

OUR GOAL:

Help families and communities improve the well-being of children in their own homes and in out-of-home care.

As Betty walked across the stage beneath the Tacoma Dome to collect her diploma from Kentlake High School, nothing about her revealed the history she has endured. Betty's life is pretty typical of a smart, goal-oriented teen. She graduated with a 3.93 GPA and was an award-winning member of her school track team. Were it not for a few outdated newspaper articles, and a small cadre of supportive professionals, there would be little outward evidence of Betty's past.

Most of the facts about Betty's life history are stored in Betty's memory. There is the knowledge of a war-torn nation, her native Southern Sudan. The recollections of a Ugandan refugee camp where she grew up. There is also the memory of her father and step-mother's highly publicized deaths, both of whom died at the hands of Betty's father.

Despite her history, Betty is undeterred. She is committed first and foremost to her two small brothers who live with Betty in the home of Margaret Nalonga, a relative who began the process of becoming a licensed foster parent in 2005 so she could care for the three children. Nalonga said in a 2005 statement, "I don't want these children to be scattered."

Betty has been a powerful self-advocate, seeking out resources available to her. She enrolled in the Independent Living program through Pierce County Alliance (PCA) and subsequently became involved in the Foster Care to College Mentoring Program (FCTCMP). The program's director paired Betty with Stella, an African woman herself who, because of her own heritage, could identify with Betty. The FCTCMP staff and Stella helped Betty and encouraged her through her high school finals, gave support through SAT practice material and helped her decide which college would be right for her. Betty went on to apply for and was awarded the Governor's Scholarship and was accepted into the Washington State Foster Care to 21 Program which provides housing and medical support to youth aging out of the state foster care system. She was granted admission to several colleges and universities but chose Tacoma Community College where she was awarded a full scholarship, because she could remain close to her brothers.

Betty has received an impressive collection of awards. Most notably, Betty was awarded the President's Education Awards Program President's Award for Academic Achievement signed by both the United States Secretary of

Education and President George W. Bush.

Betty is a determined young woman who will no doubt reach the goals she has set. The path to those goals may be made just a bit smoother through the support of the Independent Living Program, Stella her educational mentor, the Foster Care to College Mentor Program and Washington's Foster Care to 21 Program.



In addition to keeping children safe and ensuring that they are placed in stable homes, the Administration works with families, Tribes, and communities to ensure that the health, developmental, and educational needs of these children and youth are met.

Our efforts must not only address the needs of children coming into out-of-home care but must help provide them with the best possible preparation for an independent and productive adulthood.

In recent years, the Administration has increased its efforts to support children very early in their development, prior to entering school and in providing additional access to resources when transitioning out of foster care.

Several new programs offer additional access to financial support for higher education and when combined with programs which have shown long-term success are helping youth succeed.

These programs include:

- **The Independent Living Program (ILP)** helps youth from age 15-17 who are likely to remain in foster care gain skills necessary to succeed on their own. They can learn how to get and keep a job, further their education, obtain safe housing, stretch their money and more.
- **The Transitional Living Program (TLP)** helps youth 18-21 develop competencies and access community supports needed for successful independence. These young adults may gain information and resources designed to, among other things, help them obtain safe housing, make healthy choices, take care of themselves physically and emotionally, remain self-supporting, and develop a community support network.
- **The Educational and Training Voucher Program (ETV)** provides up to \$5,000 per year up to age 23 for higher education to eligible current and former foster youth and those adopted from foster care after age 16.
- **Foster Care to College Program (FCTC)** provides mentors, seminars, and community training as well as an annual four-day college immersion experience designed to help increase the college success rate of foster youth by training communities in how to support these youth and educating young people about college readiness, persistence, and success.
- **The Foster care to 21 Program** allows 50 youth per year (from 2006 through 2008) who have graduated or obtained their GED to continue receiving placement services from DSHS until their 21st birthday if they are pursuing post secondary education and maintaining a 2.0 Grade Point Average.
- **The Passport to College Promise Program** The Passport to College Promise Pilot Program is a program for the benefit and encouragement of current and former foster youth to prepare for, attend, and successfully complete higher education. Program benefits include: educational planning, information, institutional support, and direct financial resources.

The Administration currently tracks the following well-being measures:

- Children visited every 90 days by their social worker.
- High school diploma, General Equivalency Development diploma, or educational or vocational enrollment.
- Youth in care who receive Independent Living Services (ILS).

OBJECTIVE: Increase worker visits with children
MEASURED BY: Children visited every 90 days by their social worker

It is imperative that Children’s Administration personnel have a good understanding of how children in care are fairing in their out-of-home placements. Social workers may maintain contact and communications with the children for whom they are responsible through various means. Telephone calls with youth, contact with foster parents, school staff, medical practitioners, and counselors, attendance at staffings and child related meetings all help social workers know how a child is doing.

However, in order to get the best sense of a child’s well-being social workers must make face-to-face contact with children in the homes in which they are placed on a regular basis. This allows them to observe a child’s interactions both with the caregivers and with other children in the home. It provides the opportunity to see if a child has his or her own space and belongings that are age appropriate.

Currently social workers are required to visit each child in person at the child’s out-of-home placement a minimum of once every 90 days; however, statewide efforts are underway to make these visits more frequent.

Children who are under the care of the department but placed back into the homes from which they were removed must be seen in their homes at least once every 30 days to ensure their safety.

The Administration requires that a minimum of 90% of children in out-of-home care will be seen in their placements

at least once every 90 days. The Administration has performed better than required in every quarter of FY 2007.



Social Worker Visits with Children in Out-of-Home Care*



■ Percent of Children Receiving Visits Every 90 Days - - - Target

*Percent of children in out-of-home placement who are seen face-to-face by their social worker in their caregiver’s home at least once within the last 90 days. Source: September 2007 CAMIS download.

OBJECTIVE: Children in placement are supported in age-appropriate educational and developmental programs

MEASURED BY: High school diploma, General Equivalency Development diploma or educational or vocational enrollment

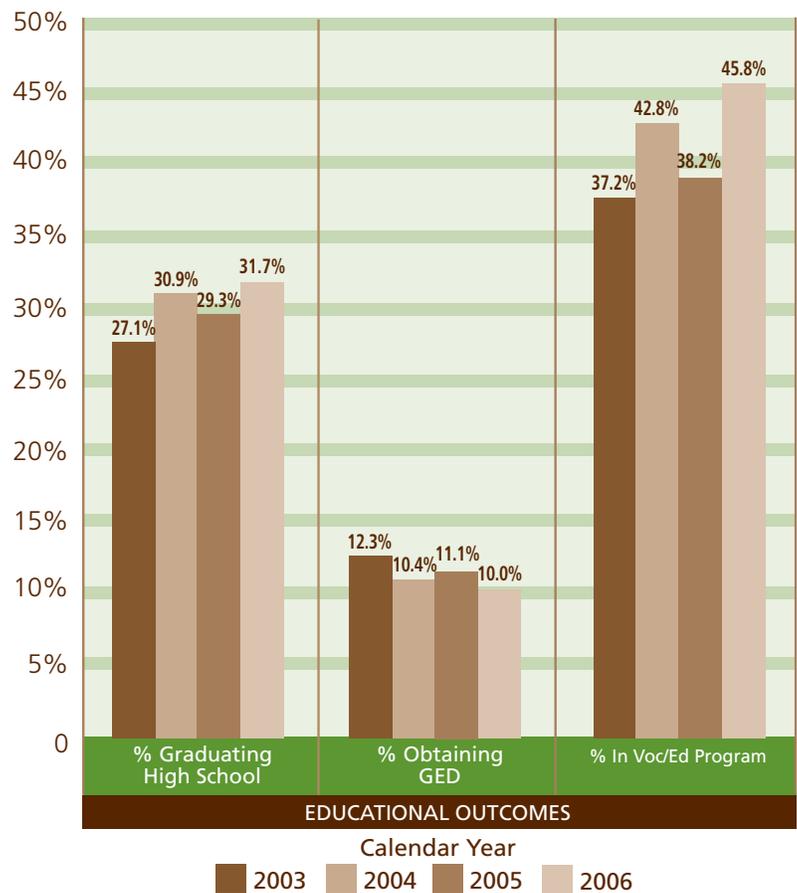
Youth who have been removed from their families due to abuse and neglect often have greater difficulty in school than many of their peers. In addition, these youth are less likely to graduate from high school and statistically pursue and complete college less often than those who have not experienced foster care.

There are a variety of reasons for these outcomes. These youth often experience instability prior to coming into out-of-home care and at times, the moves that are often part of the foster care experience can leave young people struggling to catch up.

Many youth express never having known that graduation was a possibility and the sense that college was certainly out of reach. The Children’s Administration has worked diligently in recent years to dispel that myth and to raise the expectation of success for children in out-of-home care.

In addition, the Administration with community partners and with the support of the legislature has increased efforts to provide resources designed to help youth complete high school and to pursue, persist in, and complete programs of post-secondary education.

Youth Turning 18 in Foster Care Who Graduated from High School, Obtained a GED, or Were Enrolled in an Educational or Vocational Program at Time of Exit*



*Percent of youth age 18 or older who have been in care for at least one year and who left care without being placed into a permanent home, or are in a guardianship and receiving services from the Administration, for whom educational outcomes could be obtained through records or self report. Source: Calendar year data from Educational Outcomes Surveys 2002 through 2006.

OBJECTIVE: Children in placement are supported in age-appropriate educational and developmental programs

MEASURED BY: Youth in care who receive Independent Living Services (ILS)

Often youth who “age out” of foster care (turn 18 without having been in a permanent placement) describe feeling ill equipped to succeed on their own.

They often lack the education and training as well as the “informal” supports that many youth have when going off to college or moving into their own apartment. Former foster youth may not have the freedom to take their laundry back to mom’s house, drop in for dinner when money is tight, or even ask their families for a little cash to get them through ‘til payday.

The Federal Chafee Foster Care Independence Act, passed in 1999 recognized that young adults exiting the foster care system often do so at a disadvantage through no fault of their own.

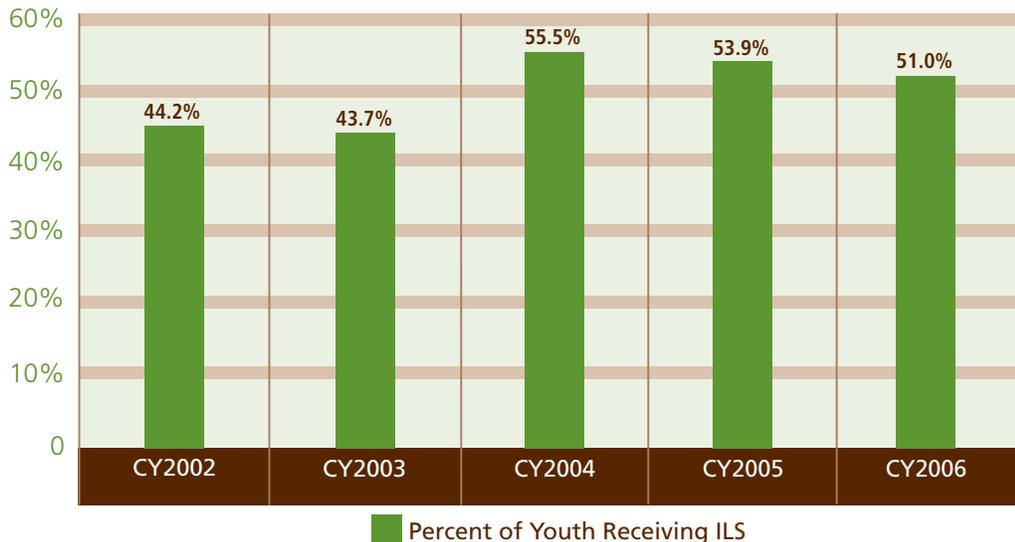
Through Chafee funding, Washington State contractors offer community-based education, training, and financial assistance to youth transitioning from foster care to independence.

Youth in foster care can learn more about the resources available to them through a new website, www.independence.wa.gov.

In Calendar Year 2006 the number of youth who received IL services prior to exiting care went down. However the number of youth coming into care or currently in care who are receiving IL services showed a 54 percent increase from CY05 to CY 06. In 2005 874 youth received services while in 2006 1,342 youth received services.

Over time, the percent of youth exiting care who received IL services should reflect that overall increase.

Youth Exiting Care After Age 18 Who Received Independent Living Services (ILS) While in Care*



*Percent of youth exiting care after age 18 who received ILS while still in out-of-home care. Source: Calendar year data from Educational Outcomes Surveys 2002 through 2006.