CARES
Creating Actionable & Real Solutions

JULY 2023

UNDERSTANDING HOW TRANSITION AGE YOUTH EXPERIENCE THEIR COMMUNITIES

A Community Analysis by the Center for the Study of Social Policy

Center *for the* Study *of* Social Policy
Ideas into Action

ABOUT CARES

CARES, Creating Actionable and Real Solutions, aims to drastically change the systemic challenges that youth—specifically older or "transition-age" youth of color—who are or have been involved with the foster care system experience. We believe that, working in tandem with the young people most impacted by the foster care system, we can develop intentional, authentic, and anti-racist policy strategies that dismantle racist systems and begin to develop the policies, community resources, and infrastructure that truly support youth in achieving their goals.

ABOUT CSSP

CSSP is a national, non-profit policy organization that connects community action, public system reform, and policy change. We work to achieve a racially, economically, and socially just society in which all children and families thrive. To do this, we translate ideas into action, promote public policies grounded in equity, support strong and inclusive communities, and advocate with and for all children and families marginalized by public policies and institutional practices.

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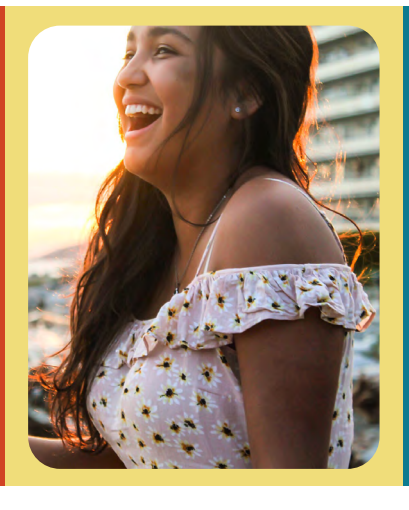



"I CAN BE SOMETHING GREAT, NO MATTER WHAT MY BACKGROUND [IS], NO MATTER WHAT FOSTER CARE WAS, BECAUSE AT THE END OF THE DAY, IT'S NOT FOSTER CARE THAT DEFINES ME."

— FARRAH, ATLANTA

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Youth deserve the opportunity to live in communities that promote their health and well-being, maximize their power, and promise, and support their ability to achieve their goals and dreams. The transition to adulthood is an important time of growth, where the right balance of independence and support is critical to promoting health and well-being throughout life. Promoting healthy adolescent development must be "an intentional, deliberate process of providing support, relationships, experiences, and opportunities."[1] To create the environment and context for young people to thrive, we owe all of them access to the opportunities they want and need to be successful. For young people who have exited foster care, we especially owe them the opportunity to achieve their goals outside of surveilling systems, and the support, preparation, opportunities, and connections to be able to do so. Our communities should be places where youth can connect with the supports they need, and do so while being included, affirmed, cared for, and valued, and feeling that they belong.

We know that youth do their best when they are secure and supported in their families and that all families deserve to live together in their communities. Belonging and feeling valued and connected to community is important to the health and well-being of young people and families.[2] Communities are where they access needed supports, formal and informal, to ensure they can meet their needs and achieve their goals. Youth and families should be able to access quality, supportive public services in their communities including public education, accessible transportation, safe housing, and healthy food.

However, for many, those resources and supports aren't available or accessible in their communities due to failures in public policy and public systems.[3] Specifically, exclusionary public policy that deems some families "deserving" and others "not deserving" has consistently upheld racist beliefs and structures, harming communities and leaving youth and families of color without access to services and supports.[4] Further, policies that are asserted to be "color-blind" or "race-neutral" have also too frequently been designed to benefit White youth and families, harming youth and families of color either directly or indirectly.[5] These policies have directly led to and/or contributed to community disinvestment, community surveillance and policing, and exclusion from social and economic opportunities and supports for youth and families of color, resulting in both too few young people and families of color having what they need to be successful and too many experiencing crises. These crises, often a result of housing instability, food insecurity, or a lack of access to health care, are compounded when youth and families become involved with child welfare systems.

Every day youth are separated from their families and placed in foster care. In FY2021, more than 35,000 youth over the age of 13, disproportionately Black and Indigenous youth, were removed from their families and entered foster care in the U.S.[6] The data are clear: the vast majority of children and youth in foster care are removed as a result of the surveillance and criminalization of circumstances stemming from poverty and lack of social and economic support.[7] For youth of color, the data suggest that, compared to their White counterparts,[8] they are less likely to reunify with their families, spend longer time in foster care, and are more likely to age-out of the system without having achieved permanent connection to family and/or loving adults.[9] Specifically, in FY2021, almost 20,000 youth—many of whom spent years in the foster care system—exited the child welfare system to emancipation without a legal connection to a loving, caring adult or support system.[10] These data further highlight how public policies and systems have been designed to exclude families of color from accessing the supports they need, and when they are able to access services, those services come with heightened levels of surveillance.[11]

> I WAS JUST SUPPOSED TO BE HAPPY THAT I WAS LEAVING FOSTER CARE, BUT YOU'RE SCARED. YOU'RE TERRIFIED.
>
> —BRIA, BRONX*

When youth of color exit the foster care system, they often face circumstances that mirror the challenges first experienced by their families prior to their involvement with the child welfare system: struggling to find supports they need in their communities such as housing, health care, transportation, food, and more. Youth exit the system during a critical developmental period, their transition to adulthood, and often must navigate their communities on their own—hoping to identify and access the supports they need—while also facing the reality that those services may not exist or be available where they live. These young people are expected to navigate complex, underfunded, and disjointed social and economic support systems as they try to secure stable housing, employment, pursue their education, and have their health care needs met. Too often the systems they encounter are ill equipped to meet their needs, and for Black, Indigenous, Latinx/e, and other youth of color, the policies that govern how these systems operate create additional barriers due to the deeply embedded racism governing the public systems in this country.[12] The failures in policy and across public systems are clear as youth transitioning from foster care often enter communities without access to affordable housing, opportunities to attend school or find employment, and physical and mental health care, resulting in youth not being set up to succeed and achieve their goals.[13]

* NOTE: all names used in this report are pseudonyms, used to protect the privacy of interviewees

CARES COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

To better promote the health and well-being of youth, especially youth who identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx/e, and other youth of color transitioning to adulthood, the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) launched, in partnership with 27 Youth Ambassadors, the Creating Actionable and Real Solutions (CARES) initiative. The aim of this work is to eliminate the systemic challenges that youth—specifically older or transition-age youth of color—who are or have been involved with the foster care system experience. Through CARES, the team is working to achieve the desired change by developing and advocating for national and local anti-racist policy agendas and promoting a narrative that values and respects the wisdom of youth and makes their experiences, expertise, strengths, and needs visible, acknowledged, and drivers of policy efforts. This effort brings together three cohorts of transition-aged youth—or CARES Ambassadors—from Los Angeles, CA, New York City, NY, and Atlanta, GA who partner with CSSP staff to ensure that the work centers their expertise and meets the unique needs of young people. A foundational component of this initiative's collective work is a root cause analysis to better understand **how communities are organized to affirm, include, and support youth transitioning out of foster care** and to collaborate on the development of policy and practice recommendations. To that end, this report explores the root structural causes that contribute to and exacerbate the outcomes and experiences of youth transitioning from foster care through a unique qualitative approach that centers the experiences of older youth. This approach considers the material shared through interviews with young people as the foundation for uncovering these structural causes and developing recommendations to address them. The impact of these recommendations as potential change strategies for all youth critically depends on individual systems' and communities' commitment to policies that are anti-racist[14]—meaning they 1) redress past injustices, and at a minimum end the perpetuation of ongoing harm, 2) meet the needs of youth of color, 3) support youth and their families, and 4) serve all youth in need.

To effectively serve youth in their families and communities, anti-racist policies and practices must also be grounded in research-informed approaches that serve to mitigate risk and promote youth well-being. CSSP's Youth Thrive initiative works within systems and communities to change policies, programs, and practices by centering five protective and promotive factors that we know are crucial for serving youth: promoting youth resilience; implementing policies that reflect a knowledge of adolescent development; providing concrete support in times of need; helping to grow cognitive and social-emotional competence; and sustaining and nurturing social connections. These factors are reflected clearly in the findings from youth interviews which serve as the foundation for this analysis; both the need for policies and practices that support these factors as well as the gaps in current programs and services in promoting them.

The analysis and approach are grounded in an understanding of historical and current systemic racism and oppression and how it has shaped and continues to shape the ways in which systems and communities are organized and their impact on the experiences of youth of color aging out of care.

COMMUNITY ANALYSIS APPROACH

For youth aging out of foster care, the connection to community is central to their well-being and success. To better understand **how communities are organized to affirm, include, and support youth transitioning out of foster care,** the CARES initiative conducted a Community Analysis. Through the Community Analysis, the CARES team sought to identify 1) structural challenges that communities face as they work to support transition age youth (TAY);[15] 2) narratives about TAY that contribute to these challenges and policies and practices that create burdens for TAY in meeting their needs; and 3) creative solutions that build the capacity of communities to affirm, include, and support youth transitioning out of foster care. The aim of this analysis is to determine solutions to help youth thrive outside of systems and in their communities.

The CARES initiative recognizes that solutions are needed that promote the ability of communities to support youth as they transition to adulthood and that systems are not and should not be the key point of connection for young people.

CSSP introduced the CARES Ambassadors to the Community Analysis, an investigative approach adapted from the Institutional Analysis methodology. Working with Dr. Ellen Pence, CSSP developed the Institutional Analysis (IA) methodology to examine and seek solutions to the organizational and structural dynamics that produce poor outcomes for particular populations of children and families served by social service agencies and community partners.[16] The IA process is grounded in institutional ethnography,[17] a form of Sociology that produces "accounts of institutional practices that can explain how workers are organized and coordinated to talk about and act on cases."[18] See Appendix B for a detailed description of the Institutional Analysis methodology. To answer the key question for the CARES initiative, CSSP adapted the IA methodology to take a closer look at three individual communities—defined

as the landscape of organizations and the infrastructure connecting public systems—rather than a specific agency or institution. This is a novel approach. Adapting a process that traditionally looks at an institution into one that examines a community with its complex landscapes of interacting institutions and systems is undoubtedly challenging and invariably leaves more to explore and learn. CSSP is continuing this learning and will be taking lessons from this first application of the approach in order to dig deeper into each of the communities included in this initial analysis. This will not only help to inform and refine our approach, but also help to uncover more about how communities are organized to affirm, include, and support TAY. See Appendix A to learn more.

In this application, the CARES team examined how a community may be organized to affirm, include, and support TAY. The Ambassadors served as advisors and partners throughout the research process including in the development of the youth interview protocol, quantitative and qualitative data analysis, identification of themes and potential driving factors, and the development of potential solutions. This report presents the findings of the CARES Community Analysis.

COMMUNITY SELECTION

CSSP identified three distinct, geographic communities within Los Angeles, New York City, and the greater Atlanta area to explore how communities are organized to affirm, include, and support youth transitioning out of foster care. The selected communities, Service Planning Area (SPA) 6 in Los Angeles;[19] the Bronx in New York City; and Fulton, DeKalb, and Cobb counties in the greater Atlanta region, were chosen after reviewing local data and speaking with system and community leaders. These communities were selected because of the high-percentage of child welfare removals occurring there, high-rates of TAY living in these communities, and high-levels of need (including food insecurity and poverty). Importantly, within each of these communities there are incredible strengths despite considerable historic disinvestment, denial of and segregation from opportunity, and neglect due to policies and decisions made by policymakers that were and are grounded in racism.[20]

DATA SOURCES

The foundation for the Community Analysis is the experiences of youth and is captured through a variety of data sources that allow for an analysis of the landscape of services and programs for TAY and narratives accompanying them, the community infrastructure, and the youth experience. The data include interviews with 47 youth from three communities, synthesis of literature and research, stakeholder interviews with community providers, and available quantitative survey data of over 1,000 TAY from three communities. Discussions with the CARES Ambassadors throughout the data collection and analysis process also supported and provided context for findings from the data above. Below are additional details on the data collection activities. More information about the activities that informed the Community Analysis approach can be found in Appendix A.

Youth Interviews

The 47-youth interviewed for the Community Analysis were recruited specifically for this analysis by Think of Us and interviewed by CSSP staff in the fall of 2022. Recruitment criteria included that the youth 1) had either aged-out of care or was living in extended foster care;[21] 2) was currently residing in one of the three identified communities; and 3) was between the ages of 18 and 26 years old. The vast majority of the youth interviewed for the Community Analysis identified as Black, Indigenous, Latinx/e, or multi-racial—a sobering reflection on the pervasiveness of separation from family and placement in foster care that children and youth of color experience.

All youth who were interviewed were provided with an overview of the CARES initiative, the Community Analysis, and how their information would be used, and were asked to formally consent to participation. Following their consent, the youth were provided with a $100 gift card as compensation for their time and expertise and a packet of information that included available resources in their communities. Youth were provided with compensation and resource information regardless of how long their interview lasted or if they chose to stop the interview early. These interviews were subsequently coded for themes by CSSP staff, which were then reviewed and further developed with input from the CARES Ambassadors. Throughout this report, select direct quotes from youth are offered to highlight examples of themes, problems TAY experience, and potential solutions.

Stakeholder Interviews

Over twenty interviews were conducted with community leaders, system administrators, and staff and leadership at community-based organizations to understand how communities are organized and to learn more about efforts underway to support TAY. Stakeholders provided an overview of the service landscape, the dominant narratives about TAY in their communities, barriers to effectively serving TAY, as well as promising initiatives and practices for serving TAY. These interviews helped CSSP staff better understand the community infrastructure and capacity.

Literature Review

The team also identified and reviewed additional data and literature including research reports and organizational studies to provide greater context for the identified communities, to help understand key policies, activities, and initiatives, and to

identify potential disconnects between how the community is and has been organized and how it could better contribute to positive outcomes for youth.

Quantitative Data Analysis

To understand the demographics of TAY in the three communities and to provide context for the experiences TAY shared in the youth interviews about their communities, the CARES team reviewed and analyzed survey data collected from Think Of Us of other young people living in the identified communities to better understand their current circumstances.[22] The data confirm that youth residing in the selected communities were facing significant challenges to thriving—barriers created and compounded by the historical disinvestment and systemic racism in their communities.

Of survey respondents ages 16-25:

Over 44% reported having an immediate money crisis and 29% reported worrying about money week-to-week;[23]

Nearly half (over 45%) were hungry at least a couple of times a month, with stark need among older youth, ranging from 51% of youth ages 24-25 in Los Angeles, to 50% of youth ages 24-25 in Atlanta, to 58% of youth ages 24-25 in the Bronx.

Framework for Analysis

The body of work supporting the Institutional Analysis suggests that there are at least eight core structural features employed by institutions and organizations that organize how they engage and serve different populations.[24] Any one or a combination of these structural features can interfere with equitable achievement of the desired outcomes—in this case, youth transitioning from foster care and being affirmed, included, and supported in their communities. These structural features also represent opportunities, or specific levers, to create positive institutional or organizational change. For this application as a Community Analysis, the core features that were identified are outlined in Exhibit 1.

EXHIBIT 1. STRUCTURAL FEATURES OF COMMUNITY CAPACITY TO SUPPORT TRANSITION AGE YOUTH

STRUCTURAL FEATURE	DESCRIPTION	STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS PROBLEMS WITHIN THE STRUCTURAL FEATURE
RULES & REGULATIONS	Established laws, regulations, other governmental requirements, and local policy that drives staff's practices and can enhance or limit the staff's ability and capacity to effectively act with youth.	Policy change and advocacy
ORGANIZATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES	Internal administrative policies, protocols, and procedures, assessment tools, decision-making panels, formats for case plans and case recording. They can enhance the staff-client relationship or impede it. The connections among providers and staff and connections between staff and youth and family members are also generally guided by administrative practice. How organizations are connected to one another to support young people is critical and is reflected in the quality of communication and information sharing.	Revise, eliminate, or adopt new practices and procedures such as streamlining applications or enhancing referrals.
COMMUNITY RESOURCES	Resources include everything necessary for staff to carry out their job responsibilities and for youth to receive effective services and supports. Resources include concrete supports, programs, and staff. The quantity of resources and how well they meet the need of youth are influenced by the mission, purpose, function, and organizing principles, culture, and tasks of member organizations.	Reallocate resources and advocate for additional resources and functions to better align the resources with needs.
ACCOUNTABILITY	Who and what holds staff accountable for their actions, especially actions with youth. Staff and organizations are often held accountable to specific data outcomes; knowing what these outcomes are and who sets them highlights mechanisms of accountability.	Develop mechanisms and measures that hold the organization accountable to the people they serve.
CONCEPTS & THEORIES	Policies, administrative practices, resource allocation, job duties are all connected to institutional assumptions, theories, values, and concepts regardless of an individual staff's beliefs. What are the concepts and theories about youth transitioning out of foster care and how do they influence policies, administrative practices, etc.	Assess and reflect on the assumptions behind language, actions, and procedures. Revise policies and procedures. to reflect positive concepts and theories and engage in training and coaching to promote narrative change.

FINDINGS

YOUTH EXPERIENCES & STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES

The Community Analysis as presented here, like many diagnostic tools, is a snapshot in time intended to identify opportunities for improvements and areas for further questioning, testing, and exploration. Through this process, we found that TAY are being failed by public systems. In all three communities, we identified clear gaps between what youth leaving foster care and transitioning to adulthood need in their communities as well as clear challenges with knowing what already exists in their communities and what they can or cannot access due to systemic barriers. Across the three communities analyzed, youth face overwhelming barriers and are consistently worried and stressed about being able to meet their basic needs including safe housing, managing their finances, and being able to access food and quality health care services. The voices and experiences of the 47 youth we interviewed were further validated by the quantitative data and literature synthesis, stakeholder interviews, and the experiences shared by the CARES Ambassadors.

YOUTH EXPERIENCE

Based on an analysis of the multiple data sources described above, the following themes surfaced and are discussed in more detail below. In each of the three communities, youth:

- Defined their "community" as being relational (i.e., about relationships and connections) and not based on geography (i.e., about proximity or location);
- Reported feeling unprepared and ill-equipped for the challenges of living independently;
- Faced multiple obstacles to getting the help they needed from community and public systems, in the ways they needed it, when they needed it; and
- Reported experiences of racism and stigma but refused to allow these experiences or others to define them.

Youth defined their "community" as being relational and not based on geography.

Although we selected specific, geographically defined communities to conduct the Community Analysis to gain an understanding of what supports and services are available to the population, an important finding from the analysis is that youth do not define their community based on where they live (e.g., geographic boundaries) but rather, they define their community based on relationships. They described community as being in caring relationships, having a sense of belonging, and a circle of friends and relatives who ***"have my back."*** Youth were clear that it is these relationships that create a sense of belonging and inclusion for them. This is a particularly important finding as our policies, including eligibility, systems, direct investments, and public services are based on geographic boundaries.

When we asked youth directly about their geographic community, few reported having experienced a community where they felt affirmed, included, or supported consistently, if at all. Instead, they reported that services in their communities were difficult to navigate because they were not well-advertised or easily accessible, and often reported being unable to identify if a service was available where they lived. Many youth reported that one way they learned about available supports was often through family and friends. However, they also spoke about not wanting to burden their friends or family with requests for financial help or navigation support for several reasons, including because their friends and family were struggling, financially and emotionally, themselves or because some of these relationships were tenuous, had been harmed, or were less established, as a result of the child welfare system. For many youth, this created a difficult dynamic - a tension between meeting their concrete needs by relying on family and friends and also respecting the boundaries of their relationships.

Youth also spoke about difficulties in building relationships in their communities—especially when it came to finding supportive adults who could help them navigate community resources to meet their basic needs. Many voiced that they wished there were dedicated organizations in the community performing outreach and helping youth navigate services. The exception to this finding was youth who were connected to college, including both community colleges and four-year programs, where programs and services were more centralized with accessible staff. Moving forward, it is important to examine the ways in which these educational structures promote supportive relationships (e.g., build relational communities) within a place-based context (e.g., more akin to a geographical community).

Youth reported being unprepared and ill-equipped for the challenges of living independently.

For many youth who aged-out of foster care, the end of foster care was a particularly difficult experience. They reported feeling ***"set adrift"*** without the institutional supports and services of the foster care system—specifically, educational support, health care, and housing.[25] Youth referred to feeling ***"thrown into an ocean,"*** not knowing if they were ***"going to sink or swim,"*** and simply being ***"terrified."***[26]

> I HAD TO FIGURE LITERALLY EVERYTHING OUT ON MY OWN. I FEEL LIKE SOME OF THE CASE MANAGERS AT THE AGENCIES COULD HAVE TAUGHT US A LITTLE BIT MORE FOR AGING OUT. LIKE MONEY MANAGEMENT, HOW TO BUILD YOUR CREDIT, AND EVERYTHING. IT'S LIKE YOU'RE THROWN OUT TO THE WOLVES.
>
> —DIANE, NEW YORK CITY

Youth faced multiple obstacles to getting the help they needed, in the form they needed it, when they needed it.

In addition to feeling unprepared to "swim" on their own, TAY encounter obstacles to getting services and supports that are in a safe location, fit their needs, are supportive of their identity, are high quality, and have a good reputation. This finding is consistent with other research, which has concluded that "too often foster youth exit care only to face significant systemic conditions beyond their control—especially around housing, employment, and financial resources—that can feel as though they are simply being set up to fail."[27] Youth interviewed for this analysis cited three common hurdles to getting what they needed and feeling supported by their community:

- **Lack of knowledge of a wide range of available resources and supports.** Youth spoke of not having the knowledge of important and available community resources in times of need. For some, like young parents, this included resources that would provide parenting guidance. One young mother spoke of looking for parenting support groups and classes but not finding any. Others spoke of looking for concrete items, like clothing and baby supplies, or developmentally appropriate activities to do with their children. Other youth shared that they did not know if they had health insurance or how to use it, with at least two sharing that they had been going to the hospital emergency room for health care instead of registering with a primary care physician. Others spoke about not knowing where to go for housing support and as a result sleeping in their car because they did not know that homeless shelters existed. Looking for mental health supports was common for many of the youth. Some acknowledged receiving information while they were still in foster care or just as they were exiting, but not knowing how to act on it when needed. In the absence of having a person to turn to for guidance, youth spoke of using social media and internet search engines, citing Facebook, Google, and Craigslist, to locate services and to assess quality, but also noted that the information they found online was not always reliable.

- **Accessibility.** There are several components to accessibility of basic needs services: logistics (i.e., timing, location, etc.), service requirements (i.e., enrollment and redeterminations), and capacity (i.e., availability of the service).

  Transportation, even in New York City with its extensive subway system, often creates a significant barrier for youth. Across interviews, TAY noted public transportation may be unsafe, expensive, and/or time consuming.

  Young parents expressed additional logistical challenges as they often have trouble accessing child care when they need it, because of limited-service hours. One parent talked about the challenges of finding child care that was able to meet her complicated school, work, and personal schedule.

  > THE BUS TAKES SO LONG, AND THE CENTER MIGHT CLOSE, OR IT'S NOT ON THE BUS ROUTE. YOU HAVE TO DRIVE THERE, AND PEOPLE DON'T HAVE CARS AND US YOUTH DON'T WANT TO DO UBER AND LYFTS BECAUSE WE HAVE TO SAVE MONEY FOR OTHER THINGS WE NEED.
  >
  > —RESHAWN, ATLANTA

  Despite efforts to prioritize housing vouchers for TAY,[28] a housing voucher is no guarantee that a youth will find adequate let alone safe and conveniently located housing. As Tia from the Bronx noted, ***"I got my section 8 voucher. They gave me one apartment and I took a look at it. It was literally next to a strip club."*** Others talked about having a voucher but not being able to find a landlord who would accept it.

  Finally, youth are looking for emotional support to heal from past trauma, much of which has been caused by, and while in, the child welfare system. Despite having health insurance, youth faced significant barriers to accessing the services that were of quality and right fit for their needs. Youth talked about wanting therapists and counselors who understand their experience, provide high-quality services, and who may provide non-traditional therapeutic services. These types of services are often hard to access with long waitlists as there is not enough capacity in the community to meet the need.

- **Affordability.** Youth may not be able to afford services or continue to afford services should they lose their eligibility (including health care, child care or a housing voucher).[29] Youth leaving foster care often have little financial security and face an economy and labor market that make it increasingly difficult to meet their needs. Some have had the benefit of having participated in a matched savings program[30] but this is not universal. While youth are often trying to balance school and/or work with other commitments, the undervaluing of work by policies and systems (e.g., hourly-wage jobs that do not provide a livable wage or lack paid leave and other important benefits) make it difficult for youth to both make ends meet and pursue their goals and dreams. For many, it is difficult to afford resources like housing, despite potential access to housing vouchers. While a voucher may cover the monthly cost of housing, they do not cover the needed upfront costs such

as first and last month's rent and a security deposit. Additionally, a housing voucher is no guarantee that a youth will find safe, affordable housing in a country with a longstanding national affordable housing crisis.

Many youth reported actively seeking mental health support during this period of transition to heal from the harms caused from forced family separation. However, they experienced significant difficulty affording mental health care despite being eligible for Medicaid in the state within which they aged-out of foster care. Youth shared, and other research supports,[31] that non-traditional mental health services and those that are high-quality are often not covered by their Medicaid insurance plans. Further, youth talked about the difficulty of transferring their health coverage from one state to another as this requires states to have elected to implement a Medicaid waiver in order to categorically provide coverage to youth who have aged-out of care in a different state.[32] This systemic barrier creates affordability challenges for youth who move to a different state to pursue their goals or be closer to family.

Youth reported experiences of racism and stigma but refused to let these experiences or others define them.
Compounding the barriers and challenges TAY experience, youth faced racism—both interpersonal and systemic. Youth spoke of ***"feeling like just trash, unwanted,"*** being called ***"troubled Black teens,"*** labeled ***"bad,"*** or seen as the ***"negative party"*** because they are Black. As a result, youth felt ***"nobody really wanted to take a chance"*** on them or cared or respected them the way ***"other kids, other ethnicities, other races get"*** treated. For Black youth and other youth of color, they experienced the stigma of having been in foster care as compounding and reported that their White peers who had been in care were given more leeway and less blame for their circumstances. Youth of color who had been in care felt they were seen as responsible for having been in the system and that aging-out was viewed as their fault.

While acknowledging racism and the stigma associated with foster care, a number of youth talked of succeeding despite the roadblocks in their path and urged others to create their own narrative, not believing the one that has been written for them. They refused to be pitied, treated like a ***"charity case,"*** or have their futures defined by their involvement with child welfare.

STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES TO AFFIRMING, INCLUSIVE, AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH

The experiences and themes identified through the interviews we conducted with older youth are unfortunately not unique and have been previously documented.[33] The Community Analysis approach and research conducted here adds a unique contribution by centering the experiences of youth who have left foster care. The framework used here explores the root structural causes of how communities are organized to contribute to and exacerbate the outcomes and experiences youth report. This analysis suggests there may be several structural features (listed in Exhibit 2 and described in-depth in this section), many of which have been shaped by systemic racism, that contribute to the experiences of TAY and prevent communities from being affirming, inclusive, and supportive. By identifying problematic elements of these structural features, we are better able to develop strategies to address them. While some structural features may be more prevalent in some communities compared to others, the problematic conditions discussed here were identified across the three selected communities.

EXHIBIT 2: EXAMPLES OF STRUCTURAL FEATURES THAT CAN HINDER A COMMUNITY'S ABILITY TO AFFIRM, INCLUDE, AND SUPPORT YOUTH TRANSITIONING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

STRUCTURAL FEATURES		POTENTIALLY PROBLEMATIC CONDITIONS
RULES & REGULATIONS		• Laws and mandates that drive service eligibility and age caps through funding reimbursement arrangements. • Lack of laws and mandates that prevent rents from escalating beyond affordability. • Laws and mandates are not aligned and present conflicting requirements.
ORGANIZATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES		• Service contracting requirements that encourage competition rather than collaboration. • Internal processes related to implementation of rules and regulations. • Complicated application process and assessment protocols that require youth to provide personal information. • Fee scales that may affect affordability. • Limited hours of operation that make the service inaccessible. • Weak or nonexistent communication and connections between systems and providers and among providers interfere with effectively linking TAY to services.
RESOURCES	PROGRAMMATIC GAPS	• Lack of an effective approach to Independent Living Skill development including through connections to community-based organizations.
	FUNCTIONAL GAPS	• Few organizations see their mission or have job positions that are responsible for outreach to TAY, periodic check-ins, and/or service navigation. • Organizations providing specific services rather than meeting a youth's holistic needs.
	CAPACITY SHORTAGES	• Insufficient affordable housing stock. • Inadequate public transportation. • Too few therapeutic options that are of quality and meet the needs of TAY. • Too few affordable or available child care options.

ACCOUNTABILITY	• Lack of mechanisms for obtaining and meaningfully integrating youth feedback. • Lack of performance measures that assesses how well youth are prepared for exiting foster care.
CONCEPTS & THEORIES	• Traditional thinking about individuals being "adults" and "ready for independence" at age 21 is not aligned with current knowledge about adolescent development. • Prioritizing youth "independence" over "connectedness" to community and relational supports.

Rules and Regulations: Age Caps, Program Eligibility Criteria, and Capacity Constraints

Legislative mandates create rules and regulations that drive service eligibility requirements and the types of supports and services that are provided using public funding. When youth described transitioning out of foster care like being ***"thrown into the ocean"*** or ***"having their wings cut off,"*** they were experiencing the federal and state mandates that set the age caps for receiving services from foster care at 18 or 21 years old—creating an arbitrary cut off based on age rather than need. As experts have noted, programming often does not provide any room for error or mistakes by the youth, community, or system due to finite funding and specific, inflexible requirements such as timeframes that can drive program eligibility.[34]

> I WAS ABLE TO GET A FOOD STAMPS, BUT WHEN I STARTED WORKING, SOMEHOW, THEY SAID, I MADE TOO MUCH. I DON'T KNOW, THEY CUT OFF MY FOOD STAMPS SO THAT MADE IT A LOT, A LOT MORE DIFFICULT.
>
> —ALISHA, LOS ANGELES

In addition, if a community-based organization wants to offer services and supports to TAY outside of the eligibility requirements set by the public funding stream, the organization must seek private funding. While some do, the cost of doing so can be significant and inconsistent, creating instability in the availability of services, in the community, and for the youth.

At the federal, state, and local levels, rules and regulations can limit programs helpfulness to TAY and all families. For example, a bevy of eligibility rules in public assistance can drastically limit support based on unrealistic income guidelines, as seen in programs like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). At the local level, rules and regulations can also constrain or support community capacity development. For example, rent control requirements can help protect affordable housing, but legislation that allows unfettered rent escalation constrains housing options for many people, including older youth. Furthermore, local mandates can add layers of eligibility requirements. As one report on the experiences of older youth in New York City noted, the New York Housing Authority "requires youth to be employed and to verify employment with a pay stub. However, for those who attend college, their salary is barely enough to pay for tuition, and they cannot pay rent unless they are able to participate in rare programs like New York Foundling's Dorm Project."[35,36] This statement highlights the impossible tradeoffs youth must navigate as they choose between their immediate needs—paying for their education or paying for housing.

Organizational Administrative Practices: Contract Requirements, Service Requirements, and Internal Processes

Administrative practices are, for the most part, in the control of each agency or organization. They are developed internally to help implement the mandates organizations have from legislative and administrative policy, contracts, and other prescribed directives. Administrative practices include, but are not limited to:

- **Contract Requirements.** Contracts dictate who can apply, the requirements for a program, and the data outcomes that must be tracked and collected. Further, the contracting process affects how resources are distributed and the extent to which collaboration can occur. Governmental rules and regulations that require competitive bidding and contracting are believed by some we interviewed to ***"pit organizations against one another"*** and can direct organizations with similar missions and populations served to develop internal practices that interfere with effective collaboration as they must compete for limited available funding.

- **Service Requirements.** Community-based organizations establish service application requirements, hours of operation, assessment protocols, sliding fee scales, etc. All of which can make the resources offered more or less accessible and more or less affordable to TAY. As experienced by the youth interviewed, the intake and application process for services can be overly complicated and overwhelming, essentially making the service inaccessible. Youth report that the complicated assessment and intake process, which often require them to tell their story again and again, can last weeks and creates a barrier to accessing essential supports in times of need.

- **Internal Processes.** Systems choose how to implement federal and state policy, including how providers share information and the design of programs for independent living. The decisions systems make lead to specific forms needing to be completed, certain processes having to be followed, and certain data collected and tracked. These internal processes dictate how staff operate, serve, and interact with TAY and can manifest themselves in a variety of ways, compounding the youth's ability to navigate each program or service.

Resources: Programmatic Gaps, Functional Gaps, and Capacity Shortages

Resources include everything necessary to help TAY thrive. Concrete services,[37] education and employment opportunities, and staff time are all considered resources. Community resources and the capacity to administer them are insufficient to meet the needs of TAY because of a long-term lack of investment in the safety net and supports.

- **Programmatic Gaps.** Gaps in programs that could meet the needs of TAY range from inadequate Independent Living Programs (ILPs)[38] to scarce family support programs for parents with young children. Few ILPs contracted by child welfare systems have been effective in preparing youth for life without the social control and surveilling hand of child welfare,[39] in part because they do not provide continued support and guidance after youth exit the program. Even the more effective programs have not been shown to improve youth social connections, despite the importance of ensuring youth have healthy, sustained relationships with people, institutions, and their community to promote a sense of trust, belonging, and feeling valued. Over and over, youth interviewed for the Community Analysis expressed needing more guidance and being ill equipped with necessary knowledge about housing, finances, credit, and the available resources in their community. Leadership and staff from one local organization had the same observation and suggested that ***"no one is teaching life skills, because everybody's focused on 'behavior management' or they're focused on college tours and access to college… nobody's talking about persistence, or how to even manage life once you exit… there is a huge disconnect."*** This programmatic gap is reflective of a lack of appreciation for or understanding of what TAY really need, instead offering a service array that focuses on behavioral change as opposed to reinforcing youths' strengths.

- **Functional Gaps.** TAY need concrete supports for basic needs[40]—food, clothing, furniture, housing, education, employment, and medical and mental health treatment—but they lack knowledge about what is available or how to navigate community services. As a protective factor, it is crucial to ensure youth receive quality, equitable, and respectful services that meet their basic needs and encourage youth to ask for help and advocate for themselves.[41] Youth spoke of a need for navigation support, but few had formal access to a navigator after aging-out or exiting a program. While some systems and communities provide this service, many do not. When it is available, TAY are not always aware or there is a lack of capacity to serve all TAY who request, and would benefit from, the support.

  All youth long for a caring community—social connections that ensure they feel safe and valued.[42] They want someone who will listen to them and while they do not want to be surveilled like when they were in foster care, they do want someone (***"who gives a damn"***) to periodically reach out to them, check in on them, see if ***"they are ok"*** and if they need help and guidance. However, this is not what youth experience in their communities. Few community organizations have a mission to reach out to youth who have exited care, to meet them where they are, or provide a drop in space for youth just to ***"hang."*** As one report noted, "Child welfare often focuses its attention on providing tangible resources to youth, like a driver's license and a place to live. Doubtless, these are important. Yet, youth also need help cultivating intangible skills like learning how to apologize, to mend a relationship, and to try again. Many of these skills are naturally developed in response to learning from mistakes."[43] This speaks to the protective factor of Cognitive and Social-Emotional Competence, i.e., acquiring skills and attitudes that are essential to forming an independent, positive identity and having a productive and satisfying adulthood.

- **Capacity Shortages.** Community capacity is insufficient to meet the needs of youth in the community in many areas including housing, child care, and mental health services. Despite federal policy that includes youth aging out of care as eligible for different housing vouchers, communities simply do not have the housing capacity to meet the demand. Capacity is insufficient both because of a lack of housing stock and local inability to regulate landlords, encourage landlords to take vouchers, and prevent rents from continually escalating.[44] Parents face long waitlists for child care, and when they are able to access child care, they may face long transit times to reach child care and the slots may not be conducive to meeting their schedules balancing school and work. Youth want to engage in therapeutic services to support their healing and manage the stress, anxiety, and depression associated with aging-out of care. However, even for those who want services, there is a significant lack of availability of traditional and non-traditional services that lead to youth often being placed on waitlists, which we know can undermine a youth's mental health and stability. When they age-out, some youth are connected to community-based agencies that provide case management, but even for them, the staff they interact with often have large caseloads which prevent them from both being responsive to youth who reach and initiating outreach to other youth.

> I HAVE TRIED TO APPLY [FOR CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE]. I HAVE BEEN APPLYING FOR THE LAST FEW YEARS, LIKE ALMOST THREE YEARS AND I NEVER SEEM TO GET APPROVED.
>
> —JESSE, ATLANTA

Accountability: Missing Mechanisms to Promote Accountability to Youth

Youth are important members of our communities, and we need to honor their experiences and be accountable to them. Accountability mechanisms hold institutions and individuals responsible for their planning, actions, performance, and follow-through. They should seek feedback on performance outcomes of particular activities, such as responsiveness, quality, and adequacy of assistance.

Too often, accountability mechanisms are limited to counting how much is done rather than how well something is done or, if in fact, a difference is being made for youth and their well-being. For example, as noted in one of the reports reviewed, "When it comes to assessing program success, programs often measure attendance, participation, and utilization metrics rather than how prepared youth actually are … As a consequence, it is unclear how youth preparedness is tracked or even defined prior to youth aging out. … Even if staff believe they are preparing youth for life post-care, they do not have a framework by which they spell out what preparedness means and track progress towards it."[45]

> THEY MOVED ME INTO MY APARTMENT AND AFTER THAT, I JUST NEVER HEARD FROM THEM AGAIN.
> —SHELBY, NEW YORK CITY

While there are data about the poor outcomes TAY experience, there is very little data about some of the key issues raised by youth and the positive contributions youth make in their communities. Systems and communities do not consistently provide meaningful opportunities to hear actionable feedback from youth. Similar to the overall lack of outreach to youth, this lack of accountability affects the ability of systems and communities to evaluate how well they are doing to be responsive to the needs of youth and improve existing services and supports for youth as they exit care and transition to adulthood in the community. While a young person may have access to housing the day they exit care, there is a lack of accountability to whether or not that youth will have stable and safe housing in the weeks, months, or years to come.

Concepts and Theories: Problematic Narratives

It is clear that the child welfare system is failing older youth in their transition to adulthood and in supporting their connections to community. Older youth interviewed clearly expressed the desire to be connected to their communities and receive supports outside of the system—youth explicitly did not want, and should not be, connected to the child welfare system throughout their adult lives. All of the features discussed above—rules and regulations, organizational practice, resources availability, and accountability mechanisms—are based on certain assumptions made by systems in our communities, which are also called concepts, theories, or narratives.[46] The following examples highlight how concepts and theories drive the practice and policy that we uncovered through this analysis. The narratives promoted through these concepts and theories provide insight into why features may be designed and implemented in ways that contribute to harmful outcomes and poor experiences for older youth.

- **The mandated age caps for service eligibility are based on the assumption that a youth is no longer an "adolescent" but an "adult" at age 18 or 21 years old.** A problematic concept driving practices is that youth should operate on their own as an "adult" once they reach 18 or 21 years of age. However, research tells us that adolescent development continues into one's late twenties and emphasizes the importance of social connections and access to concrete supports in times of need as being critical to a young person thriving.[47] The caps rely on a further assumption that even as "adults," TAY should be on their own without support or guidance, ignoring the importance of social connections and this period of development. As one report noted, "Tying services and milestones to age also creates a 'threshold'—a stark experience where one day is dramatically different from the next,"[48] an abrupt and arbitrary change that was described by many youth who were interviewed for this analysis. Youth affirmed that they did not feel ready to be on their own at 21 and in a developmentally appropriate way, craved connections to members and organizations within their communities who could provide guidance and support outside of the child welfare system.

> 21 IS TOO EARLY TO STOP [RECEIVING SERVICES], BECAUSE AT 21 THAT'S WHEN STUFF GETS LIKE THE HARDEST.
> —LEON, LOS ANGELES

- **Systems center concepts of "independence," "preparedness," and "self-sufficiency," but the interpretation of these concepts is not universal.** How these concepts are defined by systems, the extent to which the definitions are consistent and known, the extent to which staff understand the concepts, what they mean to youth, and whether youth view these concepts differently than staff, all affect the experiences of youth. The vast majority of youth interviewed shared that ILPs did not help them feel independent or prepared to be independent from a holistic perspective—for example, a young person may have had housing when they aged-out, but they did not know how to manage their finances or make a doctor's appointment on their own.

- The youth interviewed for this analysis clearly shared the importance of being connected to community members and supports (rather than independent) as they transitioned to adulthood. The concept and theory that youth must reach out if they want help (a sign of independence) is in conflict with what research tells us about adolescent development

and what youth tell us they need as they exit foster care.[49] There is a clear need for the child welfare system, including ILPs, to focus their efforts on building connections between youth and community-based organizations that can continue to provide support and guidance when youth age-out of the child welfare system. It is important to also note that this concept of "independence" is closely tied to the societal concepts that romanticize young adulthood as a period of struggle and a rite of passage. Systems' and communities' embrace of this concept negatively impacts how services and supports are structured for young people navigating the transition to adulthood—creating additional hoops for youth to jump through rather than removing any and all potential barriers. In this case, youth who have been in foster care are not seen as deserving of the same type of support that a parent would provide for their own child.

In addition to the examples above, through this Community Analysis, the team also heard concerning language—such as viewing the receipt of services and supports as rewards for good behavior, and thinking the mission of child welfare is only to stabilize TAY, not set them up for success. These perspectives from TAY highlight the disconnect between what we as a society provide TAY and what TAY need.

CREATING SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

ACTION STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE & FURTHER QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

This Community Analysis affirms what many know and what youth experience: there are gaps between what youth need and how the communities in which they live currently support them. Despite clear failures in how communities currently affirm, include, and support youth, there are bright spots that suggest there are cross-organizational collaboration and institutional practices that could be models for how communities and systems can be organized and partner together to promote the promise, health, well-being, and safety of youth. In each community the team explored, there were policy initiatives and program innovations that provide both important building blocks for change and important protective and promotive factors that support what young people need and are seeking in their communities.[50] Additionally, youth who were interviewed for this analysis offered critical advice and "magic wand" solutions.[51] Youth shared that their experience transitioning from foster care to independence depends on where they live (including distance from family and friends who can provide support), local investments in supports for TAY, and whether a youth had a caseworker, therapist, or caring adult who was responsive and able to help them meet their needs. Suggestions by the youth, along with policy initiatives and program innovations, were used to support the development of potential strategies to address problematic structural features that prevent communities from affirming, including, and supporting TAY. An initial set of potential strategies are summarized in Exhibit 3 and described below.

In reviewing these strategies, it is important to recognize that they are not "stand alone" strategies. Youth do not live siloed lives, and potential strategies for change will not be experienced in silos, either. Each potential change strategy that targets a particular problematic feature will likely influence changes in other areas. Further, to maximize impact, the potential change strategies must be implemented in conjunction with broader policy, system, and community investments that promote youth and family well-being and connections. To truly advance positive outcomes and maximize the impact of any potential change strategy, systems and communities must be committed to anti-racist policies[52] —meaning they 1) redress past injustices, and end the perpetuation of ongoing harm, 2) meet the needs of youth of color, 3) support youth and their families, and 4) serve all youth in need.

EXHIBIT 3 POTENTIAL STRATEGIES TO HELP STRENGTHEN A COMMUNITY'S ABILITY TO AFFIRM, INCLUDE, AND SUPPORT YOUTH TRANSITIONING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

STRUCTURAL FEATURES	POTENTIAL CHANGE STRATEGIES
RULES & REGULATIONS	• Extend the age limits for supports that can be financed through public funding streams. • Improve youth's eligibility for services by eliminating restrictions and streamlining eligibility requirements. • Increase the supply of affordable housing by eliminating local mandates that impede supply development and creating policy incentives to increase supply.
ORGANIZATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES	• Ensure contracting processes for service creation and delivery encourage collaboration rather than competition. • Streamline service application processes and minimize assessment protocols, instead seeking to see how information TAY have already provided can be better shared while maintaining privacy standards. • Expand hours of operation and provide transportation, child care, and concrete supports.

RESOURCES	PROGRAMMATIC GAPS	• Improve programs such as Independent Living Programs to better meet TAY needs, including financial literacy, mental health, and holistic supports.
	FUNCTIONAL GAPS	• Establish community collaborative efforts that bring together the available resources and map out a means for connecting youth to resources. • Designate organizations to intentionally reach out to and connect with TAY and help them navigate system and community hurdles.
	CAPACITY SHORTAGES	• Increase accessible and affordable resources that are safe and promote healing. • Identify creative financing streams to increase capacity for services that can meet holistic needs.
ACCOUNTABILITY		• Create mechanisms for gathering TAY experiences and evaluating the quality as well as the quantity of services and supports provided. • Ensure contracts include metrics that capture how well TAY are doing and if the service made a difference.
CONCEPTS & THEORIES		• Interrogate the language that is used to describe TAY and reflect on any damage and stigma it causes, and how it may be influencing current mandates and practices. • Promote a narrative that is aligned with adolescent development.

POTENTIAL ACTIONS TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES

Rules and Regulations: Eliminating Barriers and Promoting Flexible Funding

The CARES initiative recognizes that solutions are needed that promote the ability of communities to support youth as they transition to adulthood—for youth aging out of foster care, the connection to community is central to their well-being and success. Formal systems are not and should not be the key point of connection for these young people. However, there are ways for systems to continue to support youth beyond the current maximum eligibility thresholds by identifying and directing flexible funding to community-based organizations to provide supports to youth beyond 21 years old. Many youth who were interviewed chose to use their "magic wand" to change the age limits for extended support because, as one youth noted, ***"At 21, you're either in the middle of graduating from something, or barely getting up on your feet and running with your credit score."*** Another highlighted that ***"Some people need help longer than others, so I feel like it should go case by case on what that person needs."*** Identifying and providing community-based agencies with funding that is more flexible, can be used to support youth beyond their 21st birthday, and in ways that youth identify they need, is an opportunity for systems to be accountable to the experiences of TAY during a critical transition. One youth referred to this kind of flexibility as ***"rebound support"***—offering continued support in case a youth "does not make it" or struggles to maintain stability after they exit care. As one youth stated, ***"[youth] should have another opportunity to get more resources so when they officially do get their own place, they won't be scrambling."***

Organizational Administrative Practices: Removing Administrative Barriers

Research is clear that complicated application processes and requirements, which are often by design, lead to underutilization of crucial programs and services.[53] A few youth spoke of wanting simplified ways to obtain resources, suggesting they should be able to ***"go online to sign up for these things"*** and many discussed the barrier of having to complete onerous assessments before even being able to access the services they needed during times of crisis. In addition, the community organizations we spoke to shared that in many instances the public system's contracting procedures and resource allocation protocols interfered with collaboration. They suggested that this process could be a target for change. This is an area that deserves more investigation within communities. An area for further inquiry may be to better understand the purpose or intent of requirements imposed by agencies and organizations, which jurisdictions mandates these requirements, whether the requirements are developed through an unmandated administrative process, and if they are essential for getting services to TAY in a timely way. This information can then inform strategies for eliminating requirements that are unnecessary and burdensome.

Resources: Expanding Programs that Meet Youth-Identified Needs

As previously noted, data analyzed through this approach highlight the significant gaps in resources (related to programmatic, functional, and capacity) that exist in communities serving TAY. There are a number of areas to explore here to identify potential solutions, and as changes are made to increase the resources to meet youth needs, it is important to consider the other structural features (i.e., organizational administrative practices) that will also need to be aligned to promote true access.

Opportunities to expand resources by filling programmatic, functional, and capacity gaps include:

- **Programmatic Gaps: Improve and Expand Programs to Meet TAY Needs.** There were at least three areas where youth wanted to improve existing programs or create new ones in their communities. These programs related to improving their preparation for independent living, addressing their mental health, and healing, and creating designated resource places and spaces for TAY in the community. Specific potential strategies include:

- ***Better financial literacy guidance.*** Youth suggest there should be earlier, more frequent, and more hands-on teaching and coaching about financial independence tools and skills such as savings accounts, overdraft fees, the difference between debit cards and credit cards, credit scores, how to do tax returns, and credit building. This information has to be shared in ways that are aligned with adolescent development and learning and could include creating a ***"financial literacy museum"*** similar to a children's museum with interactive exhibits and simulations, as one youth suggested.[54] Such an approach would ***"make it fun"*** where youth could learn ***"about credit cards [by going] in and act[ing] like we are about to shop and our card [gets] declined"*** and having former foster youth to act as ***"resident advisors"*** to guide TAY through the process.
- ***Diverse supports that promote mental health and healing.*** Youth spoke of developing additional and nontraditional mental health services and therapeutic options to promote their healing and well-being. Supports identified include having therapists and counselors who are familiar with the experiences of TAY, and who can provide services in ways that are aligned with their racial identity and values and are gender-affirming. One youth reflected on the value of therapy and counseling services for TAY, saying ***"I would recommend therapy right off the bat when they age out. And somewhere where they will feel more like home.... somewhere in a comfortable setting to them."*** Providing a feeling of home was shared by Sierra in New York who wanted a program that offered therapeutic services for Black women—***"just somebody for them to talk to. ...I don't want to say a mother figure, but that could be a mother figure, you know. I think that would be beautiful, honestly, if they, if somebody could come up with a program like that for aging out youth. That's a very awkward stage. You're only like [age] 18, 20. You just don't know somebody that's like sensible, and that's not trying to force things down your throat that's able to listen to you without judgment."***

> MY THERAPIST WAS BLACK LIKE ME. HER SUPERVISOR WAS BLACK LIKE ME, SO I REALLY FELT CONNECTED, AND I FELT LIKE THEY WEREN'T JUST PICKING ON ME OR SAYING, OH, YOUR MENTAL HEALTH ISN'T SERIOUS. THEY ACTUALLY TOOK IT SERIOUS.
>
> —JAMILA, ATLANTA

- ***Holistic and comprehensive support.*** Youth proposed creating resource centers with multiple services and programs dedicated specifically to helping TAY because ***"It's not just one or two things, different people need different things. My issues are money, other persons' may be food, clothes, or mental health."*** Others wanted centers ***"where kids can interact with other kids and parents could get knowledge and the resources on parenting, mental health, like a community service."*** Youth were clear that it would be helpful to have designated locations in the community to build relationships within the community and to rely on when they are in need of support or resources.

- **Functional Gaps: Designated Responsibility for Outreach and a Connective Network.** A missing community function identified by many youth was someone who they could reach out to or who would reach out to them and offer guidance, knowledge, and support; someone or some agency that would provide continuity and stability. Youth suggested that the whole approach could also be implemented differently with an emphasis placed on intentional connections between community-based organizations working with TAY. Specifically, one youth stated ***"[I would not] make it run by the county or state. Make it more run by CBOs [community-based organizations]. Yes, the [system] will give you this check every month, or they will give you this money every month, but the financial literacy that comes with it will not be from someone from the county. It will be a non-profit organization that will be with you from 21 to 26 all the time teaching you, and just staying with you whatever you're doing, with whatever you need help with, so it'll be run by the CBO when it comes to the actual support system."***

  Many offered similar ideas about creating and expanding the position of somebody to help youth build and facilitate connections, using labels such as liaisons, mentors, life coaches, and navigators. Youth specifically stated that those serving in this role should be caring individuals, including former foster youth, who would be responsible for reaching out to TAY, checking on their progress, and making sure they are financially and emotionally ready to be on their own. These connections would be opportunities to sit down with youth and update them about resources, see what they may need help with, and walk them through service requirements and applications.

  To create this function, existing community organizations might examine their missions and determine how they might incorporate the function into their existing work or consider what might be adapted to meet this expressed need. Such initiatives and new job descriptions should be co-developed with youth to establish the structure, tasks, and necessary qualifications. In addition, legislative mandates and organizational administrative practices may need to be changed to encourage and support a collaborative community approach to responding to TAY.

- **Capacity Shortages: Identify funding streams to create a continuum of supports and services for transition age youth.** For change to be enacted, it takes long-term, dedicated funding streams that address the need for a continuum of supports and services. It is well established that there is a shortage of affordable and safe housing across the country, and waitlists for child care and therapeutic services in many communities that prevent TAY

from getting the supports they need, when they need them. In some situations, youth may not be eligible for a service until they come into contact with a public system. Communities need to be able to serve youth when they need resources and without restrictions. Systems and communities need to partner to develop a continuum of supports and services that is able to meet youth needs before the need becomes a crisis, not just when the youth is in crisis. This involves braiding and bundling financing streams and working to ensure programs are not surveilling and subjugating youth (for example, by placing them on state-required plans with consequences for opting out or ending their service engagement). Policymakers should support this work by providing consistent and substantial funding for a continuum of supports.

Accountability: Promoting Meaningful Accountability to Youth

To ensure programs are designed and implemented in ways that meet youth needs and prepare them for independent living, systems and communities must be held accountable not just for how much they are doing but how well youth are doing, including if they are better off for having been involved with a program. This means restructuring performance measures within contracts and public reports and creating or building functions that are designed to intentionally establish feedback loops through which youth can provide authentic input to evaluate the quality and quantity of efforts.

Jervey from Los Angeles explained the importance of listening to young people with experience in foster care, saying ***"My advice to the community is understanding that these youth bring a whole type of unique skills, a whole type of valuable participation in the community. Yes, we were part of a system, but that system does not define who we are as human being and understanding the fact that we have a whole extra layer of barriers and challenges that we had to overcome at a very young age."***

Concepts and Theories: Promoting Positive Narratives about Youth

Existing underlying concepts, theories, and narratives that promote damage imagery[55] must be examined, rejected, and replaced. Theories that establish pervasive narratives and drive legislative mandates, organizational operations, and distribution of resources are, perhaps, the most difficult system or organizational features to change. They require stripping away layers of assumptions and examining the basis for each assumption, and asking how it should and could be different. The racist roots of child welfare policy and systems is well documented.[56] Thus, systems and communities must be held accountable for promoting concepts and using language that denigrate Black, Indigenous, Latinx/e, and other youth and families of color and perpetuate harmful negative stereotypes.

It also requires examining language that is used in communication with TAY and the general public. Leaders need to be attentive to misleading, negative language used to describe TAY and demand more information about the origin of the language. For example, many agencies use language about engaging youth in services, programs, or feedback processes that promote the concepts that youth "must choose to engage" or "be compliant" in order to receive service or support. This undermines the responsibility of the system to actively engage with the young person and fails to recognize that systems must earn trust and demonstrate that they are helpful through a consistent track record of meeting TAY's needs.

Terms such as "independence," "preparedness," and "successful" should be examined with youth not only to ensure they understand how these terms are being used, but to ask if they are the right terms, the right definitions, and if they are reflective of what is really desired by youth. Finally, grounding the work in the most current research on adolescent development, rather than historical and traditional definitions of adulthood, is imperative. Connecting system's policies and program in the research on adolescent development can help challenge and change the narratives—identifying problematic practices and policies and creating better approaches within rules and regulations and administrative practices and changing the way agencies interact with youth.[57]

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

This analysis provides key insights about the experiences of TAY. Throughout the natural process of analysis, new and additional questions were raised that should be examined in the future. Filling the gaps and creating a stronger, more relational, community infrastructure for youth will require deliberate and meaningful engagement with TAY, as well as reflection, analysis, and the development and implementation of strategies at multiple levels and aimed at both systems and communities.

While this Community Analysis helped to generate important directions, it has also prompted additional questions and the need for more detailed information to further refine the change strategies. The assessment of how the community is contributing to these experiences requires additional investigation and engagement of community-based organizations and system leaders. The analysis presented here should serve as a foundation and launching point for continuing analysis, to uncover how communities are organized to affirm, include, and support TAY.

Potential questions for future exploration include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **How can geographic communities be supported and organized to also promote relationships for older youth?** As we heard, youth define "community" as relational and not geographic or where they live. However, our policy and system investments and connected public services are based on geographic boundaries. More information is needed to understand these dynamics and how communities can be designed to promote relationships for older youth.
- **How do systems and organizations connect youth to community resources?** More information is needed in each community about protocol and process of referral mechanisms and the quality of information sharing about resources that can promote youth strengths and meet their needs.
- **Who are the community partners that can lead the effort to create the outreach and follow-up function desired by youth?** This involves looking more closely at the organizational missions, actions, and job descriptions of those organizations currently serving youth in communities.
- **How are community-based organizations and others serving youth funded to provide supports?** What flexibility do they have in designing their programs to meet the needs of youth in their community? How can communities advocate for dedicated funding streams?
- **How are the ILPs currently structured in these communities?** This includes learning about job descriptions, caseload sizes, the tools and performance measures, how youth are included in the design and evaluation of and how progress is tracked. It is also important to investigate how federal and state restrictions within services might interfere with youth being able to engage in developmental risk taking by threatening the removal of supports and services.
- **What barriers exist for communities to meet the needs of TAY And once barriers are identified, how quickly and at what jurisdictional level can they be addressed?**

CONCLUSION

The child welfare system, which is charged with preparing TAY for adulthood, too often fails in this responsibility to support their health and well-being. The supports that all young people need, located outside the child welfare system, including child care, housing, food, and economic supports, are difficult to access or unavailable in the communities in which they live. In order to ensure these young people have what they need to be healthy, pursue their goals and thrive, systems and communities need to implement an anti-racist approach to promoting youth well-being. This work begins by developing supports that are easy to access and meet expressed needs of TAY —especially those of Black, Indigenous, Latinx/e, and other youth of color, who have been systematically underserved and excluded from past supports—and that contribute to ending the perpetuation of harm.[58] This action must also be grounded in what we know the research says about adolescent development: first and foremost that social connections are crucial to being affirmed, included, and supported.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTION

To affirm, include, and support TAY, the communities where they live must be supported and many stakeholders must share the responsibility of addressing the problematic features that inhibit young people's ability to thrive. While supporting TAY to become independent adults may be the goal, it takes a strong, collaborative, and tight-knit community of support—including family, friends, community-based organizations, and more—to achieve that goal. The experience and expertise of youth must drive all aspects of the work, especially in the design and implementation of the strategies.

Potential roles and responsibilities for enacting change include:

- **Advocates and community organizers can support older youth in sharing their voices and engaging with community and system leaders to drive change.** They can promote a narrative about TAY that affirms and uplifts their strengths and contributions to communities as well as what they need from systems and communities to achieve their goals and dreams. Together, they can all push for increased investment in communities to ensure the resources and structures exist within communities to support TAY.

- **Policymakers and administrators can craft and implement policy (legislative and administrative) changes to eligibility, reimbursement definitions, and mandates as well as remove conflicting requirements in benefit programs that make it difficult for TAY to access and afford supports and services.** Policymakers and administrators can identify and designate flexible funding to meet the needs of youth in their communities, when they need it and through services that are responsive to their needs.

- **Community leaders and organizations can advance innovative policy and practice solutions and engage youth in meaningful design of their programs.** They can examine their missions and functions to assess how to better align their work to serve TAY, collaborate with one another, and review their administrative practices to identify and eliminate barriers.

APPENDIX A

Community Analysis Approach

The Community Analysis is an investigative approach adapted from the Institutional Analysis (IA) methodology, which examines the way institutional work is organized and may contribute to the poor outcomes youth experience. (See Appendix B for a detailed description of the Institutional Analysis methodology. In this application, the CARES team examined how a community may be organized to affirm, include, and support TAY.

CSSP adapted the IA methodology to take a closer look at the community—the landscape of organizations and the infrastructure connecting public systems—rather than a specific agency or institution. This is a novel approach. Adapting a process that looks at an institution to be one that looks at a community with its complex landscapes of interacting institutions and systems is undoubtedly challenging and invariably leaves more to explore and learn. CSSP is continuing this learning and will be taking lessons from this first application of the approach in order to dig deeper into each of the communities included in this initial analysis. This will not only help to inform and refine our approach, but also help to uncover more about how communities are organized to affirm, include, and support TAY.

More information about the data collection activities that supported the Community Analysis approach is below.

YOUTH INTERVIEWS

The 47-youth interviewed for the Community Analysis were recruited specifically for this analysis by Think of Us and interviewed by CSSP staff in the fall of 2022. Recruitment criteria included that the youth 1) had either aged-out of care or was living in extended foster care; 2) was currently residing in one of the three identified communities;[59] and 3) was between the ages of 18 and 26 years old. The vast majority of the youth interviewed for the Community Analysis identified as Black, Indigenous, Latinx/e, or multi-racial—a sobering reflection on the pervasiveness of separation from family and placement in foster care that children and youth of color experience.

All youth who were interviewed were provided with an overview of the CARES initiative, the Community Analysis, and how their information would be used, and were asked to formally consent to participation.

Following their consent, the youth were provided with a $100 gift card as compensation for their time and expertise and a packet of information that included available resources in their communities. Youth were provided with compensation and resource information regardless of how long their interview lasted or if they chose to stop the interview early. These interviews were subsequently coded for themes by CSSP staff, which were then reviewed and further developed with input from the CARES Ambassadors.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Interviews were conducted with community leaders, system administrators, and staff and leadership at community-based organizations to understand how communities are organized and to learn more about efforts underway to support TAY. The analysis and views presented by the authors of this Report are not necessarily those of the organizations interviewed. Stakeholders provided an overview of the service landscape, the shared dominant narratives about TAY in their communities, barriers to effectively serving TAY, as well as promising initiatives and practices for serving TAY. These interviews helped to better understand the community infrastructure and capacity. The interviews were broken down into interviews about and from the perspective of an organization itself (Organizational interview) and interviews about the broader landscape of programs, services, and systems with which TAY interact (Big Picture interview).

BIG PICTURE INTERVIEWS	ORGANIZATIONAL INTERVIEWS
Atlanta • The Georgia Division of Family & Children Services • Multi Agency Alliance for Children • Barton Clinic Los Angeles • Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services • Pritzker Center' • Journey House • National Foster Youth Initiative • Alliance for Children • California Youth Connection • Reimagining Child Safety • Imoyase Community Support Services New York City • New York City Administration for Children's Services • Fair Futures • New Yorkers for Children	Atlanta • Barton Law & Policy Center • Youth Villages Los Angeles • Wellnest • Covenant House California • Coalition for Responsible Community Development • Sanctuary of Hope • First Place for Youth New York City • East Side Settlement House • The Door • The Children's Village

LITERATURE REVIEW

The team identified and reviewed additional literature including research reports and organizational studies to provide greater context for the communities selected, to help understand key policies, activities, and initiatives, and to identify potential disconnects between how the community is and has been organized and how it could better contribute to positive outcomes for youth. The literature reviewed is listed below.

Atlanta

- "Loving Cities Index: Creating Loving Systems Across Communities to Provide All Students an Opportunity to Thrive—Atlanta, GA," Schott Foundation, July 2020.
- Nathaniel Brown, An Exploratory Study: Foster Care Students' Knowledge of College Campus Support Programs, The University of Georgia, 2017.
- Octavia Fugerson, Uprooted, Regrounded, and Growing: An Anti-Deficit Approach to Understanding the Developmental Capital of Youth with Foster Care Experience, University of Georgia, 2018.
- Nicholas Forge, et al., "LGBTQ Youth Face Greater Risk of Homelessness as They Age Out of Foster Care," Urban Institute, April 3, 2019.
- Cameron Greensmith and Bo King (2020), "'Queer as hell media': Affirming LGBTQ+ youth identity and building community in Metro Atlanta, Georgia," Journal of LGBT Youth 19(2).
- Sarah Jones and Matthew Varga (2021), "Students who experienced foster care are on campus: Are colleges ready?," Georgia Journal of College Student Affairs 37(2): 3-18.

Los Angeles

- Sarah Morrison and Kristen Weber, "Child Welfare Practice: Creating a Successful Climate for Change—Findings and considerations from an Institutional Analysis," Center for the Study of Social Policy, September 2012.
- Denise Herz, et al., "The Intersection of Child Welfare & Juvenile Justice: Key Findings from the Los Angeles Dual System Youth Study," Children's Data Network and Cal State LA, 2021.
- Claudia Rodriguez and Matt Barreto, "California Youth of Color Poll Summary Results," Memo from Latino Decisions to Power California and interested parties, July 31, 2020.
- "Los Angeles County: Youth Justice Reimagined. Recommendations of the Los Angeles County Youth Justice Work Group," W. Haywood Burns Institute, October 2020.
- Patricia Soung, et al., "WIC 236: 'Pre-Probation' Supervision of Youth of Color with No Prior Court or Probation Involvement."
- "Building a Positive Future for LA's Youth: re-imagining Public Safety for the City of Los Angeles With an Investment in Youth Development," Violence Prevention Coalition, LA for Youth, and Youth Justice Coalition.
- Patricia Soung and Meghan Best, "Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act in Los Angeles: A Case Study on Advocacy & Collaborative Reform," Children's Defense Fund California, December 2018.
- "A Roadmap for Advancing Youth Diversion in Los Angeles County," Report to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors by the Countywide Criminal Justice Coordination Committee Youth Diversion Subcommittee & the Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office.
- Laura Muraida and Eric Wat, "South Central Rooted: A blueprint to dismantle multi-generational inequity and restore community health in South Central Los Angeles," Building Healthy Communities South Los Angeles.
- Veronica Terriquez, "The California Endowment's Youth Power Infrastructure: An Overview of Youth-Serving Organizations and Intermediaries it Supports," UC Santa Cruz Institute for Social Transformation and USC Dornsife Program for Environmental and Regional Equity, December 2019.
- Stephanie Cuccaro-Alamin, et al., "Transition Age Youth and the Child Protective System: Demographic and Case Characteristics: Los Angeles," The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, March 2015.
- Mark Courtney, et al., "CalYOUTH Survey of Young Adults' Child Welfare Workers," Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, 2016.
- Jennifer Mosley and Mark Courtney, "Partnership and the Politics of Care: Advocates' Role in Passing and Implementing California's Law to Extend Foster Care," Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, 2012.
- Laura Napolitano and Mark Courtney, "Residential Settings of Young Adults in Extended Foster Care: A Preliminary Investigation," Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, 2014.
- Mark Courtney, et al., "Findings from the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (CalYOUTH): Conditions of Youth at Age 19: Los Angeles County Report," Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, 2017.
- Autumn Taylor, et al., "Telling Our Own Stories: Former Foster Youth Experiences with barriers and Healing During COVID 19," Reproductive Health Equity Project for Foster Youth, August 2021.
- Hailly Korman and Carly Dierkhising, "A Culture of Care for All: Envisioning the LA Model," The California Wellness Foundation and Children's Defense Fund California, 2016.
- Cheryl Grills and Magaela Bethune, "Community Coalition COVID & People's Platform Findings," Prevention Network Launch, September 7, 2021.
- "Supplement to Community Health Assessment, Service Planning Area 6: South," County of Los Angeles Public Health, 2014.
- David Howard, "Unsheltered: A Report on Homelessness in South Los Angeles," Special Service for Groups, 2008.
- "Briefing on Youth Homelessness," Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, August 27, 2020
- Wellnest Annual Report, FY 19/20.
- Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic Strategic Plan, 2018-2020.
- "Community Health Needs Assessment, 2019," Cedars-Sinai.
- Los Angeles County Alternatives to Incarceration Work Group, "Care First, Jails Last: Health and Racial Justice Strategies for Safer Communities."
- Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program, "A Resource Guide for Assisting Students in Foster Care," Los Angeles County Office of Education, August 24, 2021.
- "California Foster Youth Education Law Fact Sheets," California Foster Youth Education Task Force, January 2021.
- "Professional Learning Network Report: Focusing on Foster Youth—Focus, Actions & Recommendations," Alliance for Children's Rights' East Los Angeles County Foster Youth Learning Network, August 2019.

- "Supporting and Serving LGBTQ+ Foster Youth," County of Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services, June 2018.
- Lindsey Palmer, et al., "Los Angeles County Family-Centered Services: Using Administrative Data to Understand the Landscape of Community-Based Child Welfare Supports," Children's Data Network, December 2020.

New York City

- "New York City Community Atlas: Easy Access to the Complex 2Gen Data that Informs Your Neighborhood Efforts," NYC Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence.
- "NYC Administration for Children's Services Marks One-Year of 'Fair Futures' Initiative, Connecting Thousands of NYC Youth in Foster Care with Dedicated Coaches, Tutors & Other Educational Support Services," NYC ACS, December 8, 2020.
- "Foster Care Strategic Blueprint, FY 2019-FY 2023," NYC ACS.
- "Foster Care Strategic Blueprint Progress Report FY 2020," NYC ACS, January 2021.
- "Race Equity Strategies," NYC ACS.
- "8 Years of Progress, 2014-2021," NYC ACS.
- "A guide to DYCD-funded programs that are available at no cost to individuals, families & communities," NYC Department of Youth & Community Development, 2016.
- "Housing Trajectories of Transition-Age Youth," Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence, March 2017.
- "Youth Experience Survey, 2021," NYC ACS.
- "ACS Report on Government-Issued Personal Identification for Youth in Foster Care," NYC ACS, 2020.
- "Education Outcomes of NYC Youth in Foster Care," Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence, May 2022.
- "Students in Foster Care: Tool Kit for Local Education Agencies and Local Departments of Social Services," New York State Office of Children and Family Services and NYSED, February 2022.
- "A Typology of Transition-Age Youth," Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence, July 2018.
- Adolescent Representation Clinic, "Aged Out/Cast Out: Solutions to Housing Instability for Aging Out Foster Youth in New York," Columbia Law School, July 2016.
- "Administration for Children's Services Unveils Plans for Redesigned Foster Care System," NYC ACS, June 7, 2021.
- Office of The Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., HERE to HERE, the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation, and HR&A Advisors, "Building Opportunity for Bronx Employers and Youth: Introducing The Bronx Private Industry Council," HERE TO HERE Policy Brief, March 2019.
- Matthew Morton, et al., "A Youth Homelessness System Assessment for New York City," Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, 2019.
- "Building a Network of Support: The Case for a DOE Office for Students in Foster Care," Advocates for Children of New York and The Legal Aid Society, May 2021.
- Lessie Branch, "The Impact of COVID-19 on Bronx Youth," The Thinkubator, October 20, 2020.
- Lessie Branch, Asantie Murrell, and Antonio Parisi, "Environmental Racism in NYC," The Thinkubator, July 2021.
- Naomi Okunrobo, "The Overcoming of Food Deserts and Food Swamps in The Bronx," Bronx Center for Science and Mathematics.
- "Boom for Whom? How the resurgence of the Bronx is leaving residents behind," Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition and the Community Development Project of the Urban Justice Center, July 2008.
- Yorman Nunez, "Bronx-wide Principles for Development without Displacement," The Point CDC, South Bronx Unite, The Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC), Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA), Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association, Nos Quedamos, Mothers on the Move (MOM), Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice, and The Bronx Cooperative Development Initiative (BCDI).
- Lessie Branch and Antonio Parisi, "Post COVID-19 Workforce Development," The Thinkubator, January 2021.
- Lessie Branch and Antonio Parisi, "Food Insecurity in the Bronx," The Thinkubator, November 2020.
- "NYC Well-Being Index and Changes Over Time," Columbia School of International and Public Affairs and Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence, 2019.
- Matthew Morton, et al., "Developing a Direct Cash Transfer Program for Youth Experiencing Homelessness: Results of a Mixed Methods, Multi-Stakeholder Design Process," Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, October 2020.

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

To understand the demographics of TAY in the three communities and to provide context for the experiences TAY shared in the youth interviews about their communities, the CARES team reviewed and analyzed survey data collected from Think Of Us of other young people living in the identified communities to better understand their current circumstances.[60] The data confirm that youth residing in the selected communities were facing significant challenges to thriving—barriers created and compounded by the historical disinvestment and systemic racism in their communities. The demographic data of survey respondents is in the following table.

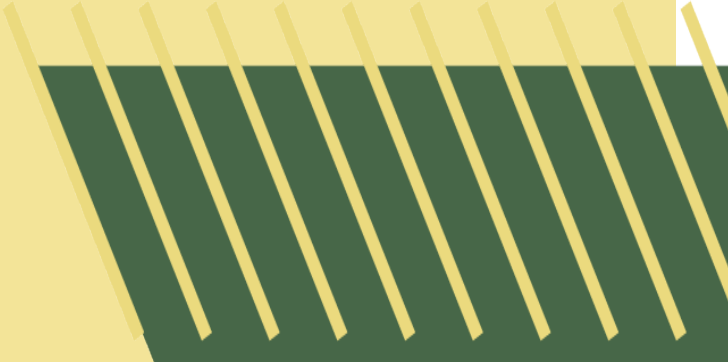
SELF-IDENTIFYING DESCRIPTIVE DATA OF TAY IN THREE COMMUNITIES, NOVEMBER 2020*

	LOS ANGELES (SERVICE PLANNING AREA [SPA] 6) N=333	ATLANTA (FULTON, DEKALB, AND COBB COUNTIES) N=243	NEW YORK CITY (THE BRONX) N=434
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	Straight: 24.6% Queer: 14.4%	Straight: 25.9% Queer: 15.6%	Straight: 20.0% Queer: 18.7%
GENDER IDENTITY	Cis Male: 36.9% Cis Female: 57.4% 2S, Nonbinary, Genderfluid: 4% Transfemale: 2%	Cis Male: 30% Cis Female: 60.1% 2S, Nonbinary, Genderfluid: 2% Transfemale: 2%	Cis Male: 24.7% Cis Female: 70.7% 2S, Nonbinary, Genderfluid: 3% Transmale: 2%

RACE	Black or African American: 44.4% Hispanic or Latino: 37.8% White: 4.2% Two or more races: 12.3% Asian: 3% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander: 1%	Black or African American: 72.8% Hispanic or Latino: 3.3% White: 9.1% Two or more races: 13.2% Asian: 1% American Indian: 2%	Black or African American: 47.2% Hispanic or Latino: 30.6% White: 1.6% Two or more races: 16.8% Asian: 2% American Indian: 8%
PARENTING	12% are parenting	7% are parenting	10.1% are parenting
AGE RANGES	16-17: 24.3% 18-21: 51.4% 22-23: 12.6% 24-25: 11.7%	16-17: 17.3% 18-21: 60.5% 22-23: 11.5% 24-25: 10.7%	16-17: 15.7% 18-21: 53.2% 22-23: 20.0% 24-25: 11.1%

Source: Demographics of Think of Us Survey Respondents, November 2020.

*Not all youth responded to every question, so the total n varies for each question.



APPENDIX B
Institutional Analysis Methodology

Far too often the current flaws in our child welfare systems are attributed to individual leaders and workers, or a general lack of resources. While these attributions may be valid, they are not the sole cause for the poor results of many of the child welfare systems' interventions. To have meaningful and long-lasting improvement, child welfare systems must address the entrenched and draconian, institutional practices and biases that inhibit a caseworker's ability to effectively assist children and their families.

Conceptualized and first implemented by Dr. Ellen Pence, the Institutional Analysis (IA) seeks to uncover, synthesize, and ultimately resolve organizational and structural dynamics that produce poor outcomes for particular populations of children and families served by social service agencies and community partners. The IA process is grounded in institutional ethnography,[61] a form of Sociology that produces "accounts of institutional practices that can explain how workers are organized and coordinated to talk about and act on cases."[62]

Through quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, similar to the methodologies employed for organizational assessments, case studies, and managerial audits, IAs examine how institutions process people as cases, focusing on disconnects between what families need to facilitate safety, permanency and well-being, and what child welfare systems and their partners are organized to provide.[63]

The focus of the IA is not on shortcomings or failures of individual caseworkers, supervisors, administrators, clinical providers, judges, lawyers, or community partners. Instead, the IA identifies and examines problematic institutional assumptions, policies, and protocols that organize or drive practitioner action, empowering institutions with the information to engage in constructive reform.

GUIDING ASSUMPTIONS

The Institutional Analysis is grounded in several key assumptions:

- **Institutional changes can improve outcomes for youth and families.** A focus on institutions, rather than individual workers or specific practices, is a productive vehicle for change. Multiple disciplines, such as management and financial auditing, program evaluation, and organizational development, have demonstrated that analyses of institutional and organizational features can identify opportunities for practical structural changes that improve system performance and enable better outcomes.

- **Institutions are designed to ensure consistency among staff and limit the influence of idiosyncratic worker behavior.** Institutions coordinate, organize, and standardize worker actions to produce institutionally authorized results that are not swayed by individual worker ideologies. Workers are confined by institutional forms, philosophies, policies, practices, and procedures. Therefore, when interventions yield consistently poor results for an identified group of children and parents, part of the problem (and therefore also part of the solution) must stem from the way workers are organized to process or manage cases.[64]

- **The institutional view of clients can be biased and thus contribute to disproportionate and disparate outcomes.** The same institutional rules, policies, forms, and manuals designed to mandate consistency and neutralize individual worker biases can still facilitate biased processing of clients. Public institutions serve communities with different identities and histories. The institutional practice of denying differences in an effort to be consistent, unbiased, and "color blind" is misguided and disadvantages Families of Color. As individual information—strengths, needs, fears, aspirations—is filtered through practice standardizing mechanisms, the unique aspects of individuals disappear. Well-intentioned interventions that do not consider the unique circumstances of each family might not be optimally suited to address families' needs.[65] The IA is designed to capture and consider the interaction of families with public systems by striving to understand the context of their lives and communities.

- **Institutional conditions affecting outcomes are not always visible.** In *The Water of Systems Change*, the authors describe the conditions that play a role in "holding a social or environmental problem in place" as being "explicit" or "implicit" or somewhere in between and that they are "intertwined and interact with each other."[66] The goal of the IA is to make visible the invisible workings of institutions and systems.

THE INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK: CORE STANDARDIZING METHODS OF INSTITUTIONS™

The body of work supporting the Institutional Analysis suggests that there are at least eight core standardizing methods employed by child welfare institutions to direct worker engagement of families.[67] Any one or combination of these features can interfere with equitable achievement of the desired child welfare outcomes—safety, permanency, and well-being. Alternatively, the core standardizing methods represent opportunities for positive institutional change. Core standardizing methods analyzed as part of the IA include: Mission, purpose, and job function. Agency missions translate into case management practices and worker job descriptions. The IA examines how mission statements, worker's job descriptions, assigned tasks, and defined job functions match the reality of what will work for those being processed as a case.

1. **Mission, purpose, and job function**—Agency missions translate into case management practices and worker job descriptions. The IA examines how mission statements, worker's job descriptions, assigned tasks, and defined job functions match the reality of what will work for those being processed as a case.
2. **Rules and regulations**—The IA examines the externally established laws, regulations, other governmental requirements, and local policy that drives workers practices. The IA looks to see how regulations act to enhance or limit the worker's ability and capacity to effectively intervene with families.
3. **Administrative practices**—These practices include internal administrative policies, protocols, and procedures, such as Team Decision-Making meeting protocols, assessment tools, decision-making panels, formats for case plans and court reports, and case recording. Administrative practices coordinate the relationship between the institution (represented by the worker) and the client; as such, they can enhance the worker-client relationship or impede it.
4. **Concepts and theories—**Policies, administrative practices, resource allocation, job duties are all connected to institutional assumptions, theories, values, and concepts regardless of the individual workers beliefs. IA reviewers are trained to look for the operative theories at any point of intervention. They are built into administrative tools and policies.
5. **Education and training—**The IA examines how education, training, and skill development for workers and supervisors, educational requirements, mentoring opportunities, and participation in local, state and/or national forums shape how workers conceptualize a case, which is then reflected in how they come to talk about and act on cases.
6. **Resources—**The IA explores how management allocates resources to both workers and clients. Resources include everything necessary for workers to carry out their job responsibilities and for child and families to receive effective services and supports that enhance children's safety, permanency, and well-being. Resources are not limited to budget dollars, but also include interventions to improve parenting, visits from workers, health care, home assistance, tutoring, emergency funds, child care, substance abuse evaluation and treatment, and staff time (i.e., caseloads).
7. **Linkages—**Organized linkages connect a worker operating at a given point of intervention to other practitioners with prior or subsequent involvement in the case. It also links workers to family members. The IA examines how successfully management has built procedures and communication for linkages (passing along critical information about families) among service providers.
8. **Accountability—**The IA looks at who and what holds workers accountable for their actions. Within this examination, the IA asks how workers at each point of case processing are being held accountable to the well-being and success of their clients. Additionally, the IA looks for accountability to other interveners and practitioners and to the overall intervention goals.
9. **Other factors may influence organizational behavior in a specific location.** Often there are other, less visible conditions that organize work with families. In some cases, there is a culture of fear resulting from numerous, tragic child deaths and subsequent media coverage. Driven by such a culture, workers may feel compelled to remove children or be hesitant to return children to their families—not because the children are unsafe or at high risk of maltreatment, but because the staff feared liability should something happen to that child as a result of the worker's actions or inactions. During the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, work with families was also heavily influenced by the public health regulations imposed on face-to-face personal interaction.

The IA seeks to uncover contributing institutional factors and identify opportunities for change. An IA examines the effects of these core standardizing methods to produce a clear, detailed description of how sequential managerial processes organize and coordinate worker actions and produce child and family outcomes. The focus of the IA is on illuminating institutional features that can be transformed to yield improved results for children and families. Unlike other evaluative approaches that seek to identify and explore program or practice strengths, the Institutional Analysis intentionally seeks to identify the problematic—what about the system is not working for families and children—as the prevalence of poor outcomes, as supported by data, clearly indicates that there is a problem. What is problematic could also hinder the successful implementation of a new initiative.

Data Analysis and Safeguards to Prevent Bias

Data analysis occurs concurrent with data collection, the latter being informed and directed by the former. Data collection teams share pertinent information at the end of each day to consider some of the daily findings as a group and enable newly gathered information to guide subsequent data collection and analysis. A more comprehensive debrief occurs at the conclusion of the data collection period. Collaboration with the Partnering Jurisdiction: To ensure opportunities for feedback, clarification, and collaboration, system leadership are invited to team debriefs and to a presentation of preliminary findings that occurs at the conclusion of each site's respective data collection period. A draft of the report is shared with the leadership to obtain further feedback and thoughts about action steps.

- **Collaboration with the Partnering Jurisdiction.** To ensure opportunities for feedback, clarification, and collaboration, system leadership are invited to team debriefs and to a presentation of preliminary findings that occurs at the conclusion of each site's respective data collection period. A draft of the report is shared with the leadership to obtain further feedback and thoughts about action steps.
- **The Multiple Source Test.** Each finding that is included in a report is supported by multiple data sources. Observations that did not meet this rigorous standard were rejected. Although specific case examples may be used to illustrate particular findings, the data presented are common occurrences, not rare events.

LIMITATIONS OF THE IA

The IA, like many diagnostic tools, is a snapshot in time intended to point the direction for further questioning, testing, and exploration. Findings are based on the experience of a limited number of families interviews, worker interviews, and observations. It is intended to serve as an impetus to tangible change and, therefore, focuses on problematic features that institutions and systems have the power to amend. An Institutional Analysis should be considered a launching point for continuing analysis, not an exhaustive or conclusive investigation.

For further reading about The Institutional Analysis and how work is organized by underlying ideas and assumptions, see:

- Kania, J., Kramer, M., & Senge, P. (2018). The Water of Systems Change. FSG. www.fsg.org
- Lobenstine, L., Bailey, K., & Maruyama, A. Design Studio for Social Intervention. (2020.) ***Ideas Arrangements Effects: Systems Design and Social Justice***. Minor Compositions.
- Weber, K., & Morrison, S. (2015). Uncovering Pathways to Improving Public Systems & Interventions for Children and Families. Center for the Study of Social Policy. IA-Methodology-web.pdf (cssp.org)
- Weber, K., & Morrison, S. (2020). The Institutional Analysis: A Tool for Diagnosing Structural Contributors to Racial Disproportionality and Disparity in Child Welfare. In ***Racial Disproportionality and Disparities in the Child Welfare System*** (pp. 375-395). Springer, Cham, Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-54314-3_19

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[2] "What We Owe Young Adults Involved with Child Welfare: A Youth Thrive Policy Agenda," Center for the Study of Social Policy, January 2022. Available at: https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2022-Youth-Thrive-Policy-Agenda.pdf. See also: "Othering & Belonging Institute," University of California, Berkeley. Available at: https://belonging.berkeley.edu/.

[3] Throughout this paper we reference "public systems" as the collection of public systems, including but not exclusively the public child welfare system.

[4] Michael Katz (2013), The Undeserving Poor: America's Enduring Confrontation with Poverty, 2nd edition, Oxford University Press; Linda Gordon (1994), Pitied but not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935, Free Press; Jill Quadagno (1994), The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty, Oxford University; Dorothy Roberts (1994), "Welfare and the Problem of Black Citizenship," Yale Law Journal 105: 1563-1602. Available at: https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=7683&context=ylj.

[5] Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, et al., eds. (2019), Seeing Race Again: Countering Colorblindness Across the Disciplines, University of California Press; Andrea Flynn, et al. (2017), The Hidden Rules of Race, Cambridge University Press. Available at: https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/hidden-rules-of-race/33D38E05DCD5B288BBC4090CC900A967.

[6] Children's Bureau, "The AFCARS Report No. 29." Available at: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/afcars-report-29.pdf.

[7] Elisa Minoff and Alexandra Citrin, "Systemically Neglected: How Racism Structures Public Systems to Produce Child Neglect," Center for the Study of Social Policy, March 2022. Available at: https://cssp.org/resource/systemically-neglected/.

[8] Megan Martin and Dana Dean Connelly, "Achieving Racial Equity: Child Welfare Policy Strategies to Improve Outcomes for Children of Color," Center for the Study of Social Policy, August 2018. Available at: https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/achieving-racial-equity-child-welfare-policy-strategies-improve-outcomes-children-color.pdf.

[9] Defined as a child or youth exiting the child welfare system to a situation where they have a legal relationship with caregivers through reunification, adoption, or guardianship.

[10] Children's Bureau, "The AFCARS Report No. 29." Available at: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/afcars-report-29.pdf.

[11] Elisa Minoff and Alexandra Citrin, "Systemically Neglected: How Racism Structures Public Systems to Produce Child Neglect," Center for the Study of Social Policy, March 2022. Available at: https://cssp.org/resource/systemically-neglected/.

[12] Elisa Minoff, "Entangled Roots: The Role of Race in Policies that Separate Families," Center for the Study of Social Policy, October 2018. Available at: https://cssp.org/resource/entangled-roots; Elisa Minoff, "The Racist Roots of Work Requirements," Center for the Study of Social Policy, February 2020. Available at: https://cssp.org/resource/racist-roots-of-work-requirements/.

[13] Rachel Rosenberg and Samuel Abbott, "Supporting Older Youth Beyond the Age of 18: Examining Data and Trends in Extended Foster Care," Child Trends, June 2019. Available at: https://www.childtrends.org/publications/supporting-older-youth-beyond-age-18-examining-data-and-trends-in-extended-foster-care.

[14] Elisa Minoff. et al., "Principles for Anti-Racist Policymaking," Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2020. Available at: http://bit.ly/Anti-Racist-Policymaking.

[15] Transition-age foster youth (TAY) are young people between the ages of 14-26 who are in or transitioning out of the foster care system and into adulthood.

[16] Kristen Weber and Sarah Morrison (2020), "The Institutional Analysis: A Tool for Diagnosing Structural Contributors to Racial Disproportionality and Disparity in Child Welfare," in Racial Disproportionality and Disparities in the Child Welfare System (pp. 375-395), Springer. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-54314-3_19.

[17] The field of institutional ethnography is often attributed to the thinking and work of Dorothy Smith. See Smith (2005), Institutional ethnography: Sociology for people, AltaMira Press.

[18] Ellen Pence (2020), "The Institutional Analysis: Matching what institutions do with what people need," in The Palgrave Handbook of Institutional Ethnography (pp. 329-356), Palgrave Macmillan. Available at: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-54222-1_18.

[19] Service Planning Area (SPA) 6 in Los Angeles includes the communities of Athens, Compton, Crenshaw, Florence, Hyde Park, Lynwood, Paramount, and Watts.

[20] See, e.g.: Andre Comandon and Paul Ong (2019), "South Los Angeles Since the 1960s: Race, Place, and Class," The Review of Black Political Economy 47(1): 50-74. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/0034644619873105; Michael Finewood, et al. (2023), "The Bronx River and Environmental Justice Through the Lens of a Watershed," Case Studies in the Environment 7(1): 1824941. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1525/cse.2023.1824941; Leah Binkovitz, "New Study Examines How Historic Racism Shaped Atlanta's Transportation Network," Urban Edge, February 2017. Available at: https://kinder.rice.edu/urbanedge/new-study-examines-how-historic-racism-shaped-atlantas-transportation-network.

[21] Of the youth who were interviewed, 14 had either been in care and or were currently residing in SPA 6 (Los Angeles), 15 had either been in care and or were currently residing the Bronx (New York City), and 18 had either been in care and or were currently residing DeKalb, Fulton, or Cobb counties (Atlanta).

[22] Think Of Us designed a microcash grant in November 2020 that integrated questions about demographics, needs, and the effects of the pandemic into the application. There was a total of 27,342 respondents from all U.S. states, D.C., and Puerto Rico. Among them, 24,695 (90.3%) were between the ages of 14 and 27 years old. Think of Us COVID-19 Microcash Grant Application Internal Data Briefing, March 2021.

[23] Of those who were 18 – 21 years old, 66% of youth in LA, 81% of youth in the Bronx, and 72% of youth in Atlanta reported either worrying about money week-to-week or having an immediate money crisis.

[24] Based on the work of Erin Pence and J. Sandusky (2005), The Praxis Safety and Accountability Audit Tool Kit, Praxis International, Inc.

[25] There are some supports, including Medicaid coverage and access to Educational and Training Vouchers, that TAY are eligible for beyond 21 years old.

[26] Erin Jacobs Valentine, Melanie Skemer, Mark E. Courtney, "Becoming Adults. One -Year Impact Findings from the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation," MDRC, May 2015. Available at: https://www.mdrc.org/publication/becoming-adults. MDRC describes this challenge as, "Youth who are no longer served by a public institution have few formal avenues to connect with service providers."

[27] Sixto Cancel, et al. (2022), Aged Out: How We're Failing Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care, Second edition, Think Of Us. P. 36.

[28] "FYI Vouchers for the Foster Youth to Independence Initiative," U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Available at: https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/fyi.

[29] Young adults, especially hourly and low-wage workers who are predominantly young adults of color, are especially vulnerable to benefit cliffs, where they lose eligibility for benefits as income rises, leaving them worse off financially. This is both an access and an affordability issue, because losing access to benefits may mean that they are unable to afford other basic needs when their income rises even a modest amount. State child care programs, Medicaid, and programs for young adults with disabilities have some of the steepest benefit cliffs. See: "The Racial Income Gap and Benefits Cliffs," Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, October 2020. Available at: https://www.atlantafed.org/community-development/publications/partners-update/2020/05/200918-the-racial-income-gap-and-benefits-cliffs; Amelia Coffey and Hannah Daly, "Benefit Cliffs Underscore the Need for a Stable, Accessible Social Safety Net," Urban Wire, January 2022. Available at: https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/benefit-cliffs-underscore-need-stable-accessible-social-safety-net; Samuel Bagenstos, "The Disability Cliff," Democracy Journal, Winter 2015. Available at: https://democracyjournal.org/magazine/35/the-disability-cliff/.

[30] A matched savings program allows individuals to save money in an individual development account, with the money matched by a participating sponsor. In many programs, participating individuals must undertake some type of financial education, and the matched savings money must be spent on allowable uses such as education, housing, vehicle expenses, health care, or business pursuits.

[31] Madeline Guth, et al., "Medicaid Coverage of Behavioral Health Services in 2022: Findings from a Survey of State Medicaid Programs," Kaiser Family Foundation, March 2023. Available at: https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/medicaid-coverage-of-behavioral-health-services-in-2022-findings-from-a-survey-of-state-medicaid-programs/; Madeline Guth, "State Policies Expanding Access to Behavioral Health Care in Medicaid," Kaiser Family Foundation, December 2021. Available at: https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/state-policies-expanding-access-to-behavioral-health-care-in-medicaid/.

[32] Through a legislative fix in the Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment for Patients and Communities Act (SUPPORT Act), all youth who turn 18 years old on or after January 1, 2023 are now categorically eligible for Medicaid in any state regardless of where they aged-out of foster care. TAY who turned 18 and aged-out prior to this fix still would be subject to this barrier.

[33] Megan Martin, Leann Down, and Rosalynd Erney, "Out of the Shadows: Supporting LGBTQ youth in child welfare through cross-system collaboration," Center for the Study of Social Policy, May 2016. Available at: https://cssp.org/resource/out-of-the-shadows/; Sixto Cancel, et al. (2022), Aged Out: How We're Failing Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care, Second edition, Think Of Us.

[34] Sixto Cancel, et al. (2022), Aged Out: How We're Failing Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care, Second edition, Think Of Us. P. 44.

[35] Sixto Cancel, et al. (2022), Aged Out: How We're Failing Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care, Second edition, Think Of Us. P. 58.

[36] Through a partnership with New York City's Administration of Children's Services and the City University of New York, The Foundling establishes the Dorm Project. This innovative program provides dormitory housing across multiple CUNY campuses, along with comprehensive academic and social supports, to help young people in foster care across all of New York City's foster care system succeed in college and beyond. For more information see: https://www.nyfoundling.org/history/fostering-college-success/.

[37] "What We Owe Young Adults Involved with Child Welfare: A Youth Thrive Policy Agenda," Center for the Study of Social Policy, January 2022. Available at: https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2022-Youth-Thrive-Policy-Agenda.pdf.

[38] Independent Living Programs (ILPs) for older youth in foster care are designed to support older youth in gaining the skills needed for living independently after they transition from foster care. These programs focus on promoting skills, knowledge, and self-sufficiency. For more information on the types of ILPs see: https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/outofhome/independent/programs/.

[39] Erin Jacobs Valentine, Melanie Skemer, Mark E. Courtney, "Becoming Adults. One -Year Impact Findings from the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation," MDRC, May 2015. Available at: https://www.mdrc.org/publication/becoming-adults.

[40] "What We Owe Young Adults Involved with Child Welfare: A Youth Thrive Policy Agenda," Center for the Study of Social Policy, January 2022. Available at: https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2022-Youth-Thrive-Policy-Agenda.pdf.

[41] "What We Owe Young Adults Involved with Child Welfare: A Youth Thrive Policy Agenda," Center for the Study of Social Policy, January 2022. Available at: https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2022-Youth-Thrive-Policy-Agenda.pdf.

[42] Dr. Martin Luther King talked about this as a beloved community, a place where "love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred." See: "The King Philosophy – Nonviolence365," The King Center. Available at: https://thekingcenter.org/about-tkc/the-king-philosophy/.

[43] Sixto Cancel, et al. (2022), Aged Out: How We're Failing Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care, Second edition, Think Of Us. P. 44.

[44] For more information and a specific example of this situation, please see Steve Thompson and Dalton Bennett, "D.C. overpays landlords millions to house the city's poorest," The Washington Post, February 16, 2023. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2023/02/15/dc-housing-authority-overpays-landlords/; Morgan Baskin, "D.C. Council Launches Bid to Reform Housing Voucher Payments," dcist, March 22, 2023. Available at: https://dcist.com/story/23/03/22/dc-council-housing-voucher-reform/.

[45] Sixto Cancel, et al. (2022), Aged Out: How We're Failing Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care, Second edition, Think Of Us. P. 44.

[46] John Kania, Mark Kramer, and Peter Senge refer to these as "mental models" in "The Water of Systems Change," FSG, May 2018. Available at: https://www.fsg.org/resource/water_of_systems_change/.

[47] Ze'ev Hochberg and Melvin Konner (2019), "Emerging Adulthood, a Pre-adult Life-History Stage," Frontiers in Endocrinology 10: 918. Available at: doi: 10.3389/fendo.2019.00918; Charlyn Harper Browne, "Youth Thrive: Advancing Health Adolescent Development and Well-Being," Center for the Study of Social Policy, September 2014. Available at: https://cssp.org/resource/youth-thrive_advancing-healthy-adolescent-development-and-well-being/.

[48] Sixto Cancel, et al. (2022), Aged Out: How We're Failing Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care, Second edition, Think Of Us. P. 45.

[49] "What We Owe Young Adults Involved with Child Welfare: A Youth Thrive Policy Agenda," Center for the Study of Social Policy, January 2022. Available at: https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2022-Youth-Thrive-Policy-Agenda.pdf.

[50] "What We Owe Young Adults Involved with Child Welfare: A Youth Thrive Policy Agenda," Center for the Study of Social Policy, January 2022. Available at: https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2022-Youth-Thrive-Policy-Agenda.pdf.

[51] During interviews, youth were asked, "If you had a magic wand, what is one or two things that would make your community better able to meet the needs of youth aging out of care and transitioning to adulthood?"

[52] Elisa Minoff. et al., "Principles for Anti-Racist Policymaking," Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2020. Available at: http://bit.ly/Anti-Racist-Policymaking.

[53] Donald Moynihan, Pamela Herd, and Hope Harvey (2014), "Administrative Burden: Learning, Psychological, and Compliance Costs in Citizen-State Interactions," Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory 25(1): 43-69. Available at: https://academic.oup.com/jpart/article/25/1/43/885957.

[54] The Young Americans Bank in Denver, Colorado, is a practical example of this recommendation. See: "Young Americans Center for Financial Education." Available at: https://yacenter.org/young-americans-bank/.
[55] Damage imagery in messaging can perpetuate racial and other biases and inequities by reinforcing negative stereotypes about people and communities.
[56] Elisa Minoff, "Entangled Roots: The Role of Race in Policies that Separate Families," Center for the Study of Social Policy, October 2018. Available at: https://cssp.org/resource/entangled-roots.
[57] "What We Owe Young Adults Involved with Child Welfare: A Youth Thrive Policy Agenda," Center for the Study of Social Policy, January 2022. Available at: https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2022-Youth-Thrive-Policy-Agenda.pdf.
[58] Elisa Minoff. et al., "Principles for Anti-Racist Policymaking," Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2020. Available at: http://bit.ly/Anti-Racist-Policymaking.
[59] Of the youth who were interviewed, 14 had either been in care and or were currently residing in SPA 6 (Los Angeles), 15 had either been in care and or were currently residing the Bronx (New York City), and 18 had either been in care and or were currently residing DeKalb, Fulton, or Cobb counties (Atlanta).
[60] Think Of Us designed a microcash grant in November 2020 that integrated questions about demographics, needs, and the effects of the pandemic into the application. There was a total of 27,342 respondents from all U.S. states, D.C., and Puerto Rico. Among them, 24,695 (90.3%) were between the ages of 14 and 27 years old. Think of Us COVID-19 Microcash Grant Application Internal Data Briefing, March 2021.
[61] The field of institutional ethnography is often attributed to the thinking and work of Dorothy Smith. See Smith (2005), Institutional ethnography: Sociology for people, AltaMira Press.
[62] Ellen Pence (2020), "The Institutional Analysis: Matching what institutions do with what people need," in The Palgrave Handbook of Institutional Ethnography (pp. 329-356), Palgrave Macmillan. Available at: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-54222-1_18.
[63] Further, as a case study, the IA is valuable in pointing to possible new directions for research and hypothesis testing in the field at large.
[64] Jack Knight (1992), Institutions and Social Conflict, Cambridge University Press; Erin Pence and J. Sandusky (2005), The Praxis Safety and Accountability Audit Tool Kit, Praxis International, Inc.; and Ellen Pence (2009), (In)visible Workings: A change-agent's guide to closing the gap between what people need and what legal and human service institutions do, Praxis International, Inc.
[65] Marie Campbell and Frances Gregor (2002), Mapping the social: A primer in doing institutional ethnography, University of Toronto Press; Jack Knight (1992), Institutions and Social Conflict, Cambridge University Press.
[66] John Kania, Mark Kramer, and Peter Senge, "The Water of Systems Change," FSG, May 2018. Available at: https://www.fsg.org/resource/water_of_systems_change/.
[67] Erin Pence and J. Sandusky (2005), The Praxis Safety and Accountability Audit Tool Kit, Praxis International, Inc.