**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Our Journey Together: Building and Strengthening Partnerships to Best Serve Youth in Foster Care**

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JONATHAN VEHLOW: Welcome to "Our Journey Together: Building and Strengthening Partnerships to Best Serve Youth in Foster Care." So without further ado, I'd like to turn things over to our moderator today, Sara Hastings, unit chief/youth policy and performance, U.S. DOL/ETA. Sara?

SARA HASTINGS: Great. Thank you so much, Jonathan. And welcome, everybody. We are so excited to have you all joining us today. We think we had about a little over 600 folks register for today's webinar. So we're so glad that you could join us.

We feel really passionate about today's topic and we may – it's foster care month and we thought it was appropriate in recognition of foster care month that we reached out to our Department of Health & Human Services at the children's bureau, our colleagues there, to really think about how we could best provide information to our respective fields and to discuss ways we can better coordinate and align and connect services for youth in foster care, both on the child welfare side and on the WIOA youth program side.

We've got a really full agenda. We are going to hear from folks from the children's bureau over at HHS and then – (inaudible) – health a little bit about our foster care month resources. We're also going to talk to you guys and share some information around debunking some myths about serving youth in foster care in the WIOA youth program.

We've recently developed a myth buster on this topic and I'll point it out. It's in the File Share window and you should be able to see that document there. It is the myth buster that we've recently developed and we'll walk through a little bit of that today.

And then we're also really excited to share with you guys some examples of where this collaboration is happening, both at the state level in Texas and also, at the local level in San Diego.

And our presenters today have some really great information that they're going to share with you and some infrastructure and partnerships in alignment information that they're going to be able to share with you. So hopefully you can take that back to your communities and to your state and have good conversations about how to better support and serve youth in foster care.

So we have with our presenters today, a number of them, we've got a full docket today – we have Catherine Heath and Taffy Compain, both from the children's bureau over at the Administration For Children & Families at the Department of Health & Human Services here in D.C.

And then we also have – from the State of Texas, we have Jenn Troke, Lanette Johndrow and Ben Holquist from the Texas Workforce Commission and Gaye Vopat with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

And then in San Diego, we have Krysta Esquivel who is with the YMCA Community Support Services and Sara Fox who is the manager of programs at the San Diego Workforce Partnership. So lots of great presenters today, a lot of different folks you're going to hear from.

And I want to turn it over now to Taffy over at the children's bureau to talk through a little bit of the foster care month resources that are out there. So Taffy, we'll turn it over to you.

TAFFY COMPAIN: All right. Thank you, Sara. So hello, everybody and thank you for joining us today as well. My name is Taffy Compain and I'm the national foster care specialist at the children's bureau in the administration for children and families at the Department of Health & Human Services.

So as you all know, in May, federal, state, local government and also, many other great partners acknowledge those who help children in youth in foster care find permanent homes and also find connections. It's also a time to recognize the need to help now more than 430,000 children in youth in foster care across the country.

So this year the children's bureau would like to particularly recognize the incredible contributions of relatives and also, kinship caregivers that they make in caring for children, maintaining family connections and also, for supporting their reunification of families involved with foster care.

And so this year we – our annual campaign is titled, "It's All Relative: Supporting Kinship Connections." And as you see here, we've got a slide that shows you our homepage and we offer a dedicated National Foster Care Month website at www.childwelfare.gov\fostercaremonth, which the address is located there on your slide.

And with that, we provide a comprehensive set of information and tips for parents, youth, kinship caregivers, for foster parents, for guardians. We also have a number of publications and resources for tribes, for communities and then of course, for child welfare professionals. If you could go to slide two, a couple of our popular sections –

And again, this is just a few that I just wanted to kind of highlight. First, we've got the resources for child welfare professionals. So here, you can see some of the information that's contained there as well as we also have another section that is very popular and widely used called Real Life Stories, if you'll go to the next slide.

This shows you the front page for the Real Life Stories and these are both narratives and videos where we really share insight into the diverse spaces of relative caregivers and also, kinship care providers, but we do so through their own eyes and their own words.

We also offer a spread the word section, which helps child welfare professionals and community advocates engage the public through outreach and social media activities. So thank you kindly for allowing me to share the information about this great resource, this wonderful website. It's one of the highlights of our annual campaign around National Foster Care Month.

I do hope that you'll be able to have the time to explore the site. On the main page, you'll see a scrolling bar that gives you the latest news and information, such as presidential proclamation, information on upcoming webinars, etc.

And if you'll come back and visit us within the next couple of weeks, we will have both a recording of our very popular webinar supporting kinship connections that we had last week as well as we'll also have information for June, which is National Reunification Month.

So we'll be having information on this website about a webinar and some other activities to support and promote the reunification of families. So that is what we've got available for you right now.

Please feel free to contact me if you've got any questions or any input that you'd like to give. We're always looking to improve our website and I hope that it is of use to you all. So with that, I'd like to turn it back over to Sara.

MS. HASTINGS: Great. Thank you, Taffy. Thanks so much for those resources, that was really helpful and hopefully folks will go and take a look a little bit more at those resources. So I see people are already starting to fill out the poll here and – our polling question.

And the question is for everybody, youth in foster care cannot be served in the WIOA youth program, true or false. And we'll give it just a second here to have people take that little quiz – our little short quiz here. And I can see – I think there's a trend here. Almost 100 percent of folks are answering false, which is correct.

So if you go to the next slide here, you'll see – and I think the name of our webinar – the title of the webinar probably gave it away a little bit. I threw you a little easy – an easy question there. Youth in foster care in fact can be served in the WIOA youth program. That is why we're having this conversation today.

I know I've gone out to many conferences across the country and have talked to lots of folks around the country and many people have said, with the change from WIA to WIOA, we just can't serve youth in foster care anymore and WIOA doesn't allow us to do that. So I've heard a lot of different kinds of comments about this.

We know that it's a little bit different with WIOA because of some of the requirements, but we wanted to make it really clear that youth in foster care, and that is both in-school and out-of-school youth, are eligible to be served in the WIOA youth program.

As many folks know who do eligibility determination, one of the barriers included in the WIOA youth program definition for both in-school and out-of-school youth is listed here. It's an individual in foster care or one who's aged out of the foster care system or who is a teen 16 years of age and less foster care for kinship care.

You know, youth who is – who are eligible for the Chafee program and any youth who are in out-of-home placement. So hopefully folks know that that is the case, that both in-school and out-of-school youth, one of the barriers listed is foster care.

And then as it relates to kind of the requirements around expenditures, yes, the requirement is that 75 percent of funds be spent on out-of-school youth, however, there are many youth in foster care who fall into the category of out-of-school youth. So that is – you know, they – there are many that can be served that way.

Also, local areas still have up to 25 percent of funds that can be spent on eligible in-school youth. So there is room in the law and in the program to be able to be serving youth in foster care. So wanted to kind of just take a minute to clarify that. This is – this question was the basis of the myth buster that we developed and that I mentioned a little bit ago.

Again, in the – (inaudible) – window, you might need to scroll down, because there's a number of documents listed there that we're going to talk about today, but one of them is the myth buster and it basically outlines what I just mentioned and what we're about to kind of walk through in the next few slides.

So let me go to the next slide and I'm going to turn it over to Catherine Heath at the children's bureau. She and I are going to tag team a little bit on the next couple slides around some of the requirements for youth in foster care. So Catherine.

CATHERINE HEATH: Great. Thank you so much, Sara. And I'm just going to start by saying a few of the acronyms that we've been using. So Sara was talking about the WIA program, which is the former Workforce Innovation Act, the programming under that specific funding. It's now moved to what we now call WIOA, which is the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act.

So WIOA is the recent legislation that assists in thinking through the workforce support. And then also, Sara was talking about In-School Youth, which we often use as the acronym ISY and then also, what we call OSY youth or Out-of-School youth and we say that OSY. So just some acronyms as we go through these two slides just to help clarify what we're talking about.

And then also, before we get started, I just want to echo what Taffy said about the incredible stories that are available on the National Foster Care website.

You know, what we hear from many providers is they use these stories throughout the years as part of their training events, as part of their kind of initiatives to really make sure people understand the specific needs of foster care and talking about youth in foster care in a meaningful way.

So as you walk away from this webinar, one of the things – and you reaffirm your commitment to serving youth in foster care, one of the important things, I think, you could do is really look at those website – web videos and see which ones might be really just kind of appropriate for you to highlight with your staff the importance of using – of working with young people in foster care.

So I'm going to talk a bit about the fact that now more than 25 states extend foster care after the age of 18 to the age of 21 through a federal program and then many more, half – at least a dozen more states operate their own state subsidy programs.

So across the nation there are opportunities for young people to be in foster care until the age of 21 and receive concrete resources and support through case management subsidies and other kinds of assistance in order to help them complement their own efforts to transition to self-sufficiency.

But when you turn 18 in your state or in the federal extended foster care program – and we did put up a list as one of the resources of the 25 states that are currently approved to operate the federal program. And again, I just want to remind you that there's another 12 states out there who operate their own state program.

But when you turn 18 in the state's foster care program, there's now conditions that usually apply, because the program's about helping complement a young person's efforts in order to transition to adulthood. And I'm going to be talking about the five main categories and they really are – over the next couple of slides.

They really are around work and school. And so the first category that most young people are going to be eligible for, at least until the age of 19, is that they're completing their secondary education or program leading to the equivalent credentials and that's actually – the first part of that statement is what's in the actual legislation.

And then in our program instruction, which is our vehicle telling states more information about a requirement, we added additional information and that's the EG that you'll see after all of these is making sure that we're really concrete with states about how a young person could be eligible to participate in their extended foster care programs.

That means the young person is age 18 or older and they're working to finish high school or taking classes to prepare for a general equivalency diploma exam.

So when you think about young people who are still receiving services and support from the foster care system, a lot of our young people under the age of 19 are going to fall in this category and be eligible for foster care. And Sara, I'll turn it over to you to let us know what that means for WIOA programming.

MS. HASTINGS: Great. Thanks, Catherine. And so for this example, we're going to go through a few of these. For this specific example, for WIOA's program eligibility purposes, those young people that are in high school at the time of enrollment would obviously be considered in-school youth.

Those taking high school equivalencies, however, may be considered out-of-school youth at time of enrollment. And now we're going to talk through the next few examples of this.

Of course, there's always some caveat depending on state and local policy, but for the most part, this just gives you a sense that for this specific requirement, you may have youth that are categorized as either in-school or out-of-school youth for this one.

MS. HEATH: Great. So the second one is, again, another major category of what our young people are doing until the age of 21, which is going to college and enrolled in a post-secondary or a vocational education program.

So if you are eligible – if you're receiving foster care, that would be one of the categories or one of the reasons why you continue to be eligible for extended foster care. And we made sure that we talked about this as either being full-time, part-time, because many of our young people might be going part-time and working.

This can be at a university or college or this can be enrolled in a vocational or trade school. So Sara, let me turn it over to you.

MS. HASTINGS: Sure. And yes, for this one – for WIOA program eligibility purposes, those engaged in this activity at time of enrollment would likely be considered in-school youth.

Now, one of the caveats here is if a young person's enrolled in, say, a community college and is doing some remedial education and giving non-credit bearing courses, they may still be considered out-of-school youth in that case for this particular requirement. So back to you, Catherine for the next one.

MS. HEATH: Great. So as I said, they have these two categories of school, which is high school or going to college or some other post-secondary vocational education and then we've got these two work categories.

And the work category I'm going to talk about now is what we call that the young person is participating in a program designed to remove barriers or promote employment. And when we wrote the instructions to the states, we wanted to make sure that everyone knew examples would be like Job Corps, attending classes on resume writing and interview skills.

So there's a whole wide variety of programs that are out there that are often offered by the department of labor and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act, that these programs could definitely be part of how a young person remains eligible to receive services through the extended foster care.

MS. HASTINGS: Yeah. And so this is Sara again. So for WIOA youth program eligibility purposes, those engaged in this activity at time of enrollment would likely be considered out-of-school youth if they're not also engaged in another type of educational program. But Job Corps is listed here.

We know WIOA's programs are very similar. So at time of enrollment, if they're engaged in this kind of activity, they may be considered out-of-school youth.

MS. HEATH: Great. Next slide. And then we know that many of our young people may not actually be enrolled currently in a program, but instead be working. So you can be eligible to receive assistance from the federal extended foster care program or the state subsidy program by working at least 80 hours a month.

And we know that the young person could be employed part-time or full-time, they could have multiple places of employment and we actually see, again, this employment category as paring perfectly with the supports that are available through WIOA.

MS. HASTINGS: Yeah. And so for program eligibility purposes for WIOA, those young people who are engaged in this kind of activity at the time of enrollment and then they're also not in high school or in post-secondary education would likely be considered out-of-school youth. So this is another example of where out-of-school youth eligibility comes in.

MS. HEATH: And I think we often think about 80 hours a month, but if you think about a young person who might need additional employment support, how do we help them move from 80 hours a month to more hours a month if they're interested in taking full-time employment and it makes sense for them?

So I always think about how yes, a young person may be just working 80 hours a month and continue to be eligible for their state's extended or state subsidy program, but how do we complement their own efforts to continue to help them on their trajectory.

So the last category is that we also have young people who are eligible for extended foster care if they have a medical condition that would prevent them from being able to be involved in the educational and employment activities.

And before I turn it over to Sara for the last time, I'm just going to also say that we know that many of our young people between the ages of 18 and 21 are living between these categories of going to school, work, trying to figure it out, maybe taking some time off because of medical conditions.

So the overlap invariability of our young people in and between these categories, I think, is one of the opportunities that we have to continue to support holistically the young person. So with that, I'm going to turn it over to Sara for the last time to talk about the condition around medical barriers.

MS. HASTINGS: Great. Thank you, Catherine. Yes. And for this one, I think people can see that this would – for eligibility purposes for the WIOA youth program, those that are not engaged in any educational or employment activities, as Catherine was talking about, at that time of enrollment in WIOA, they would likely be considered out-of-school youth here.

So again, all of this is in the myth buster. So you can download that and use that. It's also on our youth community of practice on WorkforceGPS.org. And so folks can get that on our website as well, but it is downloadable here in the File Share. It goes through all of these.

And what we really wanted to do was kind of help people see that, yes, many young people foster – youth in foster care are in-school youth, there's a lot of young people that are also considered out-of-school youth in doing activities and meeting the requirements of the child welfare system.

And so we just kind of wanted to break those down a little bit more for you to kind of see where their opportunities are. Anything else, Catherine, on your end before I turn it over to Texas?

MS. HEATH: I will just say one last note that we do leave it up to the states to determine how young people qualify for these categories. So states have the responsibility of oversight of what would meet the requirements of a young person being in a category. So we try to provide as much flexibility as possible.

Again, the extended foster care program is complementing a young person's own efforts to transition to self-sufficiency. So to the extent that a medical illness, medical condition meets the requirements of the categories or how that kind of plays out between if you're going to school part-time and then also working what category you're in, that's all up to the state to determine.

So I always recommend that you go to – if you have any questions, go to your state's website and really search extended foster care program or what happens to a young person after the age of 18 and really understand what is happening in your own state as the first kind of place to go to for more information on additional services. So thank you so much.

MS. HASTINGS: Great. Thanks, Catherine. And with that, we'll go to the next slide and I'm – it is my pleasure to turn this over to Jenn Troke with the State of Texas. So Jenn, you're up.

JENN TROKE: Thanks, Sara. And thank you, Catherine and Taffy, the whole team. Thanks for having us here today. We are absolutely delighted to be here. So my name is Jenn Troke and I'm the director for workforce grants and contracts here at the Texas Workforce Commission or you'll hear me talk about TWC.

And I'm joined by two of my colleagues here. I have Lanette Johndrow and Ben Holquist who both manage our strategic workforce initiatives team. So guys, you want to say hello.

BEN HOLQUIST: Hello.

LANETTE JOHNDROW: Good afternoon.

MS. TROKE: And then finally, we're joined by Gaye Vopat who's our traditional living services team lead and she's part of our state agency's family from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Gaye.

GAYE VOPAT: Good afternoon, everybody.

MS. TROKE: And so we are just absolutely proud and humbled and honored to be the voice of Texas here and we really want to give a shout-out to all the Texans who are on the line today, especially our workforce advocates, our boards, our workforce liaisons and PAL staff from across the state.

So thank you guys for joining us as well as everybody across the state. We're very passionate about foster youth here in Texas. So thank you. So our objectives today, really, we want to focus on the key levers that make our foster youth partnership go. So we're going to highlight several key pieces of policy and guidance that we've used to build partnerships throughout the years.

We're going to discuss funding that we've used to support local partnerships, including a new grant initiative. We'll share and highlight a technical assistance events that we hosted last year and we're hosting again this year. And then finally, we're going to share some new legislation that provides ongoing support to foster youth across the state.

So a little bit about who we are and how we operate, Texas Workforce Commission, or TWC, is the state agency, we're charged with overseeing and providing workforce development services to employers and job seekers of Texas.

Our mission is to promote and support a workforce system that creates value and offers employers, individuals and communities the opportunity to achieve and sustain economic prosperity. What does that mean?

Well, it means we provide grants through allocation formulas to workforce development boards that plan and administer WIOA, TANF dollars, SNAP dollars, childcare and other workforce and supportive services.

Our major functions include developing the workforce, providing supportive services, including childcare for targeted populations participating in workforce training and adult education and we provide services for people with disabilities to obtain training and employment. And finally, we administer the unemployment benefits and the tax program.

That's a little bit about us. Gaye, let's hear a little bit about you. Before I do that, let me talk a little bit about the board. There are 28 workforce development boards in Texas and they manage approximately 200 local workforce solutions offices. You may know them as One-Stop centers in your state or local area.

Our workforce solution offices are service delivery points where our foster youth actually go to receive services. So at those local offices, we offer a variety of services from job placement, training, resume writing, interview skills, really anything and everything related to career exploration and development.

We also provide supportive services, such as childcare and transportation and our centers are funded with a combination of dollars, federal, state and local. So Gaye, tell us a little bit about transition centers.

MS. VOPAT: So in Texas, we have at least one transition center that's located in each of the 11 department of family and protective services regions in Texas. The centers are basically a one-stop location for services to assist foster youth, homeless youth and other at-risk youth. Many of the services provided include employment or housing among other services.

Workforce solutions staff, workforce advocates, college and university staff and others are located in the centers. Centers are independently funded and operated, but they also contract with the department of family and protective services to provide federal Chafee services, such as life skills, training, case management.

These Chafee services are provided what we call in Texas the Preparation for Adult Living or PAL program.

MS. TROKE: Awesome. Thanks. So as I mentioned, we're going to start by sharing some of TWC's policies and/or guidance that we've issued to the field.

So we've actually issued three guidance letters related to foster youth since 2004 and most recently, a technical assistance bulletin in 2016 that really mirrors a lot of the WIOA elements that Sara and Catherine just spoke about moments ago.

But the first guidance letter was really about how we served youth in foster care and it really was born out of a DOL TEGL, a Training Employment Guidance Letter, that illuminated a strategic vision for youth services under WIA. Remember that?

And it prioritized investments that serve youth most in need, including foster care and some basic service approaches to serve foster youth, including basic skills, high school diploma or equivalence, employment, internships and much more.

Under this umbrella approach, TWC outlined more specific procedures for boards, including specifying the funding sources that they would use to serve foster youth.

The guidance also recommended that boards ensure appropriate staff establish ongoing relationships with PAL staff, or Preparation for Adult Living staff, to identify youth in foster care by referrals, to determine the needs of foster youth and coordinate services with PAL staff. So that was the first piece of guidance.

The second came in 2011 and this guidance really upped the ante for our local partnerships, because it provided information and guidance on applying priority of service for serving foster youth, including definitions, priority order, priority service for support services and data collection.

So boards were asked – not asked, they were directed to ensure that written copies of local priority of service policies were maintained at all of their service delivery points and posted in a way that made it possible for the public to easily access them.

Boards were to ensure that foster youth received priority over all other equally qualified individuals with the exception of eligible veterans in receipt of federal and state funded services. Boards were directed to track their services to foster youth in our reporting system and in fact, last year we served over 2,000 foster youth.

In addition, boards were given a mandate to enter into updated local Memorandums of Understanding, or MOUs, with their DSPS regional office. The MOUs really lay out the cooperative actions of boards and DSPS offices will participate in jointly as well as provide contact information so the partnership building could begin locally.

Most recently, in 2016, we issued a technical assistance bulletin essentially recapping the coordination of services to foster youth, including their eligibility for WIOA and all of the youth services available through WIOA, all of them, from tutoring through financial literacy and the full gamut.

So the TA bulletin included additional links, the staff list and program policies to make it easy for staff to find the information that they need to continue building the local partnerships in support of foster youth.

We've seen the very powerful impact that issuing guidance has had on our system and how that guidance supports the building of partnerships at every level across organizations. This next slide we included as an FYI for you guys so you all would have easy access to the pieces of guidance that we've issued.

The two on the left are the 2011 pieces that I referenced and 2016, the latest TA bulletin, is on the right. I believe these docs are also in the File Share for you all so you can grab them easily if you don't want to link out, you can just pull them on down. So we welcome that.

So not only do we have these MOUs and partnership agreements in place, but we've also funded some foster youth workforce advocates through grants to 17 foster youth transition centers that Gaye spoke about.

So in 2017, we actually provided over $2.8 million to transition centers with individual grants ranging anywhere from about $140,000 to $270,000 for organizations that are supporting foster youth across the state. And specifically, those resources are primarily used for a staff person who's housed at the transition center. They are our workforce advocate.

And their job is really to work with our liaisons at our local workforce solutions offices. But how does this partnership work? Well, there are several key players in local communities. So we have our liaison at the workforce board or workforce solution office and we also have our advocate at the transition centers.

The workforce advocate is housed at the transition center really with the primary goal facilitating access to local services for foster youth. They work closely with their designated point of contact at the board or local office and they really are ensuring priority of service for all foster youth. So we wanted to include, again, the power of the written word.

We wanted to just give you a snippet. In one of our pieces of guidance, we have this sample MOU and this is one we pulled that shows a MOU between a workforce development board and a foster youth transition center. And the MOUs do several things in our partnership and they kind of cement several key actions.

For example, both parties are responsible for sharing program and case information to provide services. They're both responsible for identifying cross-training opportunities for staff. They collaborate on short-term referrals and they coordinate referrals among partners. DSPS, meanwhile, their actions also about –

They are required to define staff roles and responsibilities. They're tracking foster youth referrals to boards and they're providing primary case management, which is really important.

And then the board, what is the board up to? Well, the board is providing employment and training, they're providing supportive services and they've providing access to current labor market information for high demand jobs. You'll see some other standard language in that MOU around general provisions.

So basically, saying both parties are going to stay within the parameters of this MOU and also, within the parameters of their own specific organizational policies. These MOUs can be amended and then they're required to be signed by the executive director of the board and/or the regional director of the DSPS or transition center, depending on where their MOU is happening.

But what does a workforce advocate actually do? Well, really communication, communication, communication. They are working with all of the key staff involved with the foster youth in their local community and they are making sure that youth service plan is effective and that they're able to mobilize the team as needed and when needed.

So one example that we like to provide is a key service the workforce advocate plays is they actually will provide transportation for the youth when they have key appointments.

So let's say they have a job interview, the workforce advocate makes sure that they get where they need to be and gives them that little boost of confidence that they need to get into that interview successfully.

Lastly, they coordinate local services to be sure the foster youth are successful as they pursue employment, education or other pathways that provide long-term career success. But everyone has a role.

The local team also coordinates referrals and outreach activities, they collaborate on housing referrals, they identify cross-training opportunities and available local resources and they participate in the statewide youth workforce development conferences, which I'll talk about in just a moment.

But I want to talk quickly about some – a new pilot, some grants that we've just kind of rolled out over the last year and this is beyond our foster youth transition centers. We have designed a foster youth education pilot that is really about delivering dropout prevention and recovery services to current and former foster care youth for high school completion.

And we want to provide them with pathways to post-secondary education and work. This is part of Texas' higher education plan. It's called 60X30. You may have heard of it. It's really a goal that we've set that by 2030, at least 60 percent of Texans aged 25 through 34 will have a certificate or degree.

So we funded four organizations, three of them are ISGs and they are delivering integrated educational services to foster youth. In most of the grants, they're also supporting staff.

For example, a full-time fostering connection social worker who closely monitors school performance, attendance and removes any barriers that are preventing successful educational attainment.

The grants really create a pathway to employment and post-secondary education through internship and something that we are calling the strong handoff enrollment process to institutions of higher education. So we want to make sure they're getting signed up and signed in and we're taking all of the barriers off of them.

One of our grantees is actually providing life coaches to provide case management, mentoring, mental health counseling, onsite childcare, student engagement and retention strategies, dual credit, internships and career and technical education certification opportunities in demand fields. So I hope you can hear my excitement about these grants.

We couldn't be more excited to see the results as we move forward. And then finally, I'm going to stop talking, but I'm so tickled to share with you something that we did last year for the first time. It was a statewide foster youth – youth in foster care conference and it's really a chance for us to continue building that local partnership.

And this year we're expanding the event to include new team members. So not only are we inviting all of our workforce boards, but we're inviting our vocational rehabilitation counselors, we're inviting our transition center staff and we're inviting our regional DSPS managers giving them a chance to support integrative services, share tools with each and keep really building that network of partners who are serving youth in foster care.

This year our event will be held in Austin in September and we're excited, because we're including a foster youth panel that shares their perspectives with us on what a successful transition looks like. So we really want to hear from them. We'll also provide training on an array of labor market tools that support young people, like Reality Check.

That's a Texas tool that realistically shows young people how much money will you need to support yourself and how does that compare to a potential salary that you might need to support yourself? And you really will have to make hard choices in about cable or groceries. Or maybe they don't watch cable anymore, but Hulu or groceries, let me modernize my joke there.

Finally, we'll have lots of time for our local teams to download with one another all of their ideas and then decide which ones they want to apply when they get home. So we're excited about that. Gaye.

MS. VOPAT: Thanks, Jennifer. So I wanted to talk about the National Youth in Transition Database. John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence program gives state flexible funding to assist youth with their successful transition to adulthood.

The law requires the administration of children and families to develop a data collection tracking system, which is known as the National Youth in Transitional Database. States began collecting data in 2010 on certain demographics, services and outcomes through a survey. States are required to survey youth at age 17 and then survey those same youth again at age 19 and 21.

Every third year a new cohort of 17-year-olds are surveys. Texas opted to conduct a random sample of youth at age 19 and 21. The chart that you're seeing here depicts Texas employment data for cohort one and cohort two. Please note that there has been an increase in both the – from the 17 to 19-year-old employment outcomes from cohort 1 to cohort 2.

There was – there's been a 4 percent increase for the 17-year-olds and then 18 percent increase for the 19-year-olds from cohort 1 to 2. Earlier, Jennifer spoke about the MOUs between the transition center, the workforce boards and also, between DSPS and the Texas Workforce Commission.

We're thinking that the increased collaboration probably played a role in the improved data that you can see between the two cohorts listed here. So in Texas, our state legislature is in session every other year. During the 85th legislative session, a number of bills were passed that affect youth who are currently or formerly in foster care in Texas.

Two of those bills were Senate Bill 1220 and House Bill 1608. Senate Bill 1220 requires a Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to create a clear development in education program.

Our agency is currently collaborating with the Texas Workforce Commission and local workforce boards and others to identify existing services, gap solutions and recommendations to our legislature.

A report is going to be submitted to our legislature September 1, 2018, which will include some of the information that Jennifer talked about earlier about the current and former foster youth in care education pilot program. The other bill is House Bill 1608. It requires a Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to establish a summer internship pilot program.

Our agency is currently collaborating with Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas, the board and the center and Marshall's Department stores to offer this internship starting this summer. Youth and the internship will be enrolled in the WIOA program, which will help pay for the youth to go through the internship.

So this is just another couple of examples through our legislature on how our agencies are collaborating.

MS. TROKE: Great. And here's our contact information and we welcome any questions later in the webinar, but thank you, again, for this opportunity.

MS. HASTINGS: Great. Thank you so much, Texas Workforce Commission. That was really, really great information. And thank you, again, for providing all of those examples for folks to take a look at and as Jenn Troke was mentioning in the File Share, there's lots of good resources and then they also provided the web address links to be able to access some of that.

So thank you guys for providing that – those really great, very concrete examples of how you're collaborating to better serve youth in foster care. So awesome information. I want to turn it over to San Diego to Sara Fox to talk about what they're doing at a local level. So Sara, take it away.

SARA FOX: All right. Thank you. Hi, everyone. My name is Sara Fox. I'm manager of programs at the San Diego Workforce Partnership. I have worked in the workforce world for the past 20 years with half of that time in Montana. My passion has been providing the best services and resources to the youth we serve.

Today, I'd like to share a few of our regional strategies for leveraging systems and funding in San Diego to serve foster youth in the WIOA system. Who is the San Diego Workforce Partnership? The City and County of San Diego designated us, the workforce development board, for San Diego County.

We are the 3rd-largest out of 49 workforce development boards in California. Our area is separated by four regions. Our collaborations vary from large projects to smaller-scaled projects, depending on the area and need. We are funded by federal, state, county and city contracts, corporate support and philanthropy.

San Diego's WIOA Title I system is made up of six comprehensive America Job Centers of California. Acronym is AJCCs that serve adults and dislocated workers 18 and older. Ten youth career centers that serve out-of-school youth ages 16 to 24 and 5 youth career centers that serve foster youth ages 14 to 24.

With the implementation of WIOA and the change in funding structure allowing only 25 percent of funding to go to in-school youth, SDWP determined the best way to serve in-school youth is to focus on foster youth. With the change in focus, we looked at our various collaborations and enhanced services.

Two key programs that are in collaboration with the County of San Diego includes San Pasqual Academy and the Independent Living Skills program, which is the ILS and Foster Youth Workforce Services. After changing our focus to foster care youth, we needed to solve how would we provide workforce services to other in-school youth.

Our solution was to look at programs that SDWP operates called Connect2Careers, C2C, that receives funding from the City of San Diego and other funders. This program is supported by youth job coaches.

Those are hired from some of our WIOA foster care programs. Connect2Careers assists young adults 16 to 24 with work-readiness training and to secure employment. This program has grown in the past few years because of the partnerships we have with the city and county officials, employers, such as Starbucks and Sea World.

We have also received funding from the James Irvine Foundation and Walmart Foundation. As part of C2C, we are currently partnering with the County of San Diego and running their internship program that they pay internship wages for foster and WIOA youth.

The youth work within county departments, such as probation, parks and rec, resource centers, federal registration offices, etc. So as this partnership continues to build, the City of San Diego also wanted to provide paid internships within the city departments. So that, in turn, offers even more young adults in our community with paid internship opportunities.

This has been exciting to see both of these opportunities expand and more young adults are being served through this collaboration and they are also being hired through the County and City of San Diego after the internships are ending.

Now I would like to focus on our collaboration with SDWP and the County of San Diego and how we leverage systems and funding within our WIOA system, as I mentioned earlier that we chose to make foster youth a priority within the parameters of the 25 percent funding requirements.

Since 2001, SDWP has invested workforce funds at San Pasqual Academy. That is the first in the nation residential education campus designed for foster teens. Every youth that enters receives work-readiness training, internships opportunities, educational training and wraparound services to prepare them once they leave the campus.

They are provided 12-month follow-up services. The partners on campus are new alternatives, San Diego County Office of Education and San Diego Child Welfare Services. Since 2007, the County of San Diego Child Welfare Services and SDWP decided to run a joint procurement to combine the county's Independent Living Services, ILS, and San Diego's Workforce Foster Youth program.

The intent was to reduce duplication, leverage resources and improve client support. Between the two systems, $1.7 million is awarded to one subrecipient to serve foster youth in ILS and WIOA workforce services. The funding is based per year and the procurement is for five years.

The county runs the procurement and we have separate contracts since the requirements are different between the two systems. We each monitor our own requirements, but we meet quarterly to determine that joint requirements are met, any challenges with the collaboration and to make sure that foster youth are being served.

Some of the challenges have been aligning two different systems to make sure you are meeting the requirements. Another challenge has been if the subrecipient is not meeting some of those deliverables pertaining to only one of the contracts. Does that jeopardize the procurement?

We have had a great partnership with the County of San Diego, but that has taken time to build and demonstrate the effectiveness in working together. With both of these collaborations with the County of San Diego, we are able to serve more foster youth in the County of San Diego.

I really believe in partnerships, because we are creating a system that is more streamlined to serve our young adults in the foster care system. I am going to turn it over to Krysta from the YMCA to discuss in more detail the services of the ILS and WIOA workforce services collaboration and to share the amazing work that they are doing with foster care youth.

KRYSTA ESQUIVEL: Great. Thanks, Sara. So I think what is super exciting about the joint procurement process with the WIOA and the ILS services is sort of what Jenn in Texas was talking about earlier is kind of the power of the written institutionalized policy here. And this happened several years ago.

And although the folks who – both at the San Diego Workforce Partnership and the County of San Diego Child Welfare Services are no longer part of this work. They've moved on or retired. It still has remained institutionalized, which really ensures proper services to a very specific population that is very, very, very much in need as WIOA-funded resources and services.

So the way that this contract is broken out is in two tiers of services. And the Y – we are the social services department – community support services, sorry, here at the – in San Diego. We're the social services department of the Y of San Diego.

We serve the whole county with a variety of services that include support for youth currently and formerly in foster care, kinship family support, transitional housing, workforce development, behavior and mental health. And of the many county, state and federal contracts we have, this is one of the ones that we are really, really proud to do work on.

So the tier 1 services, the traditional ILS services, and life skills training for 14 and 15-year-olds and 16 to 21-year-old foster youth. So the tier one is really your traditional ILS services. This includes intensive case management, supportive services, workshops and events. And then tier two is the WIOA-funded through the San Diego Workforce Partnership.

This is, again, for 16 to 24-year-old youth that are in school and out of school and includes subsidized employment and traditional work-readiness themes. What's also really great about the work we do at the local level is that we've included some pretty innovative additions to increase economic stability and mobility, particularly for this population.

Back in 2011, the Y began work on a children's bureau-funded demonstration project. That has come to be known as the Connections project and what we did was develop and intervention aimed at increasing self-regulation and relational wellness among youth who were in foster care or formerly in foster care.

We found an increase in emotion regulation, social conduct and impulse control and what we also found was an increase in income, employment status and educational status after 12 years of – or 12 months of participation in the program. We have incorporated this intervention into our work-readiness and economic stability and mobility services for youth in both WIOA and OFA-funded programs.

That's the Office of Family Assistance, which is also within the administration for children and families. So this made sense to us as the current research in the field tells us that increase social networks lead to happier, healthy lifestyles and that also leads to an increase in socio-economic status.

So for us, a focus on relational wellness through the development of self-regulation skills provided a new lens for practitioners in the state, particularly in the work-readiness phase. For years, we have been helping and wanting our participants to make changes to their behavior, make appropriate decisions and manage their emotions.

Positive relationships with others helped decrease stress and manage the toxic stress response leaving more room for adaptive, healthy behavior, thinking and emotions in its place. All of these things sound very important and essential in the world that works; right?

So further evidence suggests that curriculum and interventions that are rooted in brain science and self-regulation will assist you, especially those who have experienced trauma or systems involvement or chronic stress to better the navigation of complex systems, such as higher education and employment.

So we've really taken self-regulation as the foundation for our work and are WIOA-funded and BWS-funded programs. And self-regulation is really the foundation for lifelong functions. Helps us to regulate our thinking, our behavior and our emotions.

On the side here, you can see a simple definition for self-regulation is the act of managing thoughts and feelings in order to engage in goal-directed actions.

Self-regulation allows us to integrate past experiences and complex information for processing, such as following social norms, responding effectively to social cues, managing emotional arousal, accurate full control in attention, goal setting and planning prospective taking, persistence, self-soothing, relaxation, empathy and compassion.

This very dynamic, yet responsive set of complex cognitive, emotional and behavioral processes serves as a foundation for functioning and functioning well, again, doing so especially in the world of work and especially among a population who has experienced chronic stress, instability and trauma.

So I'm sure you're all thinking now how do you do that? Here's a really quick rundown of how we've incorporated some of these theoretical perspectives into our work-readiness curriculum. So in addition to one-on-one coaching, career assessment tools and peer-to-peer work, our work-readiness classes are rooted in brain science and self-regulation skill development themes.

Among the class topics, which are jobs 101, resume building, preparing for an interview, we have added a few that are really rooted in the self-regulation idea and that's the mindful employee where young people get to talk about their personal brand, social media, their digital footprint, what empowers and motivates them, how to give and accept feedback and how to strategically share their experiences past and present.

Another theme is diversity and non-judgment where we talk about inclusion in the workplace, working effectively with people of various backgrounds, experiences, opinions and perceptions, which can be hard for all of us, I would say, thoughtful decision-making, the importance of critical thinking in order to make sound judgments and apply our learning from one situation to another.

So we've done a lot of qualitative data collection here too and young people who participate in this type of intervention find this approach to really be novel and it gives them access to dialogue with peers that they haven't had the opportunity to explore in the past and it helps to normalize their experiences and find ways to approach the world of work with a different set of skills and tools to better navigate how complex it is in the world of work.

So if anyone is interested in learning more details about our intervention and the research that we've done, I'm happy to share all those resources via email and I think our contact information will be available on the resources. Thank you.

MS. HASTINGS: Great. Thank you so much, Sara and Krysta from San Diego. That was really, really helpful information.

And Krysta, your piece really flows nicely from our last conversation that we had on our webinar earlier this month around trauma-informed care and there was just a lot of interest in really how do we best serve young people who may have experienced trauma in one form or the other. So that model really fits nicely with what we've been talking about.

So thank you for that additional information. I am so impressed that we got through all of those slides. I maybe made folks a little nervous that we had so much content that we'd have to go fast. And Texas and San Diego, you guys did an amazing job getting through all of those slides with such great information quite quickly.

So now we have a bit of time for questions. And so I'll just take a moment to remind folks that if you did have questions, feel free to add those into the chat. We see that there are a few questions now, but not a whole lot. So if you do have questions you haven't yet entered those into the chat, please do that now.

I am going to – it looks like I have a question maybe for Jenn Troke in – at the Texas Workforce Commission. And the question is for the communication by workforce advocates between different agencies, how are the confidentiality issues addressed? So Jenn or anyone from the Texas team, can you respond to that?

MS. TROKE: I can. This is Jenn. I can respond globally for the more detailed sort of one-on-one workforce advocate to local agencies. I know that that is a challenge. Let me just recognize that that is a challenge. Data sharing is sort of always a challenge. And so – but what I can say at our level, the MOUs actually prescribe very specifically –

They speak to the confidentiality of records, making sure that they're secure and making sure that customer information is shared in accordance with state and federal law. So it is addressed in the MOU and my guess is that there are probably local procedures that are in place as well to ensure that the data integrity is maintained.

MS. HASTINGS: Great. Thanks, Jenn. Hopefully that gets at that question for the person who sent that in. Maybe the next question is for Gaye. What strategies do you recommend to locate youth who have aged out of the foster care system? The questioner says, locating them upon training completion has proven a challenge.

And so I'll ask Gaye if she can respond to that and then if San Diego – you know, Sara or Krysta, if you guys have thoughts, you can jump onto that as well.

MS. VOPAT: Sure. What I would say about that is coming from the DSPS side of things and thinking about the data collection we have to do for the National Youth in Transition Database, we're locating these after they left foster care to complete surveys. And I feel like the way that we are most successful in locating those youth is by social media.

And then texting the youth is another biggie, but also, we're able to offer financial incentives for them to complete a survey with us. So that might be something for people to think about, for them to come in to complete some training, etc. Maybe there could be some type of an incentive that's offered.

MS. HEATH: And this is Catherine. I'll just add as I work on the National Youth in Transition Database, like Gaye's talking about, the other strategy is to really think about how do you have services that make sure that young people never want to disconnect from the work that you have.

So really kind of changing the question and saying, how – what can we do so that young people want to maintain contact with us instead of us having that contact lapse and then going out and finding them?

MS. HASTINGS: Great. Thanks, Gaye and thanks, Catherine. Sorry, I also meant to ask you if you wanted to weigh in. Anything from San Diego on that question? Or I can move to the next one.

MS. ESQUIVEL: Sure. I think – this is Krysta from San Diego. I think the recruitment piece really has a lot to do with the relationships that your folks have with people who are serving foster youth.

So kind of creating that community, which we have here and San Diego Workforce Partnership's done a really great job of including service providers that aren't necessarily WIOA-funded so that we had easy warm-handoff relationships with the WIOA-funded programs to send our foster youth to before we had this joint procurement process.

MS. HASTINGS: Great. Thank you so much. And then the next question was just getting contact information from Krysta from YMCA in San Diego. Just I think we didn't have a contact email address. So we are putting that up for folks. So Krysta, you may be getting some people reaching out, but I think you had offered that if they wanted to follow up on your model and strategies.

MS. ESQUIVEL: Yes. We've got a ton of resources too. So I'd love to share that with folks and I'm happy to talk through how we've kind of developed this intervention.

MS. HASTINGS: Great. Thank you. And this next question might be, I think, for you too, Krysta. What resources did you draw from to develop the work-readiness curriculum centered on self-regulation? So I don't know if you know that offhand or not, but –

MS. ESQUIVEL: Yeah. Absolutely. We adapted a modality called dialect co-behavior therapy and we really made it useful and easy for practitioners who were not clinicians. It's actually a therapeutic modality.

So we adapted it and that was really the work we did with the children's bureau over the last five, six years in proving that adapted intervention as an evidence-based practice.

So we've got resources on all of that and then we're currently piloting and continuously improving our work-readiness curriculum where we took pieces from that original intervention and kind of have tweaked it into the more traditional work-readiness curriculum with these little pieces of self-regulation focused work going into that.

So I know that doesn't answer the question totally, but if you'd like to get in contact with me, I'd be happy to share some of those resources. Another really great resource for self-regulation, evidenced research and integration into programs is through the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation within ACF also.

So I'm sure Catherine could hook up a link to the OPRE. They have a whole series on self-regulation and evidence-informed ways of how to integrate that into existing interventions.

MS. HASTINGS: Awesome. Thanks, Krysta. And we will look – work to see if we can get that website and link up if Catherine wants to throw into our presenter chat box. So thank you. Another question around how to contact folks.

I think Gaye from Texas, if you can answer this one, what procedure would you use to contact foster care advocates who work to find job training opportunities for their youth? So I think you might have some thoughts on that.

MS. VOPAT: Sure. I think the best way to get ahold of them would be to contact one of our transition centers in the state and we have those listed on our agency website, which is www.dsps.state.tx.us. You're also typing that in. That would be the best way to contact one of the – one of those advocates.

MS. HASTINGS: Great. And so for folks in other states, they may want to look at their kind of relevant – you know, similar or relevant sites in their states. Do we have additional questions? Let's see, how do you youth in foster care systems find out about these great resources? What is the outreach to foster parents?

This looks like this is from DOR California. I don't know if either Sara or Krysta has any information to share with them.

MS. FOX: Yes. This is Sara from the San Diego Workforce Partnership. You can definitely contact me, but on our website, that you guys can – anyone can look on our website and we do show who our providers are and make those connections. So I would definitely look at our website for the San Diego Workforce Partnership.

MS. HASTINGS: Awesome. Thank you. And then we did find a link, thank you, Catherine, to the OPRE site that Krysta was just mentioning, had some really good resources at the resource library and Jonathan's going to put that in the question box here in just a second.

MS. VEHLOW: It's in.

MS. HASTINGS: Okay. That looks like that's a direct outreach to Sara. And so we'll go to the next question. And just if we can put the link in for Catherine –

MS. VEHLOW: So that link is in the Q&A box. So I sent it out to everyone. So it should be there. Yeah.

MS. HASTINGS: Oh, perfect. Great. And so let's see, are there any additional questions? I'm not seeing any other questions coming in.

Oh, we do just have a new one coming in. If we don't have foster care – or foster youth transition centers in our state, what agency should we be reaching out to start the discussion or what are the transition services typically called that we would be looking to partner with? So Catherine from HHS in the children's bureau, this looks like it would be a question for you.

Any thoughts on what someone would do and where they could look for it in their state for foster youth transition centers?

MS. HEATH: Sure. So each state receives money to help young people transition from the foster care system and there's a statewide independent living coordinator and Gaye is an example of the statewide independent living coordinator. That money is then administered either at the state level or at the county level at the county-administered child welfare system.

I think most people can Google their state information about child welfare and determine whether it's state operated or county operated, because if you're a statewide program, I would start with the foster care manager and that information's also in the National Foster Care Month information.

You can click on the – and Taffy, you can correct me if this is inaccurate. But we list the national foster care specialists and they can help determine how to begin work to establish programs specifically for youth in foster care. And then if your state is county administered, I would recommend that you go to the county child welfare agency to be able to begin discussions.

And then I would just say that there's a couple of states where the services are actually privatized. So Florida is an example. You would want to get with the private agency that's responsible for administering all of the services.

But I think generally, people can – it's really important to start kind of with the child welfare agency and then determine how the services are delivered, because I think where we see the best collaboration is through the foster care programs or the programs – the independent living programs.

MS. HASTINGS: Thanks, Catherine. And then I'm looking at a question around what collaboration do you do with mental health entities? And this maybe is a question for anybody – any of the presenters. If folks had thoughts on how do you collaborate with your mental health partners, if you're doing that at all.

So any thoughts on that? I'll just open it up to the full presenter list here. And Catherine, too, if you have – had thoughts on that.

MS. HEATH: I think we all recognize that it's an important collaboration, but I think that that's one of those opportunities to think through how to continue to further our connections or collaborations.

MS. HASTINGS: Yeah. Thank you. And I think SAMHSA at HHS, the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration, has a really good website where you can also sort of identify in your state or local area where there are mental health providers and that's for folks who are looking just kind of to start to try to identify any partners in their area.

That's probably a good website to go to first to take a look at what potential partners are in your state or local area.

MS. FOX: And this is Sara from STWP. And definitely, I agree, this is something that we're kind of building upon and really need to work more in that collaboration region-wide, because I know our local providers, they each have their individual contacts and they're working on separate contracts, but we really are working on building that into one system.

MS. HASTINGS: Great. Thank you, Sara. I'm not seeing any other questions that have come in. I know we have just a few minutes left. So I just want to take this time to thank all of our presenters for all of your time in preparing for this webinar, pulling together all of your resources and being so thoughtful about sharing your good work both in Texas and in San Diego.

I hope that folks around the country have gained some good examples, and information, and resources, and tools that they can take back to have conversations.

You know, if you're not serving youth in foster care and you see that there may be opportunities to do more of that and just to have some of those strategic conversations maybe with your local youth committee, to think about that. Hopefully this – today's webinar has provided you some good – a good start to some of those conversations.

So thank you to all of our presenters, we really appreciate all of your time. You know, this has been Our Journey Together series so far. We have been excited to continue to have conversations with you all in the field and the WIOA youth program and youth service providers across the country on these important topics.

When we end this webinar, there's an opportunity for you all to take a minute and think about any other technical assistance needs that you feel would be helpful or things that you need more information on and technical assistance on in terms of best implementing WIOA youth programs.

We definitely did this webinar topic based on comments and information that we've gained from the field over the last year or so and had heard that there was a need for this. So we're listening to everyone out there and we'd love to get your feedback and input on kind of future topics.

And just a reminder to folks, we've done a number of topics through Our Journey Together technical assistance series and hopefully you all know where to go on WorkforceGPS on your new Connections community of practice.

We've got a list of all the different kinds of technical assistance resources that we've provided you guys over the last year or so and we're going to continue to do so in the coming months. But like I said, we're eager to hear from you and learn what you think is our hot topics in the area of the WIOA youth program.

So with that, I think I will say thank you. I'm going to turn it over to Jonathan to close us out, but we hope you all have a great rest of your day and thanks, again.

(END)