

When Pedro first came to the attention of CPS, he was very thin and had been sleeping in a barn after risking his life to escape severe abuse. At 13, he had not been in school since he was five. Today he is on his way to the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis.

When the young man was brought into the local CA office by a Sheriff's deputy, he initially refused to give his name or address, but his social worker established a rapport with him and was able to learn the name of the boy as well as the whereabouts of his father. Pedro's mother and her boyfriend had kidnapped Pedro and his older sister, Elvia, nine years earlier and the father had been unable to find them.

After the "fact-finding" investigation, a Child Welfare Services social worker received the case and worked diligently to reunify the children with their father and stepmother. According to the worker, the children had been brainwashed by the mother's boyfriend into believing that their father was a horrible person. Elvia had also survived serious abuse at the hands of the mother's boyfriend.

Pedro was placed with his father first, then Elvia rejoined the family. The reunification involved months of counseling and visits. Even after Pedro returned to his father, the family kept in touch with their dedicated social worker and even invited her to family functions.

Pedro had no social skills and had to learn the basics. Once he was able to attend school, he excelled. Last year Pedro called and asked if his social worker would write a letter of recommendation for him to the Naval Academy at Annapolis, to which she readily agreed. Several months ago Pedro telephoned to report that he had been accepted into Annapolis! He recently graduated from high school and received seven different merit awards for academic and athletic achievement.

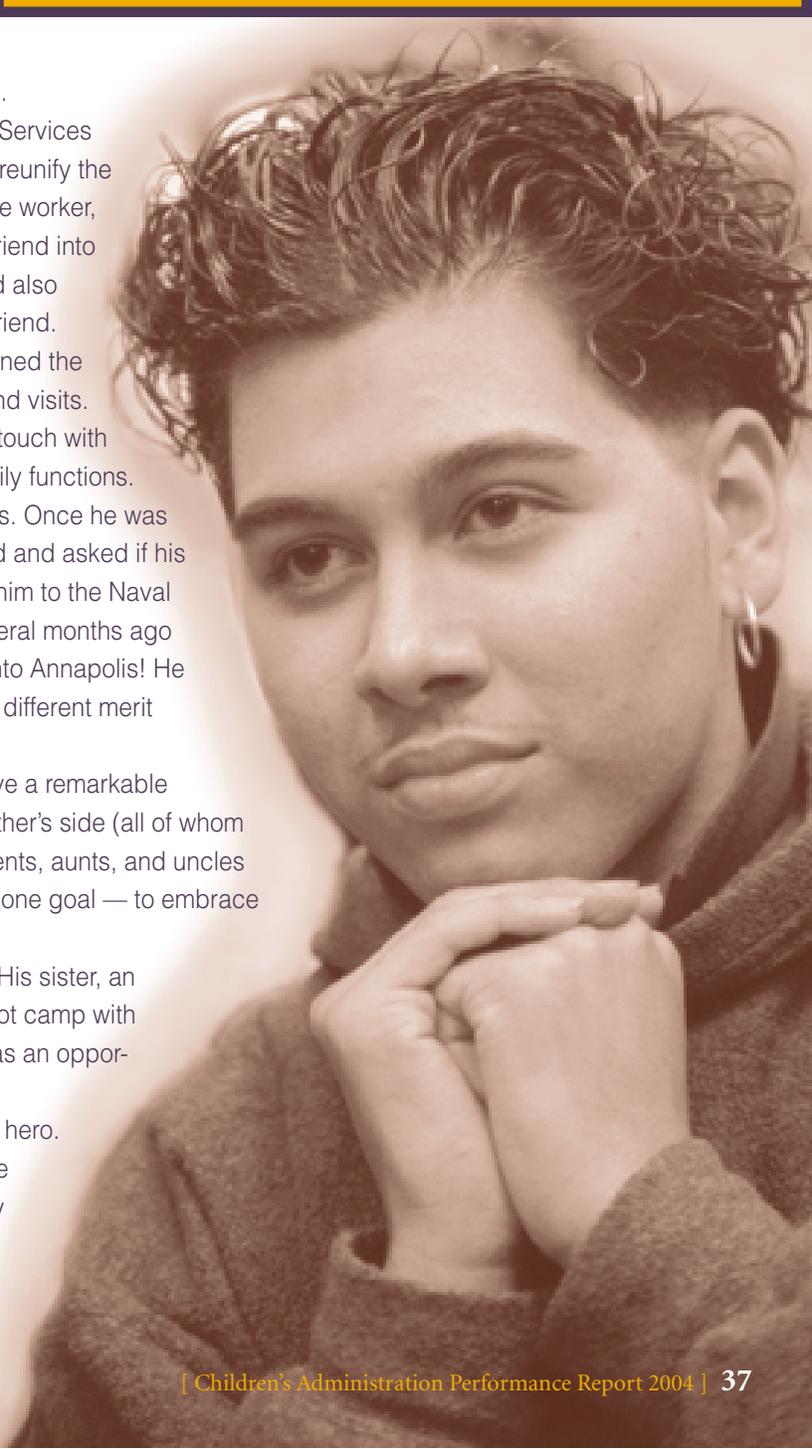
The social worker noted that Pedro and his sister have a remarkable extended family, both on their father's as well as their mother's side (all of whom are estranged from the children's mother). The grandparents, aunts, and uncles rallied together to form an amazing support network with one goal — to embrace and do what was best for these children.

Pedro is not the only one now serving in the military. His sister, an amazing survivor in her own right, has just completed boot camp with the U.S. Marines. Both hope to use their military service as an opportunity to obtain and pay for higher education.

According to the social worker, "This young man is a hero. Had it not been for him, both he and his sister would have remained in an extremely abusive situation. Pedro literally risked his life by getting help."

# Well-Being

Goal: Help families and communities improve the well-being of children in out-of-home care



## Well-Being Overview

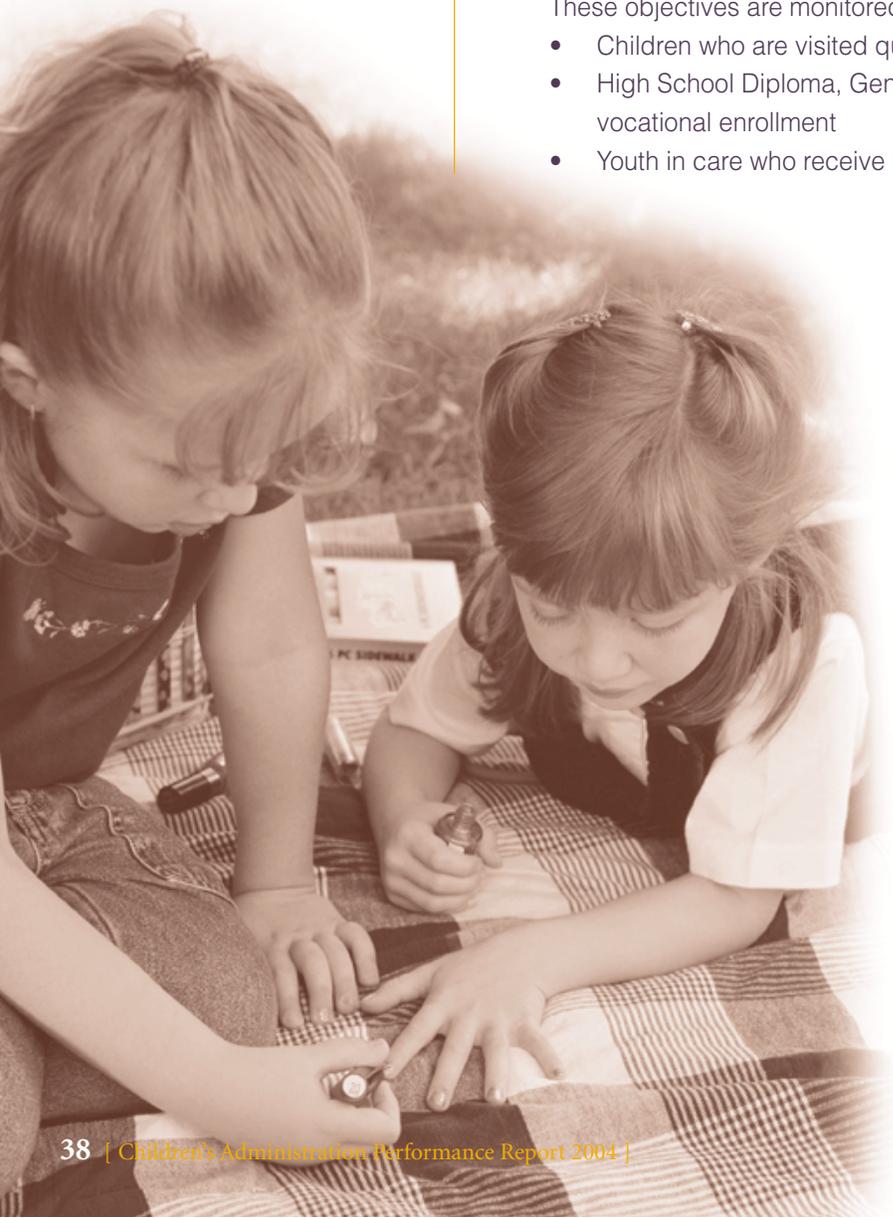
Medical, educational, emotional, and developmental progress is important to the well-being of a child. It is important to assess the needs of children in these areas and provide services to meet their needs, so that children can grow into healthy well-adjusted adults. Many of these areas are assessed using the Child Health and Education Track screening tool and other services which are monitored through case reviews.

Over the past year, efforts have been made to develop an automated system for tracking well-being outcomes both for children still in out-of-home care and for those who turn 18 while still in the care of the state's child welfare system.

Data from the information system and case review is now available to monitor the well-being objectives of increasing worker visits with children, and children in placement are supported in age-appropriate educational and development programs.

These objectives are monitored using the following performance measures:

- Children who are visited quarterly by their social worker
- High School Diploma, General Equivalency Diploma (GED) or educational vocational enrollment
- Youth in care who receive Independent Living Services (ILS)



**Objective Increase worker visits with children**  
**Measured by Children who are visited quarterly by their social worker**

Social workers maintain regular contact with children on their caseloads through a variety of face to face and telephone contact. Social workers see children in their foster homes, at school, in their offices and other settings.

The Children's Administration requires that social workers visit with children in their placements at least once every 90 days. Through these visits, social workers assess the health and safety of children. These visits also enable the social worker to evaluate how well a child is adjusting to the foster family and how the placement is meeting their needs.

This measure was historically tracked using handcounts, but the administration recently was able to use CAMIS data to determine not only that children are seen, but that the contacts are documented correctly in the information system. Improvements have been seen nearly every month since tracking began in March 2004.

**Social Worker Visits with Children in Foster Care\***



\* Percent of children who have been in out-of-home placements for at least 90 days who are seen face-to-face by their social worker in the caregiver's home at least once within the last 90 days. CAMIS SER.

Do you know

- 1 The three well-being measures?
- 2 How often social workers must visit children in their foster homes?
- 3 At what age are youth now eligible to begin receiving Independent Living Program (ILP) Services?

1 Children visited quarterly by their social worker; 2 Diploma/GED/Enrollment in Voc.Ed; 3 Youth in care who receive Independent Living Services. 2 At least once during each 90 days (3) 15 (previously 16)

**Objective Children in placement are supported in age-appropriate educational and developmental programs**

**Measured by High school diploma/General Equivalency Development diploma or educational/vocational enrollment**

Children and youth who experience abuse and neglect or other family crises, often experience academic consequences. The administration seeks to support children and youth in attaining various academic goals both as a means of bettering self-esteem and to prepare them for transition into adulthood.

Of the 491 youth who had been in out-of-home care for at least one year and

turned eighteen years of age while still in out-of-home care, 133 graduated from high school prior to exiting care. An additional 59 young adults obtained their General Educational Development (GED) diploma. In addition, 126 young people were enrolled in an educational or vocational program at the time of exit.

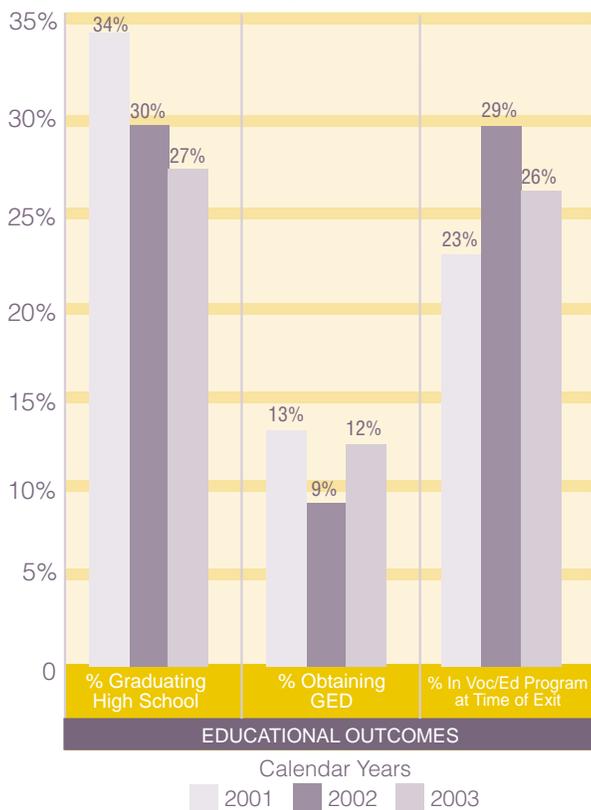
In total, 318 youth or 65 percent of those young people exiting out-of-home care had demonstrated some type of positive educational outcome at the time of their exit.

One hundred seventeen of those 318 youth planned to pursue higher education, compared to only ten of the 173 who did not achieve positive educational outcomes.

Of the 173 young people who did not attain educational success, 80 of them or 46 percent had been in special education programs while still in school. Of those who did graduate, obtain a GED or were enrolled in an educational or vocational program, 49 percent had also been enrolled in an Independent Living Program prior to exit.

The administration continues to examine ways to improve educational outcomes and to identify measures and tracking systems that will help service providers implement best practices toward improved child well-being.

**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**



\* Handcount of youth who turn 18 and have no permanent plan completed or were in guardianship at the time of exit from foster care. A total of 56 youth or 10 percent were excluded from statistics as no information was available regarding those youth following exit from care.

**Objective Children in placement are supported in age-appropriate educational and developmental programs**  
**Measured by Youth in care who receive Independent Living Services**

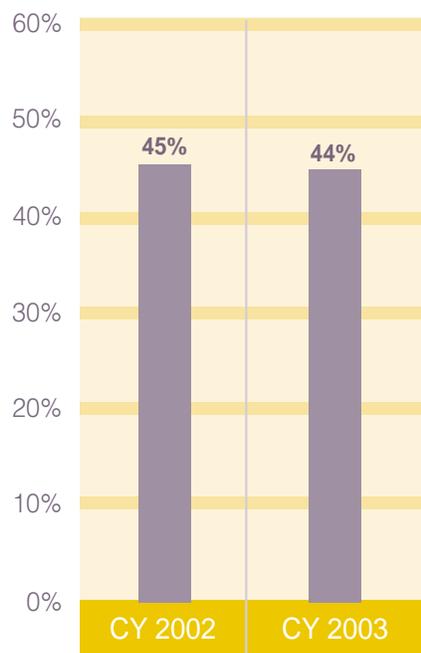
Youth who turn 18 in out-of-home care in the nation's foster care systems often report feeling ill-equipped to handle the responsibilities associated with maintaining employment, securing housing and addressing ongoing social and emotional issues. These youth often lack the family supports that most young people take for granted. The result is higher percentages of homelessness, joblessness, unplanned pregnancies and incarceration among former foster youth than their peers.

The federal Chafee Foster Care Independence Act, passed in 1999, helps state child welfare systems support young people in their transition from foster care to independent living. Chafee provides states with additional funding to develop, implement and monitor community-based programs specifically to help older foster youth become better prepared for adult living.

Washington state contracts with Independent Living Program (ILP) service providers in every region throughout the state. These agencies provide education, training, case management and other supports to older youth.

Recently Washington state reduced the age of eligibility for youth who may benefit from ILP from 16 to 15 years old in an effort to begin preparing young

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



\* Percent of youth exiting care after age 18 who received Independent Living Services while still in out-of-home care. Source: Case Review.

people for independence sooner. In addition, a new program implemented in Calendar Year 2003, helps support former foster youth who have attained educational success in furthering their education after leaving foster care. The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program provides financial assistance to former foster youth between age 18 and their 23rd birthday who have either graduated from high school or attained their General Education Development diploma. This program provides up to \$5,000 per year per student for eligible post-secondary education expenses.

Quotes from Kids

“We need to leave care with important papers. If we want to get financial aid for college, we have to prove we were a ward of the state by showing copies of court papers.”

—Nicole, former foster youth in ILP

“I think the system is good. Every place needs improvement but overall the system is good.”

—Michael, former foster youth in ILP

“The general public assumes that if you were in foster care, **you** must have done something to get there.”

—Sabrina, former foster youth in ILP

“That’s who raised me, the guardians ad litem, the social workers, the foster parents, the teachers, they all showed me discipline and the things my family couldn’t show me, so I give them the thumbs up.”

—Michael, former foster youth in ILP

