

# Mental Health and Foster Care

## Impact on GED Student Retention and Transition



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# Introductions

Who are we?

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# How we got here?

- ❖ Personal and/or Professional experiences - Brown
- ❖ Personal and/or Professional experiences - Jain

# Objectives

- ❖ Learn and discuss the foster care population through heuristic inquiry, storytelling & story sharing.
- ❖ Learn and discuss research findings on foster care youth in the U.S. and Oregon.
- ❖ Learn and discuss trauma experienced by foster care youth.
- ❖ Learn and discuss the impact of trauma on foster care youths' mental health and GED and postsecondary educational development.

# Heuristic Inquiry

- ❖ Qualitative researchers using heuristic approach seek to understand intense experiences of the human condition, such as grief, loss, love, anger, happiness, achievement, and mental health.
- ❖ This qualitative research tradition emphasizes the essence of experience and the person in relation to that experience.
- ❖ This approach focuses on intense phenomena from the perspective of researchers with attention to how participants' experiences relate to researchers' increased self-awareness and knowledge (Explore, Discover, or Find).
- ❖ It is an integration of personal experience for intense phenomena.

# Storytelling or Story Sharing

- ❖ Informal sharing of personal experiences to people who can relate to similar experiences.
- ❖ Formal sharing of personal experiences to people who can relate to similar experiences (Group Work or Group Counseling).
- ❖ Storytelling and role playing using Narrative Therapy, a method of therapy that separates the person from their problem or challenge. It encourages individuals to rely on their own skills to minimize problems or challenges that exist in their lives. Throughout life, personal experiences become personal stories.

Aging Out - <https://youtu.be/ubeRz4OHKVg>

TIBURON FILM FESTIVAL WINNER, BEST DOCUMENTARY

CINE GOLDEN EAGLE AWARD WINNER

REEL TO REEL FILM FESTIVAL WINNER, BEST DOCUMENTARY

# AGING OUT

A FILM BY ROGER WEISBERG AND VANESSA ROTH

**"Undeniably Moving...makes a strong case for reform"**  
— Los Angeles Times

**"You may never again take your family for granted"**  
— Seattle Post

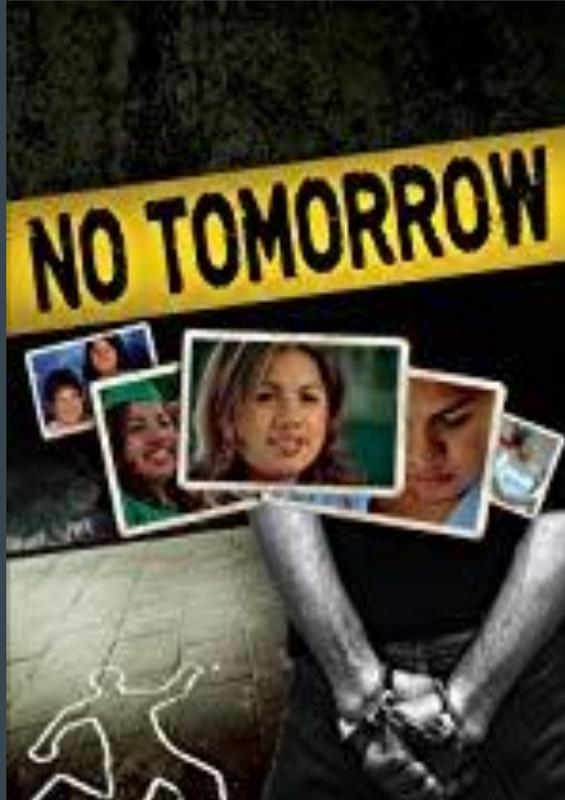
What happens when you're too old for foster care?

SERVICES AGENCY  
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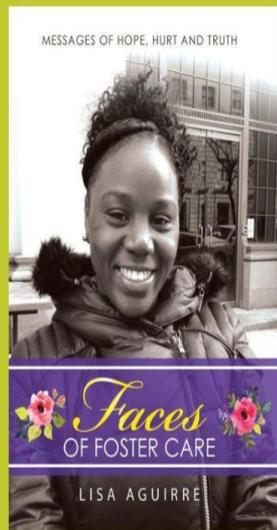


No Tomorrow - <https://youtu.be/vUvs33t3QzE>



# Faces of Foster Care: Messages of Hope, Hurt, and Truth

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*Each profile was heartfelt, piercing and uplifting. Each 'face' became most memorable in numerous and varied ways. I am honored to support these incredibly resilient young people on their journey to a happier life."*

-Friend of FYI

<https://www.dcfyi.org/faces-foster-care>  
Family & Youth Initiative #DCFYI



# Faces of Foster Care

## Messages of Hope, Hurt, and Truth

- ❖ Faces of Foster Care has heartfelt and frank messages from people around the country who have been involved in some way with foster care. Told like mini memoirs, their inspiring and sometimes heartbreaking stories bring us into their lives and show us unique perspectives of foster care in the United States.
- ❖ The book project began between 2015 and 2016 by author, Lisa Aguirre.
- ❖ I met with Lisa in 2016 during the National Association of Social Workers Conference in the lobby of my hotel.

# What's the Foster Care Story?

- ❖ **Foster Care** is a broad term referring to the court system's removing youth from their homes and placing them into the care of a state agency charged with providing for their basic needs and well-being (Hedenstrom, 2014; Kirk et al., 2011).
- ❖ The Texas Education Agency (2013) further emphasized that foster care is utilized when children are unable to live safely at home and an appropriate non-custodial parent, relative, or close family friend is currently unable or unwilling to care for them.
- ❖ The court grants temporary legal possession to child protective services, and the agency temporarily places children into safe environments (Texas Education Agency, 2013).

# The Goal of Foster Care

- ❖ Temporary until a permanent living arrangement is found and child protective services no longer has custody
- ❖ Protection from harm
- ❖ Safety
- ❖ Security
- ❖ Meet the basic developmental needs of youth
- ❖ Check out at the wellness model used in Professional Mental Health Counseling

# Wellness WHEEL

Taking care of each dimension of the Wellness Wheel can help you become more aware of the interconnectedness of each dimension, and how all aspects of your life contribute to feeling well, both physically and mentally.

## EMOTIONAL

Have a positive attitude, high self-esteem, a strong sense of self, and the ability to recognize and share a wide range of feelings with others in a constructive way.



## ENVIRONMENTAL

Be aware of the interactions between the environment, community and yourself and behave in ways that care for each of these responsibly.



## FINANCIAL

Live within your means and learn to manage your finances for the short and long term.



## INTELLECTUAL

Be open to new ideas, be creative, think critically, and seek out new challenges.



## OCCUPATIONAL

Seek to have a career that is interesting, enjoyable, meaningful, and that contributes to the larger society.



## PHYSICAL

Take care of your body for optimal health and functioning.



## SOCIAL

Build personal relationships with others, deal with conflict appropriately, and connect to a positive social network.



## SPIRITUAL

Find meaning in life events, demonstrate individual purpose, and live a life that reflects your values and beliefs.

# Foster Care Settings

- ❖ Kinship caregiver homes
- ❖ Foster family homes
- ❖ Foster family group homes
- ❖ Residential group care facilities
- ❖ Facilities overseen by another state agency

# Transition-Age Youth in Foster Care in Oregon

<https://www.childtrends.org/publications/transition-age-facts-oregon>

# Independent Living Program Services (ILP)

## Department of Human Services Programs

1. Independent Living Skill-Building Program (ILP) - Provides training and classes to prepare youth to live independently.
2. ILP Discretionary Funds - Flexible funding for various needs to assist youth to achieve goals for transition.
3. Chafee Education and Training Grant Program (ETG) - Provides funds for college or training programs.
4. Independent Living Housing Subsidy Program - Subsidy to help with housing for up to \*30 months (after 12 months, the amount of assistance gradually decreases for the next 18 months, for a total of 30 months support to transition to living independently).
5. Chafee Housing Program - Provides money for housing, based on need.

# GED and Post secondary Education

- ❖ GED holders had a significantly higher course withdrawal rate (16.8%) than students earning a high school diploma.
- ❖ Excessive course dropping is associated with 44% lower odds of earning a credential from community college and/or four-year transfer.

# At-risk groups

- ❖ Historically struggled to achieve college success:
  - GED holders,
  - Developmental education,
  - African American,
  - Part-time

# Foster Care Youth Educational Attainment

- ❖ Despite available financial support for postsecondary education through the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, only 20% of college-qualified foster youth attend college and less than 5% complete a degree (Unrau, 2011)
- ❖ These rates are far lower than the general population with 60 % enrolled and 24% degree-completion rates (Unrau, 2011).

# Foster Care Youth Educational Attainment

- ❖ Colleges and universities are beginning to take notice of foster youth as an underserved student population (Unrau, 2011; Casey Family Programs, 2010; Dworsky & Perez, 2010).
- ❖ Campus support programs are developing to provide financial, academic, and other supports to students who have aged out of foster care (Unrau, 2011; Casey Family Programs, 2010; Dworsky & Perez, 2010).

# Foster Youth Educational Attainment

- ❖ Additional studies have documented that only 8% of former foster youth reported they had graduated with two- or four-year postsecondary degrees, compared to a 46% graduation rate for young adults in the general population and their incarceration rates were ten times greater than their peers (Courtney et al., 2010, Powers et al., 2018).
- ❖ Findings of research with African American youth in foster care indicate that social support from a variety of different sources aid youth in staying mentally healthy despite major disruptions in support from biological parents (Williams-Butler, 2018).

# Foster Care Barriers

Courtney, Dworsky, Lee, and Raap (2010) found that barriers for higher education access among foster youth included:

- ❖ Lack of financial resources
- ❖ The need to be in full-time employment
- ❖ Parenting responsibilities
- ❖ Lack of transportation
- ❖ Mental Health challenges from past and/or present trauma

# Recommendations

- ❖ Dual Enrollment or Ability to Benefit (ATB)/GED and Trade Skill Diploma
- ❖ Ability to Benefit (ATB) is about access to the federal PELL grants and state HOPE grants for qualified students without a high school credential. Students must demonstrate that they can be successful in college level studies to earn a diploma.
- ❖ <https://www.gptc.edu/adult-education/dual-enrollment-ged-trade-skill-certificate/>

# Recommendations (Contd.)

- ❖ Social capital
  - Dual Enrollment
- ❖ Noncognitive skills
  - self-control, work ethic, and determination
- ❖ Enrollment cannot be the only goal
  - sufficient financial aid and support services
  - approach nontraditional learners differently

# Questions & Comments



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