



Youth Policy Institute of Iowa Receives Grant to Improve Post-Secondary Success among Youth Transitioning from Foster Care

Des Moines, Iowa – July 11, 2013 – [Youth Policy Institute of Iowa \(YPII\)](#) has received a grant to improve education and career success for youth transitioning from foster care into adulthood in Iowa. The YPII grant is one of five being awarded across the country under a new initiative created by the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#) and the [Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative](#).

Education and employment are two areas where young people who age-out of foster care frequently struggle. “This grant will allow us to focus specific attention on these issues and help us make better connections so these young people experience more success in college and careers,” said Carol Behrer, Executive Director of YPII. “Nationally, only about three percent of young people who age-out of foster care complete college by the age of 26. We can do better than that for these young people,” stated Behrer.

YPII will partner with the [Iowa Department of Human Services](#), [Iowa College Aid Commission](#), and local foster care, education and workforce partners to carry out the project. The Iowa project will also benefit from technical assistance to be provided by Boston-based [Jobs for the Future](#). Jobs for the Future’s [Back on Track model](#) seeks to build supportive pathways for older youth into and through post-secondary education and career opportunities.

[Leah Lingren](#) will lead the work. “One of our first steps is to identify and document the education and career programs and services currently available for this population in the Des Moines area and determine where there are gaps,” stated Lingren. YPII will be collecting information on high school completion programs, post-secondary bridge programs that prepare young people for college, and college support programs. “Our plan is to produce a ‘navigation tool’ that anyone working with this population can use to help guide these youth to the most appropriate program or service,” continued Lingren.

The program information gathered will be analyzed in context of data on youth in foster care as well as workforce data on in-demand occupations and associated programs of study. Results of this mapping phase will be used to inform the development of an intervention model.

Debbie Chase, Director of Strategic Development for Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, is excited about the potential of these small grants to make a big difference. “Iowa is already serving a large number of youth transitioning from foster care so there’s great opportunity to demonstrate and measure impacts of this work there,” stated Chase. “With its active partners, Iowa is in an excellent position to develop navigation tools and an intervention model that can be applied in different places in the state.”

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[About Youth Policy Institute of Iowa](#)

YPII specializes in policies and programs affecting youth transitioning from adolescence to adulthood, particularly those who have been involved in child welfare (foster care) or juvenile justice systems. Now in its 10th year as lead agency in Iowa for the national Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, YPII implements a comprehensive set of strategies to improve results for this target population. YPII also coordinates the statewide [Iowa Aftercare Services Network](#), which provides support to hundreds of young adults who age out of foster care.

