18 and not prepared for independent living will move in with friends, but it is not planned out well. Then, the state or agency is not responsible for follow-up to see how things are going. If a youth emancipates but stays in school and signs a contract with the state, the youth rarely follows through on his/her responsibility, so the contract is broken

and given that they are now an adult, independent living services are no longer available to them.”

“Once they emancipate, they tend to fall through the cracks because they are not mature enough or have the intuition to understand life/living on their own.”

“Once they have aged out of foster care (or left the system) and are under 19 years of age, so many fall through the cracks because after youth have aged out or left care, they cannot access financial/housing services. Young mothers cannot access housing because they cannot sign leases. Have to go under parent’s authority.”

One director was concerned that Indian child welfare not overlook and miss the special needs of youth with disabilities ages 0–18 who are without services “except for what schools cover, which is hardly any services. Everything is like a band-aid.” To emphasize the vocational and educational needs of children with disabilities, that tribe started a special needs office. Unfortunately, many tribes are not aware of funding available for transition services for children with disabilities.

Collaboration

Many Indian child welfare directors emphasized that their child welfare services often challenge, co-exist, or collaborate with state and county child welfare services. The nature of their relationship with other child welfare systems affects their ability to provide transition services to their youth. One tribal ICWA director emphasized that

she works closely with county child protection services, and as far as she knows there are no Indian youth placed outside Indian foster care homes. Another said, “When a child reaches the age of 17, the state provides independent living programs.” Another emphasized, “The tribe works with the county to provide transitional training to the older foster children.” Yet another agency director said, “With our new Title IV-E agreement between the tribe and the state, we will be able to provide these services to our tribal youth.”

Another Indian child welfare director expressed frustration with a tribal-state foster care agreement. The state will pay the full amount for regular foster care, but the state does not want to pay the full amount for therapeutic foster care and expects the tribe to pay the balance. The same director acknowledged that despite the frustration experienced when trying to work with the state, “there are some workers that work with us well.”

Another agency director emphasized the need “to get state systems and county agencies to recognize and utilize Indian services for youth. If tribes and Indian programs had access to money, we could provide more services.”

Cultural competency was described as an important element of collaboration. “For transition living to occur in treatment or services, the state, county, and federal levels need more cultural competency to make it easier to start programs. The tribe has to educate mainstream people to

respect their programs.” The recommendation from this program director was to increase awareness on the part of federal and state administrators, “the mainstream side.” Mainstream workers need to understand American Indian cultural programs to understand that the treatment approaches of Indian child welfare program are appropriate.

Discussion

Agency directors, Indian child welfare workers, tribal representatives, and others interviewed in this research were eager to share information to inform transition policy and potentially improve services for Indian youth. Conclusions and recommendations can be made from the information provided. However, it is important to first consider the strengths and limitations of the research.

Strengths

This project was designed and implemented by American Indian social work faculty and students experienced in conducting child welfare research within the American Indian community. This background enhanced the possibility of asking questions that would get at core issues for Indian communities and increased the understanding of the answers given. It also contributed to the high response rate for the project, given that American Indian communities are rightfully cautious of focused studies of any type. The support of this project by the National Indian Child Welfare Association and Casey Family Programs was an added encouragement for Indian child welfare agency staff to participate in the study.

The sampling method allowed for a broad sample of responses from all regions of the United States, including a variety of small and large tribes and villages within those regions and the urban centers serving Indian youth in metropolitan areas. Once the interviewer reached the agency level, s/he asked for the person who worked with Indian child wel-

fare and was familiar with transition services for youth leaving the foster care system. This increased the confidence among the researchers that the interviewee knew about the transition services offered by their agency and knew the youth receiving services from their agency.

Limitations

The agencies selected to participate in the research were drawn from a random sample. Some of the agencies selected declined to participate in the study. As a result, those who did participate are self-selected. This may bias the research in a direction that cannot be determined. The responses appear to be representative of a range of tribes, Alaskan Native villages, and off-reservation Indian child welfare programs in the United States, but there may be problems generalizing this information to all tribes, Alaskan Native villages, and off-reservation Indian child welfare programs. The research team does not know what differences may exist for the agencies that self-selected out of the sample. Estimates provided by survey respondents may not be precise and may be a best judgment of the number of youth served or the number of youth needing services. The final major limitation is that the information provided is based on reports from representatives of Indian child welfare agencies. This research did not contact state or federal sources for comparable information, and no independent verification of the data is provided in this research.

Conclusions

The agency directors interviewed indicated they are striving to meet the needs of Indian youth leaving foster care and entering adulthood. They provide services wherever possible, often on a case-to-case basis, but they would like to be able to expand services and provide more formal, structured, and in-depth transition services. The services most likely to be missing and the services many agency directors would like to add are basic transition services. Those services are life skills, social skills, mentoring, and subsidized transitional housing.

To provide transition services, agency directors are interested in potential funding available from the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 and the Chafee Independence Program. The majority of agency representatives participating in this research have not been contacted about this law and do not report that they have access to the funding.

Most tribal programs, off-reservation urban programs, and Alaskan Native programs consistently offer cultural awareness services. This is a major strength of Indian child welfare that has value for mainstream programs because mainstream programs have been found to lack culturally appropriate services. The importance of cultural services is often recognized but absent from independent living programs. The recommendations contained in the report IV-E Independent Living Programs: A Decade in Review stress that more effort needs to be made to meet the needs of

special populations (Children's Bureau, 1999). Independent living programs should tailor services to meet the needs of special populations, increase outreach to mentors from the same racial/ethnic backgrounds as youth in care, and provide cultural competency training to independent living staff. Most mainstream agencies also need to integrate more formal cultural awareness activities into independent living staff services (Children's Bureau, 1999, pp. vi-11).

Urban Indian agencies as well as tribal Indian child welfare programs would like to be included in planning and funding considerations as states develop plans for Chafee Independence Programs. The Indian Child Welfare Act authorizes funding for off-reservation programs (Indian Child Welfare Act, 25. U.S.C. § 1902. 1978). Funding for off-reservation child welfare programs was eliminated in the 1990s. As a result, many of the urban programs interviewed for this research have focused more on providing adult services than youth services.

Research

There is a need for additional research about transition programs in Indian Country, including exploration of state and local collaborations with Indian child welfare agencies. While Indian child welfare directors were able to identify programs that do provide transition or independent living services to American Indian youth, it would be worthwhile to know more about the array of services these programs provide.

A national study involving both tribes and Alaskan Native villages leaves a considerable impression of geographic, cultural, spiritual, and resource differences that exist between American Indian communities across the country. Each community, tribe, and village is different and they each have unique problems and solutions regarding the care of their youth. Across this land, American Indian youth and the child welfare workers serving them need additional assistance from federal and state sources to prepare for successful transitions of youth out of foster care. To improve conditions for all youth, federal and state agencies need to fulfill their obligations under the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 and under other laws and treaties applying to American Indian tribes and Alaskan Native villages and corporations.

Recommendations

Policy

- o Indian child welfare practice and values should lead mainstream child welfare practice with a move away from policies and legislation based upon concepts of “independent living” toward transition policies congruent with American Indian standards in order to help foster care youth connect or reconnect with supportive families and communities.
- o State and federal agencies should demonstrate efforts to comply with the requirements of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 to consult with each tribe in a given state. The chief executive officer of each state and federal agency should enforce the requirement that plans reflect consultation with all tribes in a given state.
- o Young adults should receive continuing services based on need and developmental level rather than on age limitations. This would mean extending foster care and transition services for youth beyond age 21.
- o There is a need to review and coordinate federal transition policies in child welfare, education, vocational rehabilitation, mental health and other efforts to provide consistent policy and funding support for youth leaving children’s services and transitioning to adult life and/or adult services.
- o Tribes and Alaskan Native villages and corporations should be able to receive Foster Care Independence Act funding for transition services directly from the federal government.
- o To receive the full benefit of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, tribes and Alaskan Native villages and corporations will need

direct access to Title IV-E funding to support child welfare and transition services (for full rationale and recommendations, see Brown et al., 2000).

- o Urban off-reservation child welfare agencies should be included by states and tribes in plans to prepare American Indian youth for adult living.
- o Policy development, as well as funding, technical assistance, and further research efforts, should recognize collaborations, including intertribal collaborations, collaborations between tribes and states or counties, and collaborations between tribes and non-Indian child welfare service organizations.

Research

- o The next research step should be an investigation of model transition service programs in Indian Country to be able to report how cultural activities support transitions and what service delivery systems work best for American Indian youth.
- o Research is needed to establish outcomes that child welfare agencies should seek to have from participation of American Indian youth in foster care. This is especially important given differing cultural values and traditions about the preparation of youth for adult living
- o A lack of data on American Indian youth (Earle, 2000; Goodluck and Willetto, 2000) makes it difficult to assess the number of American Indian youth needing transition services and the extent of services they will need. Further research on the status of Indian youth is vital.

- o Differences between transition services in urban and rural areas should be investigated for policy and practice implications.
- o Agencies will need support to collect data on youth services and referral sources for youth to be able to demonstrate need and to support requests for additional funding.
- o Tribes and Alaskan Native villages and corporations should be able to develop their own services and offer services on or near their homelands. Tribes, villages, and corporations should not have to send youth out of their communities to receive independent living services.

Practice

- o State and federal child welfare leaders should extend opportunities to American Indian child welfare leaders to participate in transition planning advisory boards, committees, and task forces. American Indian child welfare leaders should seek opportunities to send representatives to transition planning advisory boards, committees, and task forces.
- o The importance of cultural awareness services and rites of passage programs should be noted in transition policy and practices. State and federal officials should respect and support cultural services provided by tribes and urban Indian programs.
- o To connect with tribes and Alaskan Native villages and corporations in the development of state 5-year transition plans, state child welfare personnel will need to adapt to a different level of government-to-government relations and culturally sensitive ways of doing business.
- o To increase tribal and Alaskan Native village and corporation awareness of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 and help states' outreach to Indian Country, technical assistance should be provided to states and tribal agencies by agencies that have a record of technical support with states and tribes.
- o Tribes, villages, and corporations should consider the use of children's savings accounts (CSAs). Tribes who provide per capita payments for tribal members may want to consider setting aside some funding for youth in CSAs to provide support for their transition into adult life.

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APPENDIX A: Interview

Introduction

Transition Programs in Indian Country

Interview with Child Service Program Director or Representative

(This page will be removed and stored separately from completed interview)

INTERVIEWER INFORMATION (To be completed at time of interview)

Interviewer: _____ Date: _____

Time started: _____ Time finished: _____

Tribe/Organization Information _____

Tribe/Organization _____

Respondent: _____

Fax number: _____

Telephone Number: _____

BIA Service Area _____

Enrollment Estimate for Tribe: _____

Check one:

- Indian Tribe
- Alaskan Native Entity
- Off reservation child welfare program.

Expected Interview Time: 20 Minutes

Address to send gift certificate to: _____

Preferred Gift Certificate:

- Wal*Mart
- American Express

Survey Questions

Please send copy of research report when done: yes no

This telephone survey is being conducted by Portland State University and is sponsored by the National Indian Children's Alliance (NICA) which is a collaborative venture of the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) and Casey Family Programs.

The survey is being conducted to obtain information about services that may or may not be available to prepare Native youth to leave foster care and to have successful lives after being in foster care. In this interview these programs are described as youth transition programs, although often they are termed independent living programs. Obtaining information about youth transition programs in Indian country is important to inform policy makers as they develop guidelines to implement new federal legislation designed to serve youth leaving foster care. It is also valuable to program planners seeking to meet the needs of Native youth in transition.

Your answers will be kept confidential and reported only in general terms grouped with the responses of other tribal representatives. The identifying page will be removed and stored separate from the interview responses. Please ask any questions you would like before the interview begins and any time during the interview. You may skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. Thank you for your assistance!

- 1) Does your tribe/organization now provide services to prepare youth ages 13 to 21 to transition from foster care to adult living?
- _____ 1=Yes
 _____ 2=No
 _____ 3=Other [Describe response] _____

- 1a) I'm going to read a list of possible transition services. Please tell me which of these services your tribe/organization provides, which are contracted out and which ones you refer youth to a specific provider.

Service Type	i. Provided? [circle one]	ii. Contracted out? [circle one]	iii. Referred Out? [circle one]
1. Employment/vocational services including vocational rehabilitation	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No
2. Education/higher education/GED preparation/high school completion	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No
3. Medical Care	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No
4. Dental Care	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No
5. Mental Health Care	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No
6. Life skills	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No
7. Social skills	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No
8. Mentoring	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No
9. Cultural Awareness/Cultural Connections services	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No
10. Assistance with Enrollment/ Membership/ Tribal Identification	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No
11. Other	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No	1=Yes 2=No
11a. If yes to other, please describe: _____			

1b) How many youth would you estimate receive one or more of these services from your tribe/organization during the last 12 months?

Number _____

1c) Which services did these youth receive from your tribe/organization during the last 12 months?

Service Type	Received? [circle one]
1. Employment/vocational services including vocational rehabilitation	1=Yes 2=No
2. Education/higher education/GED preparation/high school completion	1=Yes 2=No
3. Medical Care	1=Yes 2=No
4. Dental Care	1=Yes 2=No
5. Mental Health Care	1=Yes 2=No
6. Life skills	1=Yes 2=No
7. Social skills	1=Yes 2=No
8. Mentoring	1=Yes 2=No
9. Cultural Awareness/Cultural Connections services	1=Yes 2=No
10. Assistance with Enrollment/Membership/Tribal Identification	1=Yes 2=No
11. Other	1=Yes 2=No

11a. If yes to other, please describe: _____

2. Does your tribe/organization now provide services to youth or young adults ages 16 to 21 who have left foster care or aged out of foster care?

_____ 1=Yes

_____ 2=No [Skip to question 3]

_____ 3=Other [Describe response] _____

2a) I'm going to read a list of possible transition services. Please tell me which of these services your tribe/organization provides these youth.

Service Type	Provided? [circle one]
1. Employment/vocational services including vocational rehabilitation	1=Yes 2=No
2. Education/higher education/GED preparation/high school completion	1=Yes 2=No
3. Medical Care	1=Yes 2=No
4. Dental Care	1=Yes 2=No
5. Mental Health Care	1=Yes 2=No
6. Life skills	1=Yes 2=No
7. Social skills	1=Yes 2=No
8. Mentoring	1=Yes 2=No
9. Cultural Awareness/Cultural Connections services	1=Yes 2=No
10. Assistance with Enrollment/Membership/ Tribal Identification	1=Yes 2=No
11. Subsidized transitional housing	1=Yes 2=No
12. Plans for medical and dental insurance	1=Yes 2=No
13. Kinship Care	1=Yes 2=No
14. Other	1=Yes 2=No

If yes to other, please describe: _____

2b) How many youth would you estimate receive one or more of these services from your tribe/organization ?

Number _____

3) What ADDITIONAL services would you like to be able to provide through your tribe/ organization to youth preparing to leave foster care or aging out of the foster care system?

Service Type	Would like to provide? [circle one]
1. Employment/vocational services including vocational rehabilitation	1=Yes 2=No
2. Education/higher education/GED preparation/high school completion	1=Yes 2=No
3. Medical Care	1=Yes 2=No
4. Dental Care	1=Yes 2=No
5. Mental Health Care	1=Yes 2=No
6. Life skills	1=Yes 2=No
7. Social skills	1=Yes 2=No
8. Mentoring	1=Yes 2=No
9. Cultural Awareness/Cultural Connections services	1=Yes 2=No
10. Assistance with Enrollment/Membership/ Tribal Identification	1=Yes 2=No
11. Subsidized transitional housing	1=Yes 2=No
12. Plans for medical and dental insurance	1=Yes 2=No
13. Kinship Care	1=Yes 2=No
14. Other	1=Yes 2=No
14a. if yes, please describe: _____	

- 4) In the last 12 months, how many youths in the following age ranges received any type of child welfare services from your tribe/organization? If unknown, please provide your best estimate:

[INTERVIEW PROMPT if asked: “It will help us to know how the relationship between the number of youth who may be eligible for Transition Services compared to total number of youth you provide child welfare services to.”]

Age Range (in years)	Number of youth receiving child welfare services in past 12 months
a. 0–12	
b. 13–21	

- 5) How many of the youth receiving services from your tribe/organization and between ages 13 to 21 ARE receiving transition services from your tribe/organization ?

Number _____

- 6) How many of the youth receiving services from your tribe/organization and between ages 13 to 21 are Not receiving transition services from your tribe/organization ?

Number _____

- 7) How many of the youth receiving services from your tribe/organization and between ages 13 to 21 and who are Not receiving these services from your tribe/organization are also NOT receiving transition services from any other agency?

Number _____

- 8) Do you have youth or young adults who come to your tribe/organization for transition services or independent living services after leaving another agency or social service system (for example, after leaving state foster care)?

_____ 1=Yes

_____ 2=No [Skip to question 11]

_____ 3=Other [8a. if other, describe] _____

- 9) In the past twelve months, please indicate whether these youth have come to your tribe/organization after leaving the following situations:

Situation that youth are leaving	Do they come to your tribe/organization?

- | | | |
|---|-------|------|
| 1. Tribal foster care programs | 1=Yes | 2=No |
| 2. Contracted foster care programs | 1=Yes | 2=No |
| 3. Family or relative care | 1=Yes | 2=No |
| 4. State foster care programs | 1=Yes | 2=No |
| 5. BIA Boarding Schools | 1=Yes | 2=No |
| 6. Job Corps | 1=Yes | 2=No |
| 7. Mental health care facility | 1=Yes | 2=No |
| 8. Juvenile corrections | 1=Yes | 2=No |
| 9. Private residential treatment | 1=Yes | 2=No |
| 10. Adoption (A youth or young who has been adopted outside of the Tribe or Indian Community and who is now trying to reconnect.) | 1=Yes | 2=No |
| 11. Military/National Guard | 1=Yes | 2=No |
| 12. Inpatient Alcohol and Drug Treatment | 1=Yes | 2=No |
| 13. Other | 1=Yes | 2=No |
| 13a. If yes, describe: _____ | | |
-

10) Of the youth you encounter who are ages 13 to 21 and transitioning out of the following situations, what percentage request services from your tribe/organization? Please provide your best estimate:

Situation that youth are leaving	Do they come to your tribe/organization ?		Percentage
1. Tribal foster care programs	1=Yes	2=No	____%
2. Contracted foster care programs	1=Yes	2=No	____%
3. Family or relative care	1=Yes	2=No	____%
4. State foster care programs	1=Yes	2=No	____%
5. BIA Boarding Schools	1=Yes	2=No	____%
6. Job Corps	1=Yes	2=No	____%
7. Mental health care facility	1=Yes	2=No	____%
8. Juvenile corrections	1=Yes	2=No	____%
9. Private residential treatment	1=Yes	2=No	____%
10. Adoption (A youth or young who has been adopted outside of the Tribe or Indian Community and who is now trying to reconnect.)	1=Yes	2=No	____%
11. Military/National Guard	1=Yes	2=No	____%
12. Inpatient Drug or Alcohol Treatment	1=Yes	2=No	____%
13. Other	1=Yes	2=No	____%
13a. If other, please describe: _____			

APPENDIX B: Letter of Support

11. Have you received information about the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 and the related John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program?

_____ 1= Yes

_____ 2= No [Skip to question 12]

_____ 3= Other [11a. Describe] _____

11b) Has this information been provided by [indicate all that apply]:

_____ 1= Federal sources

_____ 2= State sources, state consultation about services to Indian youth

_____ 3= National Indian Child Welfare Association

_____ 4= Other sources

Please list: 5= _____

12) What (additional) information would you like to receive about the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 and the John H. Chafee Independence program?

[INTERVIEWER, do not read list unless asked. Just mark any items mentioned by respondent]

_____ a. Research staff should make contact with NICWA to arrange to provide information

i. List information requested: _____

_____ b. Interviewer gave web address for NICWA for follow-up information and links
(www.nicwa.org)

_____ c. Interviewer gave web address for Casey Family for follow-up information and links
(www.casey.org)

13) What other issues, comments or suggestions do you want to make about providing transition services to American Indian/Native American/Alaskan Native youth?

14) Do you know any programs we should contact that provide transition or independent living services to American Indian/Native American/Alaskan Native youth?

Time interview completed: _____ [also note on front of form]

That is the end of the interview. Thank you very much for your time. Now I'd just like to confirm what address to send the gift certificate to.

[Write name and address for gift certificate on front page of interview]

Would you also like a copy of the research report when we are done?

[Write answer on front page of interview]

Questions about this research?

Contact Thomas L. Crofoot Graham, PhD., Principle Investigator

Assistant Professor, Portland State University

1-800-547-8887 x55020, grahamt@pdx.edu

FOOTNOTES

September 26, 2000

To Whom It May Concern:

Casey Family Programs (Casey) and the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) have written this letter to inform you of our recently formed partnership, the “National Indian Children’s Alliance,” and to introduce you to the research component of that partnership. The primary goal of our partnership is to increase permanency options for Indian children. We will accomplish this through efforts in three major project areas. The first component, with which this letter is most concerned, is the research component. We are contracting with nationally known Indian researchers and specialists to conduct research that can contribute to policy development on national issues that impact permanency options for Indian children. The second component will create technical assistance teams that will provide on-site technical assistance and training to tribes to enhance permanency services and options for their children. The third component will facilitate the development of tribal adoption codes that incorporate historic, culturally defined practices and implement a campaign to develop more foster, kinship or adoptive homes. Together, these three components will provide Indian children with a stronger foundation for achieving the permanency that all children deserve.

The research component allows NICWA and Casey to provide the public policy dialogue in child welfare with accurate and reliable information on the needs of Indian children. Currently, policymakers and practitioners have little information to guide them in their respective pursuits. Information that is available is often many years old or anecdotal in nature. This creates a barrier for policymakers and practitioners as they attempt to develop new programming, laws and funding. The all too common result is that Indian children are left out of the picture. When policymakers do not understand the needs of Indian children or are skeptical of the existing data, there is a tendency not to include provisions in new laws that provide benefits to Indian children. Practitioners face the same barriers, resulting in the development of new services that either do not reach Indian children or provide few benefits. In the more extreme cases, new laws and services can actually diminish the ability of Indian children to achieve permanency.

Casey and NICWA have contracted with six nationally known Indian researchers and specialists to help us close the gap on the problems identified above. These researchers will be conducting research on six different topics in the year 2000 and will be attempting to collect information in communities and organizations throughout the United States. Some of the projects will be multi-year projects, while others will be single year projects. At the end of this year, each project will produce a report detailing the research process and findings. Each of these reports will be professionally published and available for dissemination to a national audience. The research projects and lead researchers this year include:

- 1) A databook project focusing on Native American Children’s Well-Being Indicators – Charlotte T. Goodluck, Ph.D. and Angela A. A. Willetto, Ph.D. of Northern Arizona University.
- 2) Examination of the Title IV-E Foster Care and Adoption Assistance program for states and tribes that have entered into agreements – Eddie Brown, DSW of Washington University.
- 3) Assessment of family preservation services in Indian communities – Priscilla Day, Ed.D. and John RedHorse, Ph.D. of University of Minnesota Duluth.
- 4) Analysis of child abuse and neglect data for Indian children – Kathleen Earle, Ph.D. of University of

Southern Maine.

- 5) Compliance study of the Indian Child Welfare Act for Indian children under state custody – B.J. Jones, J.D. of the Northern Plains Tribal Judicial Institute, University of North Dakota and Jodi Gillette of the Native American Children and Family Services Training Institute.
- 6) An assessment of Transition Programs in Indian Country – Thomas L. Crofoot Graham, Ph.D. of Portland State University.

Casey and NICWA recruited these researchers for their quality experience in working with Indian communities, familiarity with the issues being researched and reputations as very competent and professional researchers. In addition, strict protocols for maintaining confidentiality have been developed and discussed with all of the researchers, as well as making sure that the communities and/or organizations that assist in this collection of information are provided with ongoing communication regarding how the information will be utilized.

It is our hope that you will welcome and assist these researchers when they approach you for the purpose of collecting information or learning more about issues in your area of expertise. Your help and cooperation are a very important part of what is needed to make each of these projects a success and ultimately help improve the permanency options for all Indian children. Furthermore, we are serious about wanting to hear your feedback on how we are doing. If you have any questions or would like to provide us with some comments regarding the projects, please contact either of the following persons:

David Simmons, Director of Policy and Research
National Indian Child Welfare Association
5100 SW Macadam, Suite 300
Portland, Oregon 97201
phone: (503) 222-4044
e-mail: desimmons@nicwa.org

Lucille A. Echohawk, ICW Specialist
Casey Family Programs
Great Plains Regional Office
455 Sherman Street, Suite 550
Denver, Colorado 80203
phone: (303) 871-8201
e-mail: lechohawk@casey.org

Casey and NICWA want to extend our sincere appreciation for any assistance you provide in completing these research projects. The work that goes into developing these kinds of reports is significant, but we are very optimistic about the contribution these reports will make to the field of child welfare, and especially the well being of Indian children.

Sincerely,

Terry L. Cross, Executive Director
National Indian Child Welfare Association

Lucille A. Echohawk, ICW Specialist
Casey Family Programs