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# Conrad N. Hilton Foundation Children and Youth in Foster Care Strategy

*Prepared for:*

Conrad N. Hilton  
F O U N D A T I O N

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## Executive Summary

- The number of **youth transitioning out of care** annually is increasing, and these youth have very poor long-term outcomes.
- Youth who transition out of care have very **poor education and employment outcomes**; supporting youth to complete high school, be prepared for success in college, and begin their path to meaningful employment can contribute to self-sufficiency.
- **Caregivers** have a significant opportunity to influence the outcomes of older foster youth, yet they are often ill-prepared to support these older youth. Programs improving recruitment, training, and support for these caregivers can empower them to better prepare and support transition-age youth's (TAY) transition out of care.
- **Pregnant and parenting teens** and **crossover youth** have the poorest long-term outcomes among TAY and also incur the most costs to society; programs that support these vulnerable groups will improve outcomes and reduce the number of at-risk youth.
- In addition to program support, **system reform and strengthening** can contribute to improved outcomes for youth. Public systems are not aligned with one another, nor well-equipped to serve the needs of older youth. The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation can support greater system alignment and coordination across this broad set of stakeholders.
- Three mutually reinforcing activities will allow the Hilton Foundation to achieve its goal of **ensuring youth transitioning out of care are on the path to success, able to live self-sufficiently and with the interpersonal connections they need to thrive**:
  - Supporting programs enabling self-sufficiency through college and career readiness, strong caregivers, and services for high-risk youth
  - Strengthening and aligning systems and agencies with shared goals and coordinated activities to support TAY outcomes
  - Developing and disseminating new knowledge to inform practice and policy
- Their large populations of TAY, positive legislative environments, and the presence of other funders make **Los Angeles County** and **New York City** the strategic target geographies for the Hilton Foundation's investment.

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## The Strategy Development Process Had Three Phases



### Phase I Activities

- Conducted research on the landscape of **needs, funding flows, current efforts, and intervention opportunities**
- Conducted interviews with **30+ experts in funding, service provision, and policy**
- Narrowed the focus on **TAY** and geographies of **LA County and New York City**
- **Identified preliminary opportunities** for focus areas

### Phase II and III Activities

- **Hosted convenings of key stakeholders in LA and NYC** to vet preliminary strategy and understand partner opportunities
- Conducted secondary **research on potential roles and activities, programmatic focus, interventions, and partners**
- Conducted **focus groups with foster youth** in NYC and LA
- Conducted additional interviews with **30+ experts in LA and NYC**
- **Vetted and finalized strategy** with Hilton Foundation board of directors

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## The Foundation's Strategy Is Guided by a Set of Key Principles

### Key Principles

- Support **large and vulnerable** foster care population
- Drive **systemic change**
- Achieve significant and measurable **impact**
- Align with other **Hilton Foundation initiatives**
- **Leverage** public and private **funds**
- Pursue **partnerships** with others

## The Preliminary Foster Youth Landscape Led to Six Conclusions

- 1 The number of **youth transitioning out of care** annually is increasing; these youth have very poor long-term outcomes
- 2 **LA and NYC** have the largest foster youth populations among U.S. cities and are well-positioned for strategic philanthropy
- 3 Providing a **stable placement with quality caregivers** is critical for well-being
- 4 Youth who transition out of care have very poor **education and employment** outcomes
- 5 Two especially vulnerable populations warrant special attention due to poorer outcomes than their foster youth peers: **pregnant and parenting teens** and **crossover youth**
- 6 **Systems and organizations** are in need of greater alignment to support optimal outcomes for transition-age youth

## Investing in Strengthening the Supports and Skills of Transition-Age Youth Is a Significant Need

### Lack of Support

- **Youth are not given sufficient support** to navigate their transition; they lack the skills to live independently by age 18 or 21
- **Foster Parents** are not trained to support older youth
- Youth often **lack a connection** to a supportive adult

### System Limitations

- **Public systems** are not well equipped to serve the needs of **older youth**
- Public systems influencing foster youth (e.g., child welfare, courts, education, health, juvenile justice) are **not aligned**

### Lack of Evidence

- There is **not strong a strong evidence base** for what programs work for increase self-sufficiency for older foster youth

## Based on Landscape Research and Opportunities Identified, the Hilton Foundation Will Pursue Work Across Three Initiative Areas to Improve Outcomes for Youth who Transition out of Foster Care

1

### Programs Enabling Self-Sufficiency

Through college and career readiness, strong caregivers, and services for high-risk youth

2

### Aligned Systems and Agencies

With shared goals and coordinated activities to support TAY outcomes

3

### New Knowledge

Developed and disseminated to inform practice and policy

# A Significant Need and Opportunity Exist for the Hilton Foundation to Improve College and Career Readiness of Transition-Age Foster Youth

## Need

- **Education outcomes** for youth who age out of foster care are sobering
  - While 40-50% enroll in college, studies show that between 2% and 11% earn a degree or certificate
  - **Employment outcomes** for TAY are poor and earnings are low; there is a strong association between educational attainment and earnings and employment
- Increased **educational attainment** is the largest driver of improved long-term TAY outcomes

## Opportunities

- **Support programs in high school / GED programs that prepare TAY for success in college and career**
  - **Education programs:** High school programs that include scaffolding (e.g., mentors, tutors) to help TAY become academically college-ready
  - **College preparation programs:** Programs helping TAY transition to college (e.g., peer mentors, remedial testing prep, financial aid applications)
  - **Internship programs:** Internships focused on TAY can contribute to improved employment outcomes
- **Pursue systemic change that will enable improved education and employment outcomes, such as:**
  - Policies that increase **priority treatment and supplemental supports** for foster youth throughout the education continuum
  - Increased **electronic data sharing** between education and child welfare
  - Stronger enforcement of policy promoting **stability of school placement**

***By better preparing youth for college and careers, the Foundation can contribute to increases in college completion rates and employment outcomes***

## Caregivers Able to Support Older Youth Would Help Improve Transition-Age Youth Outcomes

### *Need*

- As the most consistent presence in TAY lives, **foster parents are a significant leverage point** for improve TAY outcomes
  - 78% percent of LA foster youth live with foster families
  - 88% percent of foster youth in NYC live with foster families
- However, most **foster parents are not prepared to support older foster youth** in their development or to help them navigate their transition out of care; **kin providers are particularly under supported**

### *Opportunities*

- **Support programs that improve training of and support for family-based caregivers**
  - Improve **recruiting mechanisms** for foster parents of older youth
  - Fund existing providers to develop and implement ongoing **training and professional development curriculum for caregivers** of older youth
- **Pursue systemic change that will improve caregiver quality, such as:**
  - Influence **training and certification** across the child welfare system for parents of older foster youth
  - Influence policy **to ensure more social workers are allocated to kin care**; improve **reimbursement policies** for kin care

***Caregiver training and ongoing support builds the capacity of adult figures who connect with TAY most intensively***

## Opportunities Exist to Improve Outcomes for Vulnerable Youth: Pregnant and Parenting Teens and Crossover Youth

### *Need*

- **At-risk TAY** have the **poorest outcomes** and **incur the majority of costs** for public services
  - **Crossover youth**, involved in both juvenile justice and child welfare, have the worst long-term outcomes (education, employment, health, use of public services) of all foster youth
  - **Transition-age youth with children** struggle to complete their education and achieve economic stability; parents with a history of foster care are almost twice as likely as parents with no such history to see their own children placed in foster care or become homeless

### *Opportunities*

- **Improve outcomes for pregnant and parenting TAY mothers and reduce TAY pregnancies**
  - Fund **programs** to improve outcomes for **TAY parents and their children**
  - Support teen **pregnancy postponement** programs
- **Improve outcomes for crossover youth in probation**
  - Support **programs** to prevent delinquency, reduce incarceration rates, improve services, and reduce recidivism
- **Pursue systemic change that will support pregnant and parenting teens and crossover youth, such as:**
  - Policies that support **mothers being placed with their children**; access to publicly funded programs **teaching healthy childrearing**
  - Policies that **support collaboration** between justice, probation, and child welfare departments **to identify youth at risk** of crossing over and help them receive the appropriate services they need

***The Foundation will take a holistic approach to improving outcomes for these youth***

## Many Systems and Stakeholders Influence TAY Self-Sufficiency; Improving Their Alignment and Coordination Is Critical to TAY Outcomes



*“There needs to be much more collaboration across systems. The fact that the child welfare system is seen as the corporate parent of these young people is somewhat of a problem because in reality there are a lot of other systems (education, health, employment) that touch transitioning youth and should be part of a concerted effort to support these adolescents.”*

*– Interviewee*

## Targeted *and* Comprehensive Approaches to Strengthening and Aligning Systems Will Be Important Components of the Strategy

Approach	Capacity Strengthening	Cross System Coordination	Policy Alignment
<b>Targeted</b>	<p>Fund <b>training and professional development</b> opportunities for partners in collaboration efforts</p>	<p>Foster <b>coordination in planning providers activity alignment</b> to streamline efforts, improve educational attainment for foster youth, and <b>share responsibility for the outcomes</b></p>	<p>Develop <b>data sharing systems and policies that allow information sharing and alignment</b> between agencies</p>
<b>Comprehensive</b>	<p>Fund <b>capacity building</b> of the systems key to cross-sector coordination and support their ability to effectively implement policy</p>	<p>Support facilitation of <b>convenings and ongoing communication</b> to establish shared goals / priorities, identify <b>actions steps</b> for shared pursuit of goals, and support <b>ongoing coordination</b></p>	<p>Develop <b>data sharing systems and policies that allow information sharing and alignment</b> between agencies</p>

## Creating and Disseminating Research, and Using It to Influence Funding and Policy, Can Occur at Regional and National Levels

- The evidence base for programs that improve foster youth self-sufficiency is not well established
- The Hilton Foundation has an opportunity to support research to strengthen the evidence base for programs that improve TAY outcomes
- Funding research and evaluation, and disseminating findings and learnings, can contribute to this need

**Research** to inform the field's knowledge on how to improve TAY outcomes, in LA, NYC, and nationally

**Evaluation** to measure the impact of and identify learnings from Hilton Foundation grants, to inform the Foundation's work and share learning with the field

*Sharing learning on the local and national level will be crucial for turning findings into action across the field*

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## The Hilton Foundation's Work Will Focus in Los Angeles County and New York City

### *California*

- 60K in care; 5K transitioning out
- Positive legislative environment
- County run



### *Los Angeles*

- 30% CA foster youth are in LA



### *New York*

- 28K in care; 1.5K transitioning out
- Positive legislative environment
- County run



### *New York City*

- 65% NY foster youth are in NYC

***LA and NYC are home to one in five of U.S. foster youth and present opportunity to partner with funders and capitalize on positive policy environments***

## New York City Holds Promise for Improving Transition-Age Youth Outcomes

### Large Population

#### *New York*

- 28,000 youth in care
- 1,500 youth aging out of foster care / year

#### *New York City*

- 65% of foster youth in NY live in NYC
- 3,900 youth in care age 15+; entries for youth age 16 – 20 have grown by more than 50% since 2000
- 800 – 1,000 age out of foster care / year

### Presence of Other Funders

- With several active funders supporting disconnected youth, there is **opportunity for partnerships** especially in NYC
- **Strong philanthropic sector**

### Policy Context

- Successful Children’s Rights lawsuit in 1999 forced significant systems reform including **improved data management system** and rates of maltreatment
- **NYC has covered benefits for foster youth until age 21** for many years
- NY State has passed state-level legislation supporting **kinship guardianship**
- **Public systems are engaged and reform-minded**, but an opportunity exists to increase coordination across providers and public systems
- The child welfare system is **county administered**; NYC has contracted out the provision of most foster care services to performance-based **nonprofit private agencies**

## Los Angeles County Presents Prime Opportunities for Impact with Transition-Age Youth

### Large Population

#### **California**

- 60,000 youth in care
- 5,000 youth aging out of foster care / year

#### **Los Angeles County**

- 33% of foster youth in CA live in LA County
- 5,000 youth in care age 15+
- 1,600 – 2,000 age out of foster care / year

### Presence of Other Funders

- High **presence of other funders** for potential partnerships
- **Existing relationships** with funders and public sector can be leveraged

### Policy Context

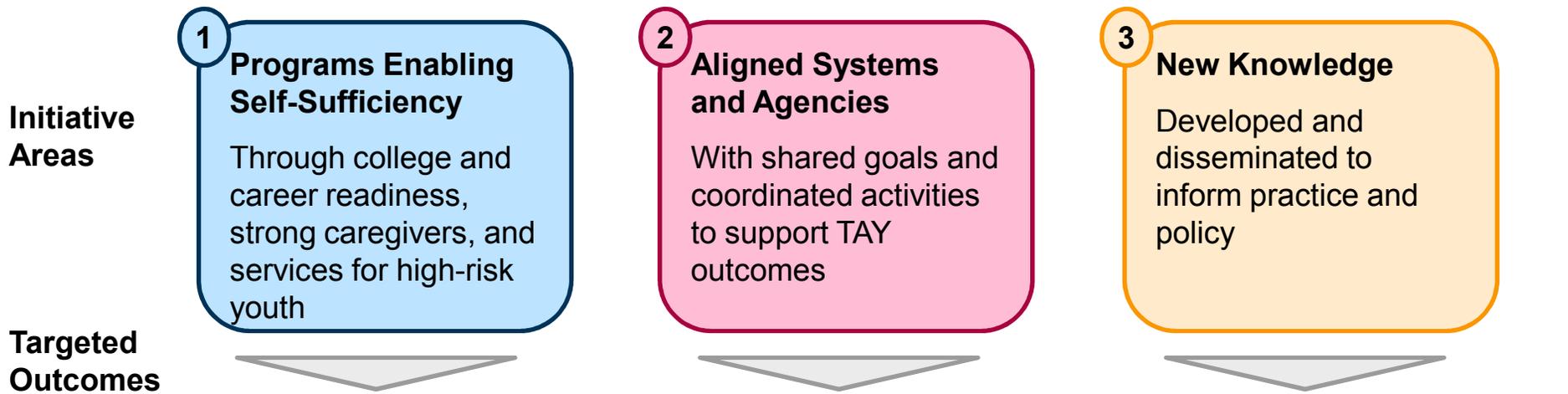
- Key state **legislation passed**:
  - Fostering Connections AB 12 (2010)
  - Additional positive legislation supporting education, adoption, sibling placement, and kinship care
- **Fostering Connections AB 12 is a pioneering policy** that covers benefits for foster youth up to age 21
  - Public and nonprofit sectors in LA are committed to improving outcomes for this population and are beginning to **collaborate in AB12 implementation**
  - Successful implementation provides an opportunity to set a national **example**
- As in NYC, the child welfare system is county administered, thus **county-level implementation** will be key

***Investment in LA County will affect the lives of a large number of youth and set an example for the state and country***

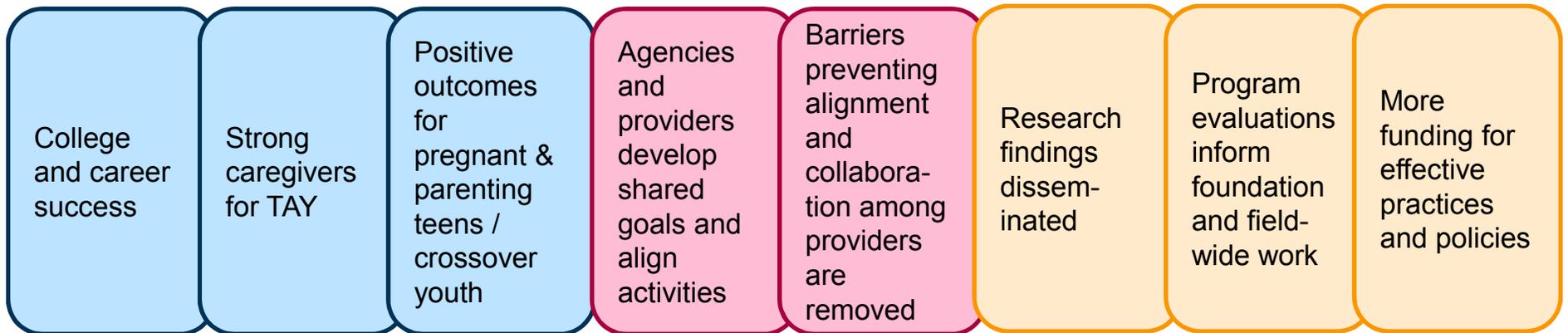
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**Vision** *Youth transitioning out of care are on the path to success, able to live self-sufficiently and with the interpersonal connections they need to thrive*



**Targeted Outcomes**



**Ultimate Result**

*Transition-age youth have the skills and supports they need to live healthy and productive lives*

## Monitoring and Evaluation Should Inform Continual Refinement of the Strategy and Programs and Help Build Field Knowledge



Potential for impact increases when:

- **Strategy** establishes the boundaries for evaluation
- **Evaluation** guides the development and refinement of a strategic approach

- A **well-designed M&E system** with a baseline study and/or comparison groups can inform continual learning and strategic refinement without investment in more resource-intensive randomized-control trials
- This approach of evaluation and continual strategy refinement should be done by all **partners at every level** (grantees and the Hilton Foundation)

***Evaluation results can help build field knowledge and fill crucial evidence gaps***

## The Evaluation Should Be Informed By Both Process and Outcome Indicators

- **Process indicators** measure how well projects are implemented, services are being delivered, and support being is provided to transition-age youth
  - Simple, straightforward indicators that are **captured regularly** across all programs
- **Outcome indicators** measure how the Foundation's resources have helped improve the outcomes for transition-age youth and supported them to thrive on the path to self-sufficiency and interconnectedness
  - More complex indicators, and therefore should be **collected less frequently** (e.g., once or twice per year) and only from the same small subset of program participants
  - Should be **collected by grantee staff or external researchers / evaluators**

*The following slides lay out sample program activities, process indicators, and outcome indicators for each initiative area within the Foundation's strategy*

## Framework and Indicators That May Inform the Foundation's Monitoring and Evaluation

	Outcomes
<b>College and Career Readiness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of foster youth in LA and NYC who participate in college readiness and access programs</li> <li>• % of foster youth in LA and NYC with improved postsecondary completion</li> <li>• % of foster youth in LA and NYC with improved employment outcomes</li> </ul>
<b>Caregivers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of foster youth in LA and NYC for whom caregiver capacity is improved</li> </ul>
<b>Vulnerable Youth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of parenting teens and crossover youth in LA and NYC with improved long-term outcomes*</li> </ul>
<b>System Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of cross-sector coordinated efforts created / strengthened</li> <li>• # annual convenings of organizations and agencies supporting TAY</li> <li>• # of positive / enforced policies for improving outcomes for TAY in target geographies achieved through advocacy</li> </ul>
<b>Funding and Knowledge Sharing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research base around programs to improve TAY outcomes is expanded and shared at both local and national levels</li> <li>• Hilton Foundation funding is matched by private-sector funders aligned with Foundation TAY goals</li> <li>• # of policies or programs informed by Hilton Foundation-funded research and evaluation</li> </ul>

\*Indicators to be finalized upon program evaluation, but may include metrics similar to the Midwest Study: educational attainment, employment, living arrangement, # children and whether they live with the parent, whether or not youth has been convicted of a crime

1

## TAY Access to Programs that Support them on the Path to Self-Sufficiency

### Sample Activities

#### The Hilton Foundation will:

- Make grants to key nonprofit or public partners
- Invest in capacity building of grantees when appropriate

#### Grantee Partners will:

- **College and Career Readiness:** Prepare TAY for postsecondary success by improving college readiness (academic and like skills) and helping youth navigate the transition to college
- **Caregivers:** Increase caregivers' capacity to support older youth, and their ability to transition to self-sufficiency
- **Vulnerable Youth:** Provide holistic supports to improve outcomes for parenting TAY and crossover youth

### Sample Indicators

#### Process Indicators

- Number of youth reached through programs in the three sub-strategies
- Number of caregivers reached through the caregiver strengthening efforts

#### Outcome Indicators

- **College and Career Readiness:** Increase in number of youth enrolling in postsecondary programs, completing programs, and obtaining stable employment
- **Caregivers:** Caregivers capacity is improved (e.g., ability to help youth access services for which they are eligible)
- **Vulnerable Youth:** Long -term improvement in outcomes of parenting teens and crossover youth\*

\*Indicators to be finalized upon program evaluation, but may include metrics similar to the Midwest Study: educational attainment, employment, living arrangement, # children and whether they live with the parent, whether or not youth has been convicted of a crime

2

## Strengthening and Aligning Systems and Organizations

### Sample Activities

#### The Hilton Foundation will:

- Convene and support key agencies and service providers to build collaboration and improve alignment
- Support targeted advocacy efforts to improve policy environment

#### Grantee Partners will:

- Agree on a shared agenda and set of goals to improve outcomes for TAY
- Coordinate and collaborate with each other to achieve the identified goals
- Pursue policy changes that overcome barriers to alignment and improve outcomes for TAY

### Sample Indicators

#### Process Indicators

- Number of organizations participating in setting shared goals
- Number of convenings held
- Number of collaborative efforts developed

#### Outcome Indicators

- Agreement on common goals and progress measures
- Policy changes to improve alignment and TAY outcomes
- Improved data sharing policies at the state and county levels that lead to improvements in policy and practice

3

## Creating and Disseminating Knowledge

### Sample Activities

#### The Hilton Foundation will:

- Fund research aligned with strategic priorities
- Evaluate grants
- Share best practices and learnings with other funders and implementers
- Ensure that grantee partners report results and findings to the Hilton Foundation as well as sharing learning with the field
- Raise awareness among public and private funders of the importance of investment in TAY

#### Grantee partners will:

- Monitor and report outcomes of TAY within their programs
- Share findings from programs with other relevant TAY / FY service providers

### Sample Indicators

#### Process Indicators

- Data collection and analysis completed by grantees / research organizations
- Number of reports by partners on the results and findings of Hilton Foundation-funded programs
- Number of convenings or meetings with funders or government officials to share learnings, research findings, or best practices

#### Outcome Indicators

- Number of policies or private programs that adopt findings or learnings from Hilton Foundation-funded activities
- Amount of private funding drawn to the foster youth field in LA County and NYC

# Appendix

**Phase I Landscape Research Findings can be found at:**

[www.hiltonfoundation.org/images/stories/Downloads/  
Programs/foster\\_youth/  
Foster\\_Youth\\_Landscape\\_Deck.pdf](http://www.hiltonfoundation.org/images/stories/Downloads/Programs/foster_youth/Foster_Youth_Landscape_Deck.pdf)

## Organizations Included in FSG Interviews\*

### National Landscape

Annie E Casey Foundation
Barry University
Bayview Child Health Clinic
California Youth Connections
Casey Family Programs
Center for the Study of Social Policy
Chapin Hall, University of Chicago
Eckerd Family Foundation
Edna McConnell Clark Foundation
Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative
K&L Gates
Lucille Packard Children's Hospital
Mainspring Consulting / Foster Care Work Group
National Foster Youth Action Network
SF Child Abuse Prevention Center
Stoneleigh Foundation
Stuart Foundation
Texas Appleseed
The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy
Tiger Foundation
Tipping Point Foundation
University of Chicago
University of Pennsylvania
Winstead Consulting
Youth Law Center
Youth Villages

### New York Landscape

Andrus Family Fund
Annie E. Casey Foundation
BNY Mellon
Casey Family Programs
Center for an Urban Future
Columbia University / Workplace Center
City University of New York
City University of New York Prep
FEGS / The Academy
Gap Foundation
Good Shepherd Services
Local Initiatives Support Corporation NYC
New York Foundling
NYC Administration for Children's Services
NYC Administration for Children's Services
NYC DOE
OSI
Pinkerton Foundation
Robin Hood
The Door
The Fund for Public Schools
The National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

### Los Angeles Landscape

Alliance for Children's Rights
California Child Welfare Co-investment Partnership
Casey Family Programs
Center for Social Service Research, UC Berkeley
Child Welfare Initiative
Children's Law Center
DCFS / Crossover Youth Initiative
DCFS/ Youth Development Services
First Place for Youth
Five Acres
LA County 1st District Office
Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office
Stuart Foundation
United Friends of the Children
Walter S. Johnson Foundation

\* Additional organizations were consulted by Hilton Foundation staff.

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