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**STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTION OF A SUCCESSFUL CAMPUS FOR FORMER
FOSTER CARE CHILDREN ATTENDING POST SECONDARY EDUCATION
PROGRAMS**

A dissertation submitted to
the Graduate College of
Marshall University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
In
Curriculum and Instruction

by

Jeffrey Lee Shrewsbury

Approved by

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Marshall University
August 2020

APPROVAL OF DISSERTATION

Jeffrey Lee Shrewsbury

We, the faculty supervising the work of

affirm that the dissertation **STAKEHOLDERS PERCEPTION OF A SUCCESSFUL CAMPUS FOR FORMER FOSTER CARE CHILDREN ATTENDING POST SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

meets the high academic standards for original scholarship and creative work established by the EdD Program in **Curriculum and Instruction** and the College of Education and Professional Development. This work also conforms to the editorial standards of our discipline and the Graduate College of Marshall University. With our signatures, we approve the manuscript for publication.



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I would like to thank all the students and case managers that helped me with this project;
I have never met finer people.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|------|
| APPROVAL OF DISSERTATION..... | ii |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | iii |
| LIST OF TABLES..... | xi |
| ABSTRACT..... | xiii |
| CHAPTER 1 | 1 |
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Statement of the Problem..... | 3 |
| Purpose of the Study | 5 |
| The Significance of the Study..... | 6 |
| CHAPTER 2 | 8 |
| Literature Review..... | 8 |
| What is Foster Care?..... | 8 |
| History of Foster Care..... | 8 |
| Government Intervention | 10 |
| McKinney-Vento Act..... | 12 |
| Research on Educating Foster Care Children | 13 |
| Emotional/ Counseling..... | 17 |
| Transportation..... | 18 |
| Tutoring..... | 19 |
| Housing | 19 |
| Medical | 20 |
| Financial..... | 20 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Transitional Living..... | 21 |
| Problems Former Foster Care Children Face..... | 22 |
| Loneliness and Emotional Issues | 22 |
| Trauma Informed Care..... | 23 |
| Wraparound Supports | 24 |
| History of Wraparound Supports | 25 |
| Family First Prevention Services Act | 26 |
| KVC Campus | 27 |
| Examples of Programs that Assist Foster Care Students | 29 |
| Legislation..... | 29 |
| Positive Pathways | 30 |
| Great Expectations | 31 |
| Passport to Careers..... | 32 |
| Similarities and Differences Between Programs | 33 |
| CHAPTER 3 | 34 |
| Research Questions..... | 34 |
| Research Method | 34 |
| Mixed Methods Approach | 35 |
| Quantitative Methods..... | 35 |
| Qualitative Methods..... | 36 |
| Triangulation..... | 37 |
| Quantitative Instrumentation | 38 |
| Qualitative Semi-Structured Interview | 39 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Sample..... | 40 |
| Data Analysis | 40 |
| Quantitative Results | 40 |
| Qualitative Results | 40 |
| Conclusion | 40 |
| CHAPTER 4 | 42 |
| Problems Encountered | 42 |
| Case Manager Results..... | 43 |
| Need More Support in College Than Other Non-Foster Care Students?..... | 43 |
| Receive Enough Emotional Counseling Support to Be Successful? | 44 |
| Receive Enough Transportation Support? | 46 |
| Receive Enough Tutoring Support?..... | 47 |
| Students Currently Have a Safe Place to Live? | 48 |
| Receive Enough Medical Care?..... | 49 |
| Receive Enough Financial Support?..... | 51 |
| Understand What Services Are Available from Your Program?..... | 52 |
| Take Advantage of All Services in Your Program? | 53 |
| Receive Enough Support from Your Program to Be Successful? | 55 |
| Want to Graduate from School? | 56 |
| Would Do Better in a Trade or Vocational School Than a College or Community College? | 57 |
| Need a KVC Campus Specifically for Former Foster Care Students? | 58 |

| | |
|--|----|
| What Do You Think Former Foster Care Students Need More Than Anything Else to Be Successful? | 61 |
| Student Results | 62 |
| Need More Support in College Than Other Non-Foster Care Students | 62 |
| Receive Enough Emotional Counseling Support to Be Successful? | 64 |
| Receive Enough Transportation Support? | 65 |
| Receive Enough Tutoring Support? | 67 |
| Currently Have a Safe Place to Live? | 68 |
| Receive Enough Medical Care? | 70 |
| Receive Enough Financial Support? | 71 |
| Understand What Services Are Available from Your Program? | 72 |
| Take Advantage of All Services in Your Program? | 74 |
| Receive Enough Support from Your Program to Be Successful? | 75 |
| Want to Graduate from School? | 77 |
| Would Do Better in a Trade or Vocational School Than a College or Community College? | 78 |
| Need a KVC Campus Especially for Former Foster Care Students? | 79 |
| What Do You Think Former Foster Care Students Need More Than Anything Else to Be Successful? | 82 |
| Results to Address the Research Questions | 83 |
| What Supports Do Foster Care Students and Case Managers Feel Are Currently Lacking or Working in Existing Programs? | 83 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Do Former Foster Care Students Understand What Services They Can Receive in the Identified Programs? | 89 |
| How Do Foster Care Students and Case Managers Feel about the Campus KVC Envisions? | 90 |
| What Do Foster Care Students and Case Managers Feel Is Needed to Make Former Foster Care Children Successful in Post-secondary Education?..... | 91 |
| CHAPTER 5 | 93 |
| Summary of Research Questions | 93 |
| Research Question One: What Supports Do Foster Care Students and Case Managers Feel Are Currently Lacking or Working in Existing Programs? | 93 |
| Research Question Two: Are Former Foster Care Students Aware of Services They Can Receive in the Identified Programs? | 95 |
| Research Question Three: How Do Foster Care Students and Case Managers Feel about the Campus KVC Envisions?..... | 96 |
| Research Question Four: What Do Foster Care Students and Case Managers Feel is Needed to Make Former Foster Care Children Successful in Post-secondary Education?..... | 99 |
| Recommendations..... | 100 |
| Recommendation One: Study the Efficacy of a KVC Campus for Short Term Training Programs in Community College Settings..... | 100 |
| Recommendation Two: Look for More Ways to Improve Transportation and Safe Housing in College | 101 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Recommendation Three: Work to Have a Full Time Dedicated on Campus Case Manager to Work with Foster Care Programs | 102 |
| Recommendation Four: Research Whether Students are More Critical of Themselves Than Case Managers are Critical of Students..... | 103 |
| Recommendation Five: Conduct a Mixed Method Study..... | 104 |
| REFERENCES | 105 |
| APPENDIX A-IRB APPROVAL..... | 118 |
| APPENDIX B- QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW..... | 119 |
| APPENDIX C- CURRICULUM VITAE | 120 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 1. Case managers’ thoughts on whether more support is needed. | 44 |
| Table 2. Case managers’ thoughts on emotional counseling. | 45 |
| Table 3. Case managers’ thoughts on transportation. | 47 |
| Table 4. Case managers’ thoughts on tutoring. | 48 |
| Table 5. Case managers’ thoughts on safe housing. | 49 |
| Table 6. Case managers’ thoughts on medical care. | 50 |
| Table 7. Case managers’ thoughts on financial support. | 51 |
| Table 8. Case managers’ thoughts on whether students understand services available. | 53 |
| Table 9. Case managers’ thoughts on whether students take advantage of services. | 54 |
| Table 10. Case managers’ thoughts on support from program to be successful. | 56 |
| Table 11. Case managers’ thoughts on whether students want to graduate. | 57 |
| Table 12. Case managers’ thoughts on trade /vocational school or college. | 58 |
| Table 13. Case managers’ thoughts on a KVC campus. | 60 |
| Table 14. Case managers’ thoughts on what foster care alumni need more than anything else... | 62 |
| Table 15. Students’ thoughts on whether more support is needed. | 64 |
| Table 16. Students’ thoughts on emotional counseling. | 65 |
| Table 17. Students’ thoughts on transportation. | 67 |
| Table 18. Students’ thoughts on tutoring. | 68 |
| Table 19. Students’ thoughts on safe housing. | 70 |
| Table 20. Students’ thoughts on medical care. | 71 |
| Table 21. Students’ thoughts on financial support. | 72 |
| Table 22. Students’ thoughts on whether students understand services available. | 74 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Table 23. Students’ thoughts on whether students take advantage of services. | 75 |
| Table 24. Students’ thoughts on support from program to be successful..... | 77 |
| Table 25. Students’ thoughts on whether students want to graduate..... | 78 |
| Table 26. Students’ thoughts on trade /vocational school or college. | 79 |
| Table 27. Students’ thoughts on a KVC campus. | 81 |
| Table 28. Students’ thoughts on what foster care alumni need more than anything else. | 83 |
| Table 29. Student and case manager agreement on supports needed. | 88 |
| Table 31. How students and case managers feel about the KVC campus. | 91 |
| Table 32. What do you think former foster care students need more than anything else to be successful? | 92 |
| Table 33. Student and case manager agreement on supports needed. | 94 |

ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study examined the supports children with a history of foster care need to be successful in post-secondary education. The study asked ten foster care alumni students receiving services from programs in Virginia, Florida, and Washington State about the level of support they receive and how successful that support is. The study also asked ten case managers that work in these programs their thoughts on the level of supports students with a history of foster care need in post-secondary education; the results of the case managers and students were then compared for agreement. The study also asked the same students and case managers their thoughts on how successful a campus exclusively designed for students with a history of foster care may be if the staff on the campus are specifically trained in *trauma informed* care. The case managers and students agreed on all questions regarding support; except for supports provided around access to medical care. The study suggests a *dedicated campus* for foster care alumni could provide students with a means to overcome some obstacles that make obtaining a post-secondary degree or certificate difficult. The study also suggested that students in the program are more critical of their performance than the case managers are critical of student performance; students may tend to see their failures as their own fault.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

According to research, it has been well established children in foster care experience issues that define them as an at-risk group (DeVaul, 2014; Nollan, 1996; Pecora, Williams, Kessler, Hiripi, O'Brien, Emerson, Herrick, & Torres, 2006). Foster children may be removed from their natural home today, spend 30 days in an emergency shelter, move to a group residential placement, and then move to a foster home in less than a few weeks or months. Each move is starting over for the child; often meaning a transfer from one school district to another, switching homes, and switching friends (DeVaul, 2014; Nollan, 1996; Pecora et al., 2006).

The issues foster children face with the greatest impact are higher enrollment in special education, more school moves, lower graduation rates, more frequent expulsions from school, lower grades, and less academic support than children in the general population (Alon & Tienda, 2005; Griffith, 2008; Pecora et al., 2006). In addition, children in foster care also have more problems finding employment, housing, and continuing their education after leaving foster care (DeVaul, 2014; Nollan, 1996).

Foster children also miss school more frequently than students in the general population before and after foster care placement (DeVaul, 2014). Prior to foster care placement children may miss school because they do not live in a stable household that ensures they get to school; it could be because of drug use of parents, getting evicted, homelessness, moving a lot, physical abuse, parents may have a mental illness, or other issues (DeVaul, 2014; Nollan, 1996; Pecora et al., 2006).

Just because a former foster child goes to college, it does not mean issues such as unstable and inconsistent lifestyles or even homelessness go away. When children leave foster

care services and go to college, the concern or question is not whether the child will be accepted into college, but will they stay enrolled in college (Day, Dworsky, & Feng, 2013). The Midwest Study that followed more than 700 foster care children in Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin found only one-third of foster care children completed one year of college by age 24, compared to one-half of non-foster care children finishing one year of college by age 24 (Courtney, Dworsky, Lee, & Raap, 2010).

It is likely foster care children face even more setbacks and barriers obtaining a college degree than children that are the first in their families to attend post-secondary education (Day, Dworsky, et al., 2013). Barriers that exist for foster care students in college include not having a driver's license. In 2006, an estimated less than one-third of foster care college students had a driver's license (Pecora et al., 2006). Without a driver's license, the likelihood of getting a job is decreased which in turn affects the likelihood of having the ability to pay for basic needs or to even attend college (Courtney, et al., 2010; Scannapieco, 2011).

Another barrier for foster care children is the risk of becoming homeless after they leave foster care services. Research conducted between 1990 and 2011 indicates between 11% and 36% of foster care children become homeless after leaving foster care compared to 4% of non-foster care young adults (Dworsky, Napolitano, & Courtney, 2013). Homelessness has an even greater impact on a young adult attending community college; the lack of a campus can prevent the student from going to school.

The nature of foster care is to provide protection and oversight to the foster care children; often the oversight prevents children from learning to communicate and socialize with other children and people in everyday situations (Bruskas, 2008; Scannapieco, 2011). These protective measures often lead to unintended results such as the foster child failing to develop socialization

skills, developing a support network of friends, and learning how to navigate ordinary situations a young adult would face in life when attending college or working (Scannapieco, Smith, & Blakeney-Strong, 2016).

Because foster care children often fail to develop social skills, it does put them at risk for making bad choices when they are transitioning into adulthood (Cushing, 2011). These bad choices when transitioning into adulthood only increase the need for structured or semi-structured supports through *transitional living* or similar programs once foster children leave their foster care homes (Scannapieco, et al., 2016). Research suggests support services should concentrate on teaching skills such as budgeting, strategies for finishing school and attending post-secondary programs, completing household chores, and other daily skills needed to survive after leaving the protective care of a foster care setting (Scannapieco et al., 2016).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In 2016 in the United States, 22,000 foster children had the goal of emancipation in their case plans; of those, 17,000 of the children were from services provided through foster care and transitional living programs (Children Rights, 2018). In 2017 there were 442,995 children in foster care in the United States (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017). Research indicates only four percent of children that age out of foster care will earn a four-year degree by age 26, while 36% of the entire general population will earn a four-year degree by the same age (Children Rights, 2018). These numbers suggest well over 400,000 of the children in foster care will not earn a four-year degree, making former foster care children a population at significant risk to experience limitations on future income earning and self-dependency.

A significant obstacle to earning a four-year degree exists in the complexities of educating foster care children. Navigating the complicated foster care system, state social

workers, state rules, foster parents, school systems, foster care providers, and for some foster care children, their demanding personal needs, can be taxing and overwhelming. Added complications can make matters even more trying; for example, high turnover rates of social service workers, decreased funding, increased needs, and doing more with less in a bad economy (DeVaul, 2014; Stone, D'Andrade, & Austin, 2007). Because it is so complicated to educate foster care children regular examination of policy issues is crucial.

Research conducted by Harrison-Jackson in 2009 found correlations between the age a child entered foster care and the likelihood of earning a high school diploma or GED. The study indicated children who enter foster care after age 12 are more likely to obtain a high school degree or GED than children that entered foster care at a younger age. Harrison-Jackson in the same research found children that did obtain a GED or High School diploma prior to age 18, and before aging out of foster care, were much more likely to be employed and successful in later life (Harrison-Jackson, 2009). In addition, an increase in placements experienced while in foster care also negatively correlated with educational achievement; as placements went up, educational achievement went down (Harrison-Jackson, 2009).

The lack of academic achievement can lead to putting former foster children at a higher risk of becoming homeless and unemployed. Research between 1990 and 2011 indicates that between 11% and 36% of foster care children become homeless after leaving foster care, compared to 4% of non-foster care young adults (Dworsky, et al., 2013). An increase in other social problems which foster care alumni are at risk, such as the rates of jail time, unplanned pregnancies, drug usage, and alcoholism increase the chances that foster care children are also destined to have some of the same problems as their parents (Goldhaber-Fiebert, Snowden, Wulczyn, Landsverk, & Horwitz, 2011; Wulczyn, 2010).

When foster care children are not successful, there are problems the community must deal with. The problems are damaged lives, lost human capital, and an increased likelihood children with a history of foster care will engage in unlawful activities to survive; the nature of these problems can increase the likelihood there are other children that enter into the foster care system (Goldhaber-Fiebert, et al., 2011).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to determine whether the current level of support provided to foster care alumni while attending college is enough support to allow foster care alumni to graduate with a post-secondary degree; or, do post-secondary programs need to provide more support, such as dedicating a campus solely to foster care students? Even though foster children say they would like to attend college at or near the same rate as non-foster care children say they would like to attend college, foster care alumni are far less likely to obtain a college or post-secondary degree (Alon & Tienda, 2005; Courtney, et al., 2010; DeVaul, 2014; Griffith, 2008; Nollan, 1996, Pecora et al., 2006). While the challenges faced by foster care children in their academic achievements have been highlighted by several research studies, there is currently no one single accepted way states or post-secondary institutions attack the problem of providing support to foster care children to graduate with a post-secondary degree.

This study will look at how different programs and post-secondary institutions across several states have attacked the problem of getting foster care children into college and successfully graduating with a degree or certificate that helps the student obtain employment and live on their own. This study also aims to make the needs of foster care alumni more known to educators, private foster care agencies, and state agencies so these components of the foster care system can work together to better help foster care alumni achieve post-secondary educational

success. States and foster care agencies are often attacking the problem of educating foster care alumni in different ways; these differences in methods could be attributed to financial resources, geography, or other reasons. This study will attempt to pull together some of the more known or successful programs that attempt to transition foster children from secondary education to higher education.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is important for foster care alumni and the community at large that former foster care alumni have an opportunity to succeed. High school graduates are twice as likely to be unemployed as college graduates and the more educated an employee the more likely they are to have a secure work environment (Cairó & Cajner, 2018). With the increased likelihood foster care children will be homeless and unemployed, it is critical to our communities that we reduce the risks associated with being in foster care. The rates of jail time, unplanned pregnancies, drug usage, alcoholism and other social problems foster care alumni are at risk for increases the chances foster care alumni children are also destined to be in the foster care system (Goldhaber-Fiebert, et al., 2011; Wulczyn, 2010).

This study will examine the problems associated with obtaining an education after leaving foster care; this study will look at a host of different programs across the country and look for efforts that have been successful, then look at whether a more intensive program with a campus dedicated solely to former foster children would better serve these foster care alumni.

KVC, a national foster care program that serves several states across the nation has obtained a campus they hope to convert to a successful model tailored to meet the needs of students transitioning from foster care into adulthood and higher education. This specific type of service has not been attempted before and is significantly different from other programs located

on college campuses across the country. With financial resources often in very short supply, efforts to aid any group in the social welfare system need to be studied so the most effective methods are used to attack the problem (Goldhaber-Fiebert, et al., 2011).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is Foster Care?

Foster care is defined as a child residing in a home in the care of someone other than a natural parent or family member, or in residential facilities where care takers could be foster parents or paid staff (DeVaul, 2014). There are various reasons why a child may be removed from a natural parental setting. Reasons could include parent neglect, parents may be deceased, the child could have serious behavioral issues or medical needs that do not allow the parent to care for the child, or the parent could have medical or behavioral issues that do not allow the parent to care for the child (Nollan, 1996).

Most people would agree if the parent cannot take care of a child, then the next best alternative is another relative of the child (Bremner, 1974; Jones, 1985; Nollan, 1996). The intent is for placement in foster care to be temporary but all too often the placement becomes long-term or permanent. Once children are removed from parental care, they are often moved from one foster care setting or residential treatment program to another. Often, the moves are made because of time limitations put on placement or perhaps due to a child's behavioral issues, further complicating the child's educational goals because the move often means a change in school districts. There is very often more than one placement for children in foster care, and because of the trauma foster children are often exposed to, it is often a challenge to educate children in the foster care system (DeVaul, 2014).

History of Foster Care

Throughout history, policies related to the American family have been complicated. Over the course of a few centuries, the United States shifted between interfering and not interfering in

the private matters of families, partly so the integrity of the family could be maintained (Nollan, 1996). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, if a child was removed from their family they were sent to live with another family, which probably was the most stable and natural childhood possible (Jones, 1985). Institutional care was not common until the 1830s and by the end of the nineteenth century, institutional care for children fell out of favor. Because the orphanage and residential group home placement remains out of favor, placement in a natural home or with another family remain preferred living arrangements (Bremner, 1971; Children Rights, 2018; Jones, 1985; Nollan, 1996; West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, 2015). Placements can become further complicated when, in some cases, a child has been orphaned or abandoned (Jones, 1985; Nollan, 1996).

In 1853, Charles Loring Brace founded the *placing out* system, with the assistance of the New York Children's Aid Society; 100,000 children were placed in free foster homes in mostly farming families in the Midwest and upstate New York (Bremner, 1971). The youth provided the farmers with labor and the farmer provided the youth with a place to live until adulthood (Bremner, 1971; Nollan, 1996). This arrangement did solve some problems and lessened the economic burden of the government; but it was a process with little regulation and set the stage for children being abused and taken advantage of (Bremner, 1971). The placing out system was also an important issue because it was setting the policy for government to intervene and place children while recognizing the right of the community at large to intervene in family affairs when necessary (McGowan, 1988). In 1886, a different intervention was introduced by Charles Birtwell. In his plan, the foster placement relationship was modified to encourage restoration with the natural family. Thus, the focus was shifted from community protection of the child, if possible, to preservation and/or restoration of the natural family (Bremner, 1974).

The twentieth century continued to see changes and laws passed to address the foster care system and permanency planning. In 1909, the first White House Conference on Youth was held which endorsed the preservation of the family and family care as opposed to institutionalization (Jimenez, 1990). The public also began to feel poverty alone was not justification to remove a child from a family; only mistreatment or other reasons should facilitate removing a child from a natural home (Bremner, 1971). Laws were also passed to provide pensions to poverty-stricken mothers so they could care for their children (Bremner, 1971; Nollan, 1996). Unfortunately, these laws also led to reasons for removing a child often based on judgement of the mother's character (Bremner, 1971; Jones, 1985).

Government Intervention

In the early part of the 20th century, Congress recognized the responsibility of the federal government to ensure dependent children were cared for by passing legislation that affected the health and well-being of dependent children (Bremner, 1971). In 1912, Congress created the United States Children's Bureau, the first agency of its kind in the world. In 1921 the Sheppard-Towner Act was passed allowing grants and aid given to states for care of children and their mothers, creating a standard of giving or funding direct services to children and parents (McGowan, 1988).

The Social Security Act of 1935 allowed matching funds to states for the care of children that lived in poverty; the child's environment was fine in all respects other than poverty (Bremner, 1974; O'Neill, & Gesiriech, 2011). This act also strengthened state welfare agencies and allowed the states larger roles in administration of child welfare services; this aid made it possible for children to live with their natural families or in the homes of close relatives (Bremner, 1974; Jones, 1985; McGowan, 1988; Nollan, 1996).

From 1933 to 1960, despite the considerable growth in the United States population, the number of children in residential settings dropped from 140,000 to 80,000 children (Bremner, 1974; Nollan, 1996). However, the next decade saw a steady increase in the number of foster care children as well as an increase in reports of abuse and neglect in foster homes (Barbell & Freundlich, 2001). Several issues that surfaced in the 1960s triggered a concerning period for the American child welfare systems. During the decade, over 50% of children in foster care had been in foster care over two years. Most saw their natural families very infrequently and if the children were in foster care more than one and a half years, there was decreased likelihood they would ever return to their family (Nollan, 1996).

An increase in foster care numbers, and growing concern with child abuse prompted the development of advocacy groups and a push for deinstitutionalization. Placing a child in the least detrimental alternative placement gained momentum in the child welfare system through the 1960s (Fanshel & Shinn, 1978; Pelton, 1987). These issues led to the 1974 Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and created the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. Funding was provided to states for the development of statewide systems for reporting and investigating abuse and neglect (Harrison-Jackson, 2009; Nollan, 1996; Pelton, 1978). The act did not clearly define abuse and neglect resulting in an increase in children potentially in need of out of home care. Ultimately, the funding provided did not match the need generated by the act (Jimenez, 1990; McGowan, 1988). The act also shifted the focus of the system from preserving families to providing professional intervention and the removal of the child from their natural families (Jimenez, 1990; McGowan, 1988; Nollan; 1996).

In 1980, the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act was passed to address the continuing rise in out-of-home placements. The act required permanency planning and efforts to

prevent out of home placement; the government attempted to shift the role of child welfare agencies to concentrate more on family reunification and protecting and preserving family relationships (Jimenez, 1990; Pine, 1986). The order for most preferred placement was first reunification with the natural family, next adoption, followed by guardianship, and then long-term care (Barth & Berry, 1987). The number of children in foster care did drop initially after the Adoption and Assistance Child Welfare Act was implemented, but by the end of the 1980s the rate of foster care increased, and foster care was higher than ever, partially because of the increase in substance abuse among parents (Berrick, 1998).

Since the 1980s, the federal government has continued to pass laws and initiatives to care for children in abusive family situations to include the Adoption and Family Services Act of 1992, the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, and the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 addressed concerns about the protection and adoption of children (DeVaul, 2014).

McKinney-Vento Act

When state workers remove children from natural homes, they may have to make the move quickly in the interest of the child's safety which raises a few concerns. The child can often be shuffled off to another living arrangement within the span of a day or even hours. When children are moved a lot, it means the worker may have little to no information on a child they can pass on to either the foster parent, residential facility, or school system that may receive the child (DeVaul, 2014; Gustavsson, 1991; Nollan, 1996; Pecora et al., 2006). The result could lead to a delay in the education of the child, the inability of the school to identify needed behavioral intervention and would greatly hamper efforts to work with the child (Gustavsson, 1991; Schwartz, 1999).

In 1987, the US government addressed the issue around lagging school records following the child by enacting the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This act forced school systems to admit children into school who did not live in permanent placements (DeVaul, 2014). The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act helped prevent children who were homeless from being left out of school because their records were unavailable while they waited on foster care placement. However, the rule did not apply to children placed in foster care if the placement was considered permanent.

Provisions of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act were updated with passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (DeVaul, 2014). Originally, foster children were not included in the ACT unless they were living in a homeless shelter. There is a new version of the Act that is a result of the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that replaced the NCLB. The old McKinney-Vento ACT did not consider foster care children homeless (DeVaul, 2014). The new McKinney-Vento ACT makes it possible for children to get into school, but it does nothing to solve the problem school systems may have if they do not understand the child's behavior and emotional issues, or even realize what grade the child is in (Blome, 1997).

RESEARCH ON EDUCATING FOSTER CARE CHILDREN

Research has shown on average children that are placed in foster care receive an inadequate education, resulting most often with negative outcomes (Blome, 1997; Harrison-Jackson, 2009). Research has also shown when children are placed in foster care and in a stable family unit for the duration of the school year, academic performance improves. Children placed in stable foster-care experience increased school stability, which in turn promotes learning and educational achievement (Conger & Rebeck, 2001). School stability along with the underlying idea of permanency planning are related to attachment constructs and stability in the home. The

resulting stability serves as the base for the child's emotional development (Massinga & Pecora, 2004). Consequently, the more stable the placement, the better the outcomes for children in foster care (Conger & Rebeck, 2001; Massinga & Pecora, 2004).

Research has established stability in school and the home positively influence outcomes for foster children. Stability has been linked to a more successful education, including stability in foster care (Massinga & Pecora, 2004). But, if a child moves around a lot and has several placements, stability is probably not present and can prevent the child from getting the education needed to be successful. Often, children are forced into positions in which they are suddenly emancipated but have a very poor education as a result of changing placements and school systems (Harrison-Jackson, 2009).

The fundamental purposes of foster care should be to prepare a child to live on their own. To live on their own successfully, children need to get an education or learn a trade. Very often the primary concern becomes just keeping the child safe until they are an adult; studies have shown foster care alumni represent an at-risk population for finding employment and seeking further education when emancipated without some level of academic achievement (DeVaul, 2014). Workers assigned to foster children do not always understand the educational system and how to navigate through it; due to a lack of understanding, needed services are often not identified (McNaught, 2005).

Considering factors such as over-size caseloads and the high turnover experienced by state workers, children can be prevented from getting needed services. As a result, the child gets lost in the bureaucracy (Vesecky, Woodard, & Levine, 2005). Because of the bureaucracy, a child's needs may not be identified, causing the child to continue to fall behind in school. The lack of these interventions could contribute to certain behaviors that only further contribute to

problems with the child's placement, causing a revolving door of more frequent moves (Jacobson, 2008; Runyan & Gould, 1985).

In 2001, passage of the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Act established the Education and Training Voucher program. Eighty percent of the program was state funded by the federal Department of Education and 20% came from U.S. congressional expenditures (Harrison-Jackson, 2009). The purpose of the Education and Training Voucher program was to allocate money for post-secondary education for foster children that had aged out of the program and for foster children that were adopted prior to age 16 (Harrison-Jackson, 2009). The foster children could receive \$5,000 per year to go to state-funded vocational and post-secondary schools. States were also allowed to spend up to 10% of funds on administrative costs to incentivize the utilization of the program (Harrison-Jackson, 2009).

In 2008, McCoy, McMillen and Spitznagel studied foster children exiting from foster care in a state that allowed foster care children to stay in foster care services until age 21. The study noted four primary concerns foster care children had when exiting care. Those four concerns were: 1) youth often left through unplanned means that ran contrary to expectations of the foster care system; 2) most youth left care frustrated and cited frustration with the system as the primary reason for leaving care; 3) foster children with the most pronounced behavior issues were more likely to exit the program; and, 4) youth that stayed in the system were often living on their own somewhere in the community while children that left the system were most likely to live with family.

The McCoy, et al. (2008) study found very often children were discharged without clear plans, many times without notice, and for reasons that were not based on needs, but based on age or other reasons having nothing to do with the child's needs. One of the recommendations from

this study was to educate foster care providers, court judges, and other members of the foster care system to challenge why a child or young adult should be discharged from care. The study also recommended states provide care past age 18, while at this time, some states were working toward discharging foster care students at age 21. At the time this paper was written, the federal government was working toward allowing foster care children to continue services in some capacity until age 26 through *The Family First Prevention Services Act* that was signed into law as part of the Congressional Bipartisan Budget Act on February 9, 2018 (First Focus Campaign for Children, 2018).

The McCoy et al. (2008) study also suggests foster care children are often frustrated with care they receive. They often feel their needs are not met and foster care programs are disorganized, case managers are not available, information is hard to obtain regarding options, and support from foster care providers in general is poor. The study suggests better monitoring and quality control systems on the part of foster care service providers to reduce the frustration foster care children have with services. The study also suggests if services could be less frustrating for foster children, foster children may remain in services longer. Transitional living programs could be a way for children to have some of the independence they want and need, but also receive the needed guidance and support young adults need when they reach young adulthood (McCoy et al., 2008).

Cohen (2013) found there were 22 states that offered tuition waivers for former foster care children. In 2017, the Education Commission of the States reported 28 states provided some form of waiver or grant to assist foster care students, a six-state improvement (Cohen, 2013; Education Commission of the States, 2017). Some research suggests former foster care students need more than help with tuition to be successful in college. Students must first know about the

tuition assistance that is available and secondly, former foster care students lack more than just the cost of school. They possess inadequate social skills and support, and academic preparation, as well as financial support (Watt, Faulkner, Bustillos, & Madden, 2018).

Emotional/ Counseling

Past research indicates students with a history of receiving counseling services while in foster care receive far less counseling or emotional support services once exiting care (Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, & Nesmith, 2001; National Council on Disability, 2017). Not receiving counseling services after exiting care can be a problem since emotional support and counseling are still much needed for students that have trauma in their past, making former foster care students a population that can generally be described as needing and often lacking social and emotional support (Geiger, Hayes Piel, Day, & Schelbe, 2018; Goodkind, Schelbe, & Shook, 2011). Suicide attempts are twice as likely in the foster care population than in the general population, with approximately 85% of foster care youth living with a mental illness (National Council on Disability, 2017).

Counseling and emotional services, or social supports in general are often not available to students in post-secondary education because these services do not exist (Manno, Jacobs, Alson, & Skemer, 2014). Even if a student recognizes they need services and is willing to participate in counseling services, the service may not be part of an official program for the student or may be part of the college or university system and may not specialize in issues specific to trauma suffered by foster care alumni. Information about counseling services is often passed around through word of mouth and foster care alumni may not realize what services are available because information is inaccurate (Manno, et al., 2014).

Eighty-eight percent of colleges and universities report offering some form of free counseling/emotional services with slightly less than 10% offering one to nine free sessions and charging less than 30 dollars a session (National Council on Disability, 2017). When schools charge a fee it adversely affects the foster care alumni population because this population usually has less financial resources. Of the schools that report they provide counseling services, only 70% of the staff are licensed to provide these services (National Council on Disability, 2017).

In a 2011 study published in 2012, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) reported 64% of students that drop out of college do so because of a mental health issue (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2012). Since 85% of foster care children are estimated to have a mental illness, the foster care alumni attending college are likely to be part of the 64% of student dropouts in post-secondary education.

Transportation

Lack of transportation can be a serious issue for students in college and especially for students with a history of foster care. Not having a stable family or social circle often means foster care students rely on public transportation or friends to get from one place to another (Conner, 2018). Public transportation may not be accessible to students in rural areas that attend a community college. Even if public transportation is available, the timing of the bus or train runs may not coincide with the schedule the student is trying to keep. Students may have to leave for school much earlier than other students with reliable transportation just to make the bus or train route work for them. They may also have to leave campus later than other students, making the use of public transportation an inefficient way of getting around. Former foster care alumni often have a difficult time getting to and from therapy, training opportunities, and other program activities (Manno, et al., 2014).

Tutoring

One finding from the July 21, 2017 National Council on Disability (NCD) report stated tutoring services be provided to foster care alumni with mental illness issues. It was reported by students during a survey completed by the NCD tutoring was a service that helped them feel more supported on campus. The NCD recommended all students with a history of living in foster care have a transitional living plan in college and further suggested that tutoring be a component of that plan. In a 2018 study by Geiger, et al., 57% of the college programs studied provided some sort of tutoring service with only 43% of programs not offering a service.

Students, whether in foster care or not, are more likely to stay in secondary education if they receive proper advising, faculty assistance and tutoring services when needed (Merisotis & McCarthy, 2009). Because foster care children have often been bounced around from placement to placement while in high school, it is very likely they have not had the same educational opportunities as a student from a more stable environment. Moves often delay the education of the child when records simply do not always follow children from one school to another (Gustavsson, 1991; Schwartz, 1999).

Housing

Housing is another concern for students with a history of foster care. A 2001 study reported 14 percent of males and ten percent of females are homeless at least once after discharge from foster care, making housing a significant issue for students transitioning from foster care (Courtney, et al., 2001; Geiger, et al., 2018). Even if a student attends a four-year college program with housing on campus, the campus may close during breaks between semesters, leaving students with no place to live during breaks (Geiger, et al., 2018).

Students attending a community college or other program without a dorm have significant challenges finding affordable housing, especially in urban areas with high rent or in rural areas with few housing opportunities (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010; Geiger, et al., 2018). Working and going to school can be very difficult and a lack of affordable housing pushes students without housing to work more hours to acquire housing, adversely affecting their study time (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010).

Medical

In 2001 affordability of healthcare was a significant problem for college students with a history of foster care (Courtney, et al., 2001; Geiger, et al., 2018). There can also be a stigma associated with receiving healthcare when on a college campus, especially if the healthcare centers around a mental health issue. There have been instances where universities have *kicked out* students for attempting suicide or for accessing mental health services (National Council on Disability, 2017).

Because of the nature of the trauma suffered by many foster care alumni, students could arrive on a college campus and not have their basic health care needs met. It is possible that foster care children may not express their health needs or there is the chance the health issue could go undiscovered (Salazar, Jones, Emerson, & Mucha, 2016). Some have suggested when former foster care alumni arrive on a college campus, they should have trained staff that are familiar with trauma informed care to ensure mental health and medical needs are met (Hallett, Westland, & Mo, 2018).

Financial

When foster children age out of care and attempt to go to college or other post-secondary education, they still need money to meet needs such as food, transportation, and clothing.

Students very often have a difficult time meeting those financial obligations because of unemployment or the inability to work full-time hours because of school (Courtney, et al., 2001). Students that work more than 15 to 20 hours a week often suffer academically (Pike, Kuh, & Massa-McKinley, 2009).

Financial supports have been linked to student persistence, which means those students with the financial resources to pay for school and living expenses are more likely to stay in post-secondary education (Beauchemin, 2017). For foster students, their financial needs are not just about money for paying tuition. It can also be money for rent in a community college setting, food if the student lives off campus, clothing, cell phone bills, computers or other tools for schoolwork, and transportation. Because most students with a history of foster care will fall into the lower economic categories, it is important to note students from lower economic backgrounds are eight times more likely to drop out of post-secondary educational programs (Cahalan & Perna, 2015).

TRANSITIONAL LIVING

The Independent Living Initiative was a result of the Adoption and Assistance Child Welfare Act; this initiative created the *Transitional Living* model for children with little hope for successful unification with their natural family, or successful placement in foster care, family placement, or adoption (Blostein & Eldridge, 1988). To qualify the child must be 16 years or older and in the state's care or in danger of becoming placed in state custody (Allen, Bonner, & Ureenan, 1988). This model was designed for children that were seen as too old to be adopted and unlikely to succeed with reunification efforts. The goal was to prepare the child for adulthood by transitioning the child from an adolescent to an adult, with a concentration on acquiring skills for adulthood as the objective (Blostein & Eldridge, 1988). Over the last 30 years

attempts have been made to increase supports for foster children aging-out of services. One initiative, the Foster Care Independence Act allowed Title IV- E funds allocated through the Social Security Act to create the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, doubling the dollar amount states could use for independent living programs (Dworsky, Smithgall, & Courtney, 2014).

In the transitional living program, the child could live alone or with other youth in the program in an apartment or other community environment. In turn, the youth would receive needed supports as they transition to adulthood. The program consisted of skills training to address budgeting, pre-employment, assistance in finding a home, health care needs, and educational needs (Cook, McLean, & Ansell, 1989). In 2002, the Educational and Training Vouchers Program for Youths Aging out of Foster Care (ETV) was added to the Chafee program. Students with a history of foster care placement and enrolled in post-secondary opportunities received yearly vouchers in the amount of \$5,000 (Children's Bureau, 2018).

PROBLEMS FORMER FOSTER CARE CHILDREN FACE

Loneliness and Emotional Issues

Research conducted by Dworsky and Perez (2009) suggests college-bound foster care children have a fear of being alone when they are in college. What was also surprising about their findings was children often keep these feelings of loneliness to themselves because they feel it is a problem they should overcome on their own without help. Programs could generally help children with most issues, but the issue associated with loneliness was something that could be a problem for students that programs may not know to address (Dworsky & Perez, 2009).

In similar research in 2014 conducted by Geenen, Powers, and Phillips (2014) the Better Futures program, a project of the Pathways to Positive Futures Research and Training Center at

the Regional Research Institute for Human Services at Portland State University, found improved performance in post-secondary education when students participated in the Better Futures program. The program provided support to former foster care children on emotional and trauma issues suggesting the treatment of mental health issues was a very important part of ensuring success in post-secondary education for former foster care children.

Trauma Informed Care

An organization that intends to provide trauma informed care aims to have the entire organization understand how a history of trauma can affect how someone responds to the environment (Hallett, et al., 2018). Foster children are often shuffled from one living environment to another, often change schools, are often victims of physical and sexual abuse, and frequently are ill prepared for the challenge of living independently once they age out of foster care (DeVaul, 2014; Vesecky, et al., 2005). The literature is very rich with examples of how difficult it is for a former foster child to graduate from any post-secondary institution, whether it is a community college or a four-year college.

As cited earlier, housing is a difficult issue. In their 2018 study, Hallett, Westland, and Mo interviewed former foster children in a California community college regarding problems with attending college. The study by Hallett, et al. captured real life experiences with which the students were challenged. The students were often left scrambling for a place to live, and even if they did have a transitional living home, the home was very often an hour or more from the community college campus.

Other issues uncovered by the Hallett, et al. (2018) study centered around triggers the students would see, hear, or imagine that made it difficult for them to attend class. As defined in the Hallett, et al. study, a trigger is an event, observation, thought, or any other manifestation,

imaginary or real., that reminds or evokes a negative response in someone. Students in the Hallett, et al. study described examples of triggers that made them want to leave a classroom. One example is discussion of alcoholism or abuse in a social science class; the discussion in school created a trigger that reminded the foster child of past experiences, making it too difficult to stay in class. Some of the children in the study suggested it would be helpful if professors in the classrooms were more sensitive to the needs of former foster care children. The concluding thoughts of the Hallett, et al. study state that the effects of trauma continue to affect foster children even when they are technically adults and attending college and recommended students would be more successful if colleges could somehow attend to these needs.

WRAPAROUND SUPPORTS

The definition of wraparound services can be difficult to define, even though the wraparound concept has been around since at least the early 1970s (Barrow, 2018; Walker, Bruns, Conlan, & LaForce, 2011). One definition for wraparound supports is “a philosophy of working with children and youth that have behavioral or emotional needs” (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2018). The National Wraparound Implementation Center (NWIC) was established in 2014 to support stakeholders, educational organizations, state organizations, foster agencies, juvenile courts and other agencies, and communities in effectively organizing and defining wraparound initiatives (NWIC, 2020). The NWIC defines wraparound as:

Wraparound is an ecologically based process and approach to care planning that builds on the collective action of a committed group of family, friends, community, professional., and cross-system supports mobilizing resources and talents from a variety of sources resulting in the creation of a plan of care that is the best fit between the family vision and story, team mission, strengths, needs, and strategies. (NWIC, 2020)

Wraparound supports are also described as an approach that provides needed services to foster children by *wrapping* natural family, community and paid supports around the child,

allowing the family and foster child control and direction in their own life choices (Stambaugh, Mustillo, Stephens, Baxter, Edwards, & Dekraai, 2007). The goal is for wraparound services to utilize natural, community, paid, and family supports to provide the needed guidance to a foster child so they can make it through college.

An example of how wraparound services could work for a foster child is when a college assigns a case worker to provide support to a former foster child that grew up in a mostly rural environment. That case worker could link that child to natural supports in the community such as public transportation for which a person from a rural setting may not be familiar. The same child, while enrolled in college, could also be linked with local community job fairs to find employment. If the child struggles in classes, the same paid case worker could also arrange for the student to join study groups. In addition, the case worker could walk the student through how to take advantage of all the financial aid and grants that may be available to a former foster child in college. While one student may lack transportation, another may need grief therapy, or another may need a job, wraparound services could be different from student to student and tailored to individual student needs.

HISTORY OF WRAPAROUND SUPPORTS

Wraparound supports are currently widespread across the United States, Canada, and some European countries; over 100,000 people including children and families have been impacted by wraparound services (Van Den Berg, Bruns, & Burchard, 2008). The wraparound term was first used by Dr. Lenore Behar in North Carolina in the early 1980s to describe services to children prompted by outcomes of the *Willie M.* lawsuit (Van Den Berg, et al., 2008). Essentially, wraparound services were viewed as an attempt by the state to keep from

institutionalizing children and, as much as possible, keep children in their home communities (Barrow, 2018; Van Den Berg, et al., 2008; Walker, et al., 2011).

During the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, comparable practices to wraparound services were beginning to develop in other, but similar fields (Van Den Berg, et al., 2008). Personal futures planning and person-centered planning are similar processes utilized in the field of developmental disabilities. Similarly, wraparound services developed in the 1970s and 1980s and evolved into current practices. All three approaches put the individual being served at the center of the services provided and look to that person for guidance in shaping their own plan of services while keeping their family and individual wishes central to serving the person (Van Den Berg, et al., 2008). More than 30 states, including Alaska, Vermont, Washington, California, Florida, and West Virginia have used wraparound supports (Van Den Berg, et al., 2008; West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, 2015).

FAMILY FIRST PREVENTION SERVICES ACT

On June 16, 2016 *The Family First Prevention Services Act* passed the US Congressional House Ways and Means Committee (Buchanan, 2016). The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) was passed into law in February 2018, which resulted in changes to Title IV-E and Title IV-B of the Social Security Act. The changes were made to decrease out of home placements of children and decrease the length of stay for children in residential facilities (Alliance for Strong Families and Communities, 2018; First Focus Campaign for Children, 2018). The bill would allow Title IV money to be used to strengthen families by providing substance abuse prevention and treatment, assist grandparents with caring for grandchildren, provide wraparound services to families, link families with needed therapy, and reinforce

community efforts to support families (Alliance for Strong Families and Communities, 2018; First Focus Campaign for Children, 2018).

The FFPSA is in its early stages of implementation and each state that will participate in the program must develop a plan to meet the standards set forth in the act, including establishing model licensing standards for relative foster family homes and ensuring state services are consistent with national model standards (Alliance for Strong Families and Communities, 2018). States must also put measures in place to ensure maltreatment death cases are fully documented and investigated (Alliance for Strong Families and Communities, 2018).

Part of the Family First Prevention Services Act created some changes in the Chafee program. One change specified Chafee Act funding is available to children who were in foster care at age 14 or older. Other changes make education and training vouchers, sometimes referred to as ETVs, available to children ages 14 to 26 with an eligibility limit of five total years to receive Chafee funds. Language was clarified to explain children can still qualify for Chafee if the child aged-out at an age other than 18 if the child has not reached the age of 23 in states that had previously set the age for 21. Further clarification makes it clear use of funds for room and board cannot exceed 30 percent for young adults who have aged out of foster care and have not reached 21 years of age, or 23 years of age, in the case of a state or tribe that had previously extended foster care to age 21 (Alliance for Strong Families and Communities, 2018; First Focus Campaign for Children, 2018; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, April 12, 2018).

KVC CAMPUS

KVC, a non-profit agency with a history of providing services to children in foster care, acquired a college campus in West Virginia and proposes to provide post-secondary educational opportunities to children that were in foster care (KVC Health Systems Website, 2018). Only

students that were formerly in foster care would live on the campus; but these former foster care students would attend college courses throughout the day with students from the local community who may or may not have a history of foster care placement. The initial goal is to serve 50 children and increase the census to 500 students with an estimated annual cost of 50,000 dollars per child (The Associated Press, Feb 17, 2017; The Chronicle of Social Change, 2018). The West Virginia Mentoring with Oversight for Developing Independence with Foster Youth program, MODIFY for short, would be expected to pay for tuition. KVC envisioned the program would be paid for by state and federal funds in the form of payments under the Chafee Foster Care Act and the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (The Chronicle of Social Change, April 2018).

The literature does not have any other example of a campus model like the one KVC proposes and KVC's own website says the campus would be the first of its kind in the nation. For the purpose of this study, this campus will be referred to as a *KVC campus*. The staff and instructors on the KVC campus would be trained in trauma informed care to better meet the needs of former foster children who very often have emotional or behavioral needs (The Chronicle of Social Change, 2018).

Part of trauma informed care is to provide wraparound supports to help meet the basic needs of the student while on campus. Wraparound supports is a philosophy of working with children and youth that have behavioral or emotional needs; the distinctive difference between this philosophy and others is in the meaning of the service *wraps around* the person receiving services and their family in their environment, community, and schools work together to meet the overall needs of the student by establishing natural supports in the community that can

provide the needed support for a former foster child to graduate (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2018).

EXAMPLES OF PROGRAMS THAT ASSIST FOSTER CARE STUDENTS

A review of the literature does not indicate there is one specific way in which young adults that were in foster care are currently aided in post-secondary education. In work completed by Amy Dworsky, Smithgall, and Courtney in a 2014 research project conducted through Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, identified three types of programs supporting youth attending college: 1) *high school completion* programs identified by Tyler and Lofstrom (2009); 2) *college access* programs identified through work completed by Domina (2009), Gullat and Jan (2003) and Perna (2002); and, 3) *college success* programs recognized through work completed by the College Board, (2011) and Meyers, (2003).

Legislation

To meet the needs of students with a history of foster care some states have enacted legislation that requires public universities to have a case manager/liaison type person in each school that assists students that were in foster care understand what assistance can be obtained through the school, through state agencies, and through other programs that may be available (Geiger, et al., 2018; Watt, et al., 2018). Examples of these are Florida, Washington, and Virginia; these state programs collaborate with other programs that may exist in the state to meet the needs of disadvantaged people in general, as well as work with agencies that are specifically targeting students with a history of foster care. This wraparound approach attempts to meet needs students may have that could be related to transportation, tutoring, food deprivation, housing or other needs; not just tuition.

High school completion programs, specifically designed to assist foster children graduate high school, include focus on counseling, curriculum redesign, financial incentives, and school restructuring (Dworsky, et al., 2014). Examples of college access support and interventions are college immersion programs while in high school, undergraduate courses taken in high school, skills training, and regular follow-up with counselors or advisors. Some states provide tuition waivers that make college accessible, while Chafee grants assist in school costs, and events or activities to prepare and educate foster children in how to apply and what to expect in college (Dworsky, et al., 2014).

The third type of support provided to foster care children are programs under the college success heading identified by Dworsky, et al. (2014). These supports come in a variety of campus support programs including financial assistance, liaisons and counselors for guidance, academic tutoring, emotional counseling and therapy, housing opportunities, transportation programs, work opportunities, clothing and food vouchers, and other natural supports or campus supports.

This study will focus on college support programs. There are several examples across the country but three programs that are very popular and frequently found while researching this topic are: Positive Pathways, Great Expectations, and Passport to Careers.

Positive Pathways

Positive Pathways is a Florida-based program that provides services to current or former foster children in post-secondary education. Positive Pathways was established in 2014 after the Florida legislature required public colleges and universities to appoint mentors or liaisons to work with former or current foster care students using the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) tuition and fee waiver (Positive Pathways Website, 2018).

Positive Pathways is a collaborative effort between many professional groups that are spread across Florida. These professionals may work with DCF or be part of programs that are created by colleges that have other programs that support children with a history of foster care. The collaborative effort looks for ways to identify each former foster care child in college across the state and link them with state waivers to pay for college as well as assist students with financial, academic, life skills training, and linkage to state programs to support students with medical and other supports.

Great Expectations

According to the Great Expectations website (Great Expectations Website, 2018), the state of Virginia enacted legislation in the year 2000 with revised legislation in 2009 and again in 2017 that provided money through the Tuition Grant program for college students attending community colleges that were formerly in foster care or currently in foster care. In 2008, the Great Expectations program was started when Virginia Community Colleges joined efforts with private philanthropists to provide mentoring and other support to former or current foster care students enrolled in community colleges in the state of Virginia.

Twenty-one community colleges now participate in the Great Expectations program with 10 full time coaches and 11 part time coaches to support foster care alumni students. Foster care students are required to enroll for at least six credit hours or be enrolled in a workforce program. Each student is paired with a coach that provides guidance and links the student to support (Great Expectations Website, 2018). The services provided to the students in the program can be categorized as wraparound services.

Wraparound services are a philosophy that provides a host of supports to students by looking at each student's needs and then tailoring the support to that need. Supports could range

from linking a student with an academic advisor, helping find transportation to and from school, linking the student with social programs, connecting to counseling services, linkage to resources helping secure housing, and how to navigate through college life (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2018).

Passport to Careers

The state of Washington has the Passport to Careers program for former foster care children that are attending college. The Passport program provides a scholarship and wraparound services to college students that were at one time in foster care. Eligible youth must have been in Washington state, in federal or tribal foster care after age 15, maintain Washington state residency, be in the process of working on their first bachelor's degree, associate degree, or certificate including a pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship certification. Students must also enroll in school before their twenty-second birthday.

The Passport to College Promise program was originally established and improved through Senate Bill 6274, which established the Passport to Careers program. The changes allowed more students to be eligible for help paying for and attending college or even apprentice programs. Those most helped were former foster care alumni, students that have been homeless, and students in tribal or federal foster care (Washington Student Achievement Council, 2018). Post-Secondary education institutions that participate in the program must develop a plan that outlines how they will provide services through the Passport to Careers program. Schools must identify a designated campus support staff and a designated financial aid staff to help the Passport to Careers students, which includes helping identify resources in the community to help meet the students' financial, emotional, and housing needs, as well as creating the wraparound component of the program (Washington Passport Network, 2018).

Similarities and Differences Between Programs

There are subtle differences among the three programs, but all include the same basic components. Overall, the intent of these programs is to: 1) serve several schools across a state; 2) provide a funding source that pays for all or nearly all of the costs of college; 3) employ a case manager or liaison type position to provide guidance on how to access financial resources; and 4) engage a case manager/liaison type person that can connect the student to resources in the community for which the student may be eligible, such as housing, transportation, public assistance, counseling services, or other public services.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this study is to answer questions that specifically address supports needed for students formerly in foster care to be successful in post-secondary education. The following questions will be addressed through surveys and interviews targeted at three programs discussed in the literature review. Those programs are: Positive Pathways, Great Expectations and Passport to Careers.

1. What supports do students with a history of foster care and case managers feel are currently lacking or working in existing programs?
2. Do former foster care students understand what services they can receive in the identified programs?
3. How do foster care students and case managers feel about the campus KVC envisions?
4. What do foster care students and case managers feel is needed to make former foster care children successful in post-secondary education?

RESEARCH METHOD

Research questions one through four will be answered using a mixed methods approach. The mixed methods approach used in this research project is a convergent mixed methods approach. A mixed methods approach was selected for the design of the study in an attempt to increase the validity of the research by gathering information from various sources, both through closed questions with answers that are converted to numerical representations, and through open ended questions that allow for the participants engaging in the study to elaborate on information.

Mixed Methods Approach

A mixed methods approach to research utilizes both *quantitative* and *qualitative* methods. The goal of using both approaches is to maximize the benefits provided by each of the quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell, 2015; Hayes, Bonner & Douglas, 2013). Quantitative data is composed of data that can be analyzed using statistical methods. The results of the data are numerical in nature and allow the researcher the ability to analyze information based on numerical representations of the results of the data (Creswell, 2015; Hayes, Bonner & Douglas, 2013). Qualitative data collection produces non-numerical data that attempts to find the *voice* or *meaning* of a research question from the perspective of research participants and allows for *interpretation* of the data by the researcher (Creswell, 2015).

Quantitative Methods

A survey was developed and distributed using *Survey Monkey* to collect quantitative data from two groups of study participants. It was comprised of opinion-type questions to be answered using a one to five Likert Scale. Prior to completing the surveys, both groups were given a description of a KVC campus. In the first group, students in post-secondary education with a history of foster care were asked to answer questions designed to gather their thoughts about services they were receiving and whether they believed a KVC campus model may have been more beneficial, at that time, to serve their needs. Links to the survey were sent electronically to the students' email accounts from either the director or other employee of the program.

Each of the programs studied employs either a case manager or liaison-type staff member assigned to each post-secondary school taking part in the respective programs. The second group comprised of case managers and liaison-type staff received the same survey as the students.

Strengths of Quantitative Methods

Quantitative methods can allow for statistically sound methods to analyze data and formulate correlational and predictive relationships with a degree of significance and allows for researchers to analyze the impact that one variable may have on another variable (Creswell, 2015; Interaction, 2018). Statistical methods used in analysis of quantitative data can also control for the effects of extraneous variables that potentially could complicate findings (Interaction, 2018). Quantitative data can be collected from very large samples making it possible to generalize to an entire population (Creswell, 2015; Hayes, et al., 2013). Quantitative data can also be examined quickly because of the number of statistical programming applications available that can manipulate large sets of data in seconds (Creswell, 2015). Clear methods can also be documented that allow other researchers to replicate the study with the same population, allowing for validity of findings to be replicated, or not replicated (Creswell, 2015; Interaction, 2018).

Qualitative Methods

The students and case managers who were interviewed using qualitative techniques were asked how they liked the services provided in their respective programs and they were given opportunities to elaborate on what they thought about the services. Because of distance and limitations on travel, six or more of the interviews for students and case managers were completed on the phone and at least four interviews were completed face-to-face. The reason for phone interviews was due to long distances between each program and the researcher.

Strengths of Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods attempt to examine the entire person or subject in a holistic way by developing a better understanding for depth of meaning attributed to personal experience

(Creswell, 2015). This type of research has advantages. One advantage is that information gained from the subject's perspective is often richer in detail and answers why people may feel a particular way (Creswell, 2015). The qualitative approach also gathers information that allows for a more in-depth understanding of family structure and dynamics from the subject's point of view, as well as any cultural or social issues that have an impact on the interview subject (Creswell, 2015; Plano Clark, Huddleston-Casas, Churchill, Green, & Garrett, 2008).

Another advantage of a qualitative approach is the face-to-face interview, which provides the interviewer the opportunity to observe the subject in their own environment; and importantly, allows for a better understanding of the cultural, environmental, and social obstacles the subject may face; the face to face interview can give further insight into why a subject maintains their stance on a given question (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Information gathered during a qualitative process is often very informative and can provide information that can add considerable meaning to other evidence obtained through quantitative methods. The qualitative process often provides insight into topics and issues that would be difficult to obtain using quantitative methods alone (Creswell, 2015; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Plano Clark, et al., 2008).

Triangulation

Triangulation was used in this research project to gain a better understanding of the data. Triangulation is an old method used in research design and for several reasons (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Creswell, 2003). One reason is to compare qualitative and quantitative data. In a mixed methods study, comparison between the two types of data can point out the weaknesses of one type of data collection which can be offset by the strength of the other (Creswell, 2003; Denzin, 1978). Qualitative and quantitative data can then complement each

other, increasing the validity of the study and increasing the likelihood the results of the study are closer to the truth (Creswell, & Plano Clark, 2011; Creswell, 2003; Denzin, 1978).

Triangulation can also be used to compare the answers provided by students with the answers provided by case managers. When the two groups agree, it can provide validity to the answers from each. If the two disagree it can raise questions that can later be examined or questioned. In addition, triangulation is a tool that can validate and raise questions for future research, explain inconsistencies between groups, create the need for further questioning, and corroborate findings (Creswell, 2003; Denzin, 1978).

When triangulation techniques are used, there are three possible outcomes: convergence, inconsistency, and contradiction (Denzin, 1978). These three outcomes can point the researcher in different directions to find the truth. If the quantitative and qualitative results agree, convergence is achieved. If inconsistency is found, the researcher may need to broaden the sample or change the type of tools used to collect data. If the quantitative and qualitative data contradict each other, it could mean more research is needed, one method was closer to the truth than the other, or neither of the two methods captured the truth. Regardless, the researcher should understand that more work is needed.

Quantitative Instrumentation

Former Foster Child

The survey was composed of 13 items that asked each respondent how they felt about certain services or supports they were receiving in their programs. Respondents answered using a Likert scale choice of 1) strongly disagree, 2) disagree, 3) neutral, 4) agree, or 5) strongly agree. One open ended question at the end of the survey was an additional tool to gather further insights into students' feelings about their programs. Data generated from this question was used to assist

with triangulation techniques during analysis of the Likert-style responses and answers to the qualitative questions.

Case Manager

The case manager survey mimicked the instrument given to the student in every way, except for asking the case manager's opinion on whether a support is provided rather than the student's opinion on the same support. The case manager survey utilized the same 13 Likert-style comments plus the one open ended question at the end.

Qualitative Semi-Structured Interview

Former Foster Child

During the qualitative portion of this mixed methods study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the former foster children. Each respondent was asked to respond to the same 13 survey items and allowed students to elaborate on their answers. Instead of Likert scale responses, students were asked to respond with their opinions or personal views and if needed, could provide further details. Follow-up questions were used to encourage students to further explain their opinions. To conclude the interview, each respondent was asked the open-ended question used in the quantitative survey.

Case Manager

During the qualitative portion of this mixed methods study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the case managers. Each respondent was asked to respond to the same 13 survey items from their own perspectives. Similar to the interviews with former foster children, case managers were also given opportunities to provide further explanation for their opinions. Follow-up questions were asked to obtain additional views from case managers about

reasons for the way they felt. The case managers were also given opportunities to go into detail in their responses on the concluding question.

SAMPLE

The sample used to answer all questions and the sub-questions came from the students and case managers that took part in the programs described in the literature review: Positive Pathways, Great Expectations, and Passport to Careers. Each of these programs has the mission to support former foster children while attending post-secondary education. Taking information from the students and case managers that utilized these programs provided insight into whether these programs work, and whether the KVC campus program would be beneficial for the students.

DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative Results

The quantitative surveys were analyzed using the descriptive statistics percentages, mean, and mode. The differences between the opinions of the students' answers and the case managers' answers on the survey were analyzed utilizing the Mann Whitney U test for comparison.

Qualitative Results

Qualitative results for all questions were analyzed using descriptive coding techniques and categorizing data into different themes. The final open-ended question on the qualitative tool was analyzed using descriptive coding and categorization techniques.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the services and supports provided at the time of the study to former foster care alumni attending post-secondary education was successful. The study also asked whether students and case managers thought a KVC campus

could be a means of ensuring former foster children success in post-secondary education. With the number of foster care children across the nation, and with a low number of these children graduating from a post-secondary educational program, it is imperative these children be provided with the support needed to be successful adults.

It is likely foster care alumni that are not successful obtaining a skill set to support themselves in adulthood will engage in some of the same behavior that caused them to become a foster care child; thus, creating a cyclical effect in which children of foster care services also receive foster care services.

CHAPTER 4

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

The initial design of the study was to complete a mixed methods study that consisted of 10 qualitative student interviews, 10 qualitative manager interviews and emailing a survey to as many former foster care students and case managers as possible. The survey was designed to include 13 Likert scale items and one open-ended question. The Likert scale rated responses across five points: 1) strongly disagree, 2) disagree, 3) neutral, 4) agree, and 5) strongly agree. Students were asked how they felt about certain services or supports they were receiving in their program. There would have also been an open-ended question at the end of the survey that would have been used as an additional tool to address how the student feels. Very soon in the data gathering stage of this study it became apparent there would be large problems with gathering completed surveys via emails; these problems centered around two reasons.

The first reason was there was no accessible database of email addresses for all the students and case managers in the programs that could facilitate the distribution of emails to the study's participants. The second and hardest problem to overcome was the fact that in several cases, students and case managers were too busy to answer emails and even phone calls regarding the study. It grew increasingly difficult to contact 10 students for qualitative interviews; after considerable problems with unanswered calls and emails, the study was changed to a purely qualitative study without the quantitative component. The study was successful in obtaining 10 interviews with students and 10 interviews with case managers. All interviews were either in person or on the phone, except for one student that preferred to answer all questions in writing and then communicate back and forth with points of clarification.

CASE MANAGER RESULTS

Ten case managers were interviewed for the study. They were asked 14 questions regarding the services their program provided to students with a history of foster care. Each question is described with the results below. Case managers may have elaborated on a question and discussed more themes than one; for that reason the total number of themes could exceed the number of case managers.

Need More Support in College Than Other Non-Foster Care Students?

All ten case managers said students with a history of foster care required more support than non-foster care students. Case manager 10 said, “The kids live in survival mode; they can’t do much else.” Both case managers 4 and 7 said students with a history of foster care are “like first generation students”; case manager 4 also said, “Foster care children need a lot of emotional support; they are a lot like first generation students.” One difference with first generation students that was clarified by case manager 4 was first-generation students still could have support from family students from foster care may not have.

The most common theme was support categorized as *in general*: transportation, emotional, and financial. Other specific reasons for the needed support was trauma, the student being in survival mode, and the child coming with deficits; one case manager specifically said family supports. It was clear all ten case managers agreed students with a history of foster care needed more supports than non-foster care students. Table 1 breaks the case managers responses into specific themes.

Table 1. Case managers' thoughts on whether more support is needed.

| Need more support in college than other non-foster care students? | | Times Mentioned |
|---|---|-----------------|
| Yes | 10 | |
| Yes Themes | Kids are in survival mode. | 1 |
| | Like first generation students. | 2 |
| | Kids suffer from trauma. | 2 |
| | Need support "in general" transportation, emotional, financial. | 3 |
| | Come with deficits. | 1 |
| | No family supports. | 1 |
| No | 0 | |
| No Themes | | |

Receive Enough Emotional Counseling Support to Be Successful?

The most common theme was emotional supports are not provided as frequently as needed, and the most common reason for not having emotional supports provided is a lack of services. No case manager interviewed had a program that provided emotional support services such as counseling by the program they worked in; each program relied upon the college or university provided counseling services. Case manager 6 specifically said, "It's tricky, we are not counselors. I have students with bipolar disorder, oppositional defiant issues." Case manager 6 also said, "I have students that refuse to go to the campus program." Case manager 9 said, "I am not a licensed therapist, I give advice."

Case manager 10 discussed the need for students to feel as if the services they did receive were not "clinical." For that reason, she suggested the sessions that were held at the campus have as much input from the students as possible, so the terminology used was not clinical. Case manager 10 described students will not participate if the times are not convenient.

Seven of the 10 case managers specifically said services vary from college campus to college campus. While no program in the study provided a specific counseling service, students were referred out to the college designated counseling services and they noted there were great differences among colleges and universities in their provided services. The three programs studied could be attached to a large four-year university with good services or the program could be located on a community college campus with very few resources. The most important factors were whether the campus had a dedicated program case manager on campus and the commitment of the college to the program the college provided.

Two case managers said there were enough emotional support and counseling services provided and they had never had to make a referral to an external provider or to any service that was located on campus. These two case managers were not the norm.

Table 2. Case managers' thoughts on emotional counseling.

| Receive enough emotional counseling support to be successful? | | Times Mentioned |
|---|--|-----------------|
| Yes | 2 | |
| Yes Themes | Never had to make a referral. | 2 |
| No | 8 | |
| No Themes | Always been a problem, lack of services. | 8 |
| | We aren't licensed counselors. | 2 |
| | One campus may be good, another may not. | 7 |
| | Commitment of program. | 7 |
| | Kids need to help make the rules. | 1 |
| | Lack of participation, refuse, no call no shows. | 3 |
| | Kids not comfortable, do not like clinical term. | 2 |
| | Services aren't convenient, transportation issues. | 2 |

Receive Enough Transportation Support?

Ten of 10 case managers said transportation was a problem for students in their program. The most common problems with public transportation were the available times and routes for public transportation. Students may have to leave three hours before a class starts and take several different buses or trains to make a class on time. The student would then need to wait an hour or longer to make their way back home, making it difficult for the student to make it to work on time if they have a part-time job before or after class.

Rural areas often do not have public transportation; if a student was enrolled in a community college in a rural setting, they may not have a public transportation option. In some urban settings, public transportation is not always considered safe. If the student had night classes or had children that needed to attend day care while they were in class, the students were sometimes hesitant to take public transportation with their children.

Two case managers brought up students may not have a driver's license. The reasons may include they could not get their birth certificate or other needed documents to obtain one, or they never got the opportunity to learn to drive in foster care. Even if a student could obtain a driver's license, they could have difficulty paying for the car.

All the case managers reported gas cards or bus tokens were regularly given to students. Most of the time gas cards were available for students that had cars but only if they asked. The cards were in the form of gift cards in amounts usually around 20 dollars or less. Case manager 6 described the transportation problem, "It's a huge issue, bus routes don't always cover routes, no driver's license, students do not have dependable transportation." Case manager 4 said, "We can give tokens for buses, sometimes kids drop out because of transportation." Case manager 2 said, "Rural areas are a problem; bus routes are not practical."

Table 3. Case managers' thoughts on transportation.

| | Receive enough transportation support? | Times Mentioned |
|------------|--|-----------------|
| Yes | 0 | |
| Yes Themes | | |
| No | 10 | |
| No Themes | | |
| | Bus or train routes are not convenient. | 10 |
| | Bus or train times are not convenient. | 10 |
| | Public transportation is not safe. | 2 |
| | Cannot afford car or maintenance. | 2 |
| | Depend on friends. | 3 |
| | Transportation is too difficult for mothers. | 1 |
| | Rural areas do not have public transportation. | 6 |
| | No driver's license. | 2 |
| | Community colleges have less resources. | 1 |

Receive Enough Tutoring Support?

No program studied had a tutoring program specifically for the students from foster care. The students with a history of foster care were expected to use the college tutoring service that every other student used.

The case managers were evenly distributed on this question; five case managers said students got enough support, while five said they did not. The most common theme with the case managers that said there was not enough tutoring was not every college had a program for tutoring. It is important to realize when tutoring was available, it was not part of the foster care program studied; it was a service provided by the college campus the program was part of.

Case manager 10 said in the past there were supports put in place for students in her program that were specific to the students with a history of foster care; she said, "It was built, they did not come. Students did not necessarily take advantage of the program or could not, hours did not always match up with schedules or bus routes."

Case manager 8 said, “The tutor may be available, but the quality of the tutor is not good.” Case manager 8 explained tutors were often students that were in work study that were just good students on their own and were selected for tutoring because they made good grades, not because they were good tutors. Case manager 3 said, “Some campuses provide a light touch when it comes to tutoring.”

Case manager 4 said, “All we can do is provide the tutor; we can’t go into the classroom for the student.” Case manager 4 also said, “Generally, if they need it, we can find it.” Case manager 5 explained the student had to be receptive to tutoring. The most common theme with the case managers that thought there was enough tutoring was the student did not try to utilize the service that was available.

Table 4. Case managers’ thoughts on tutoring.

| | Receive enough tutoring support? | Times Mentioned |
|------------|--|-----------------|
| Yes | 5 | |
| Yes Themes | No dedicated tutoring for the program. | 5 |
| | It is available, if the student uses it. | 5 |
| No | 5 | |
| No Themes | Not every college has it. | 5 |
| | There is no tutoring dedicated to foster kids. | 5 |
| | Have to use the campus tutoring used by everybody. | 5 |
| | Students need a comfort zone. | 1 |
| | Tutoring is not good, not skilled. | 1 |
| | Transportation. | 1 |

Students Currently Have a Safe Place to Live?

Ten out of 10 case managers said finding a safe place in which to live was a problem. The most common problem cited was most community colleges do not have a campus for

students. Case manager 8 said, “Only a couple of the larger universities in the state have done a good job.” Case manager 10 said housing is the “top issue.” Case manager 10 also described what sometimes happens to students even if they do find affordable housing: “Sometimes the kid’s credit is ruined because foster parents or family used their social security number to acquire utilities, then the bill does not get paid, so their credit is bad and they cannot get an apartment.”

Case manager 9 described along with a housing problem sometimes comes food insecurity issues; they cannot always afford both the house and food. Case manager 9 said, “The kids on campus may be safe, but the kids off campus are couch surfing.” Couch surfing was brought up by two case managers as a problem. Students without a place to go are staying wherever they can. In some places, case manager 1 said, “Approximately ¼ of the students served in foster care programs probably have a housing issue.”

Table 5. Case managers’ thoughts on safe housing.

| | Currently have a safe place to live? | Times Mentioned |
|------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Yes | 0 | |
| Yes Themes | | |
| No | 10 | |
| No Themes | Housing not affordable. | 3 |
| | Community college lacks housing. | 4 |
| | Rural settings have no housing. | 2 |
| | Couch surfing. | 2 |
| | Homelessness. | 3 |

Receive Enough Medical Care?

Nine of 10 case managers said students do receive enough medical care. The one case manager that said they do not have enough medical coverage said so because providers refuse to

take the state Medicaid card which leaves the student with no place to go but the emergency room. Case manager 8 said, “The mentality of the student is go to the ER and not maintain routine care.”

In all programs and states in the study, medical coverage is provided to former foster care students unless they sign themselves out of state care. Case manager 1 described a former foster care student can have insurance through the state but loses coverage if they sign themselves out of state custody and reunify with parents. Two case managers pointed out the insurance provided by the state for students from foster care does not always cover counseling services.

Confusion over state documents received through the mail is also a problem a student may have; they do not understand what the state may be sending them as far as health coverage and deadlines for enrollment are concerned, etc. The biggest concerns case managers provided were the students do not know they have coverage, they forget, or do not think about it until it is needed, and do not understand language in formal letters sent from the state regarding healthcare. All case managers agreed students must be *coached* by case managers and employees in the state systems on what medical coverage is available to them.

Table 6. Case managers’ thoughts on medical care.

| | Receive enough medical care? | Times Mentioned |
|------------|---|-----------------|
| Yes | 9 | |
| Yes Themes | Students do not know they have the coverage. | 6 |
| | Students only use the ER. | 2 |
| | Counseling is not covered. | 2 |
| | If they reunify with the family, no coverage. | 1 |
| | Do not understand how the coverage works. | 2 |
| No | 1 | |
| | Dr. refuses to take the medical card. | 1 |

Receive Enough Financial Support?

All 10 case managers agreed there was enough financial support for former foster care students to pay for college tuition, books and fees. Case manager 4 said, “I have never had a student I could not get school paid for.” Case manager 1 said, “Money for school yes, for other things no.” The problem pointed out by all 10 case managers was there are more expenses that are not covered; such as transportation, housing, food, etc.

Case manager 10 said, “They can pay for school. It’s just other things like food, housing, and transportation.” Case manager 9 pointed out students sometimes must remain a ward of the state to get more benefits that are offered. Two of the case managers in the sample did provide information at least two states provide monthly income to students to help pay for incidentals. The dollar amounts vary from state to state and can range between approximately \$860.00 to \$1,255.00 a month, depending on the state.

Table 7. Case managers’ thoughts on financial support.

| | Receive enough financial support? | Times Mentioned |
|------------|--|-----------------|
| Yes | 0 | |
| Yes Themes | | |
| No | 10 | |
| No Themes | Only school tuition, books and fees can be paid for. | 10 |
| | Housing off campus is expensive. | 10 |
| | Living expenses are not always paid for. | 10 |
| | Transportation is expensive. | 8 |
| | Food is expensive. | 8 |

Understand What Services Are Available from Your Program?

This question generated a lot of discussion from the case managers that resulted in not clearly answering yes or no in some cases. In six cases the case manager said it *depends* on the case manager or the system the student came from; this answer will be counted as no for the purposes of this study. There was one case manager that said “yes” and three that said “no.” Counting the six “depends” and three “no” answers as “no” means there were nine “no” and one “yes” to this question.

It seems case managers understand without actively engaging the student, the student will not understand what services are available. It also appears they recognize there are students that do not know what services are available. Case manager 2 said, “Sometimes kids do not know. It depends upon state workers before they get to us a lot.” In some cases, students do not realize they were even eligible for services until they are discovered by case managers in the program on campus, after the student goes to school.

Case manager 8 said, “It depends on whether there is a dedicated case manager on campus. Some campuses may not have a dedicated worker.” Case manager 8 explained some colleges do not have the resources to have an employee dedicated to just the foster care program. The worker may complete other jobs for the campus that could be similar, but not solely for the foster care program.

Case manager 10 works in a program that is currently in a transitional stage and will no longer be the case manager of the program. The new oncoming case manager will not only work with the foster care population but also work with first generation students. This school is a community college and lacks some resources. Across town there is a large university with a dedicated worker solely working on the foster care programs. In this state, it was mandated

through legislation that each school have a case manager; it is just unfunded. The one case manager that said “yes” they do understand said “The coach usually talks to them.”

There were two reasons for not understanding that are placed on the student - one reason is failing to remember, and the second reason is failing to ask or *running* from foster care because they no longer want anything to do with the system. Case manager 10 said, “It is hard to ask for help; they sometimes run from foster care so they may not know.”

Table 8. Case managers’ thoughts on whether students understand services available.

| Understand what services are available from your program? | | Times Mentioned |
|---|---|-----------------|
| Yes | 1 | |
| Yes Themes | Coach usually talks to them. | 1 |
| No | 9 | |
| No Themes | Depends on case manager. | 9 |
| | Depends on the campus, do they have dedicated worker. | 6 |
| | Depends on state worker before college/find out in college. | 2 |
| | Students do not remember. | 3 |
| | Students run from the system, failing to ask. | 3 |

Take Advantage of All Services in Your Program?

When asked whether students take advantage of all services in their program, this question generated much of the same discussion that was generated in the previous question asking if students know about services. One case manager said, “No, there are outliers on both ends. More about the emergencies and not the maintenance, people just think about it when they need it.” This answer is the only clear “no” response from a case manager.

Seven case managers said it depended on whether the student knew about the service, implying students do take advantage if they know about the service, so it will be counted as “yes.” There was one “neutral” answer. The neutral answer was from case manager 8. This case manager was not sure whether the students did or did not take advantage of services.

Six case managers did add the caveat students would take advantage of services if they knew. Case manager 3 said, “Depends on if they know, can be overwhelming.” Case manager 2 said, “Depends on if they know, have to be connected to the program.” Case manager 2 explained connected means they are drawn into the program by the program. Case manager 4 added, “It depends on the orientation, does the orientation do a good job of explaining the services.”

Table 9. Case managers’ thoughts on whether students take advantage of services.

| | Take advantage of all services in your program? | Times Mentioned |
|----------------|---|-----------------|
| Yes | 8 | |
| Yes Themes | Depends on state workers before college. | 1 |
| | Depends on case managers. | 7 |
| | Depends on a good orientation. | 1 |
| | Have to be connected to the program. | 1 |
| | Can be overwhelming. | 1 |
| | If they know they do. | 6 |
| No | 1 | |
| No Themes | Outliers on both sides. | 1 |
| | More about the emergencies. | 1 |
| Neutral | 1 | |
| Neutral Themes | Unsure | 1 |

Receive Enough Support from Your Program to Be Successful?

When asked if students from foster care get enough services from their individual programs to be successful, six case managers said, “yes,” one said, “generally,” one said, “depends on campus,” and two case managers said, “no.” For the purpose of this study, the answers “generally” and “depends on campus” will be regarded as “no.” Both answers imply at times the answer is “no.”

Of the two that clearly said “no,” case manager 1 said, “The way it is set up, huge caseloads, large geographic regions, and high staff turnover, students don’t get enough support.” Case manager 8 said, “Even the kids not in foster care don’t get enough support.” Case manager 3 explained some schools as having a *light touch* when administering the programs; usually these schools do not have a dedicated case manager with former foster care students as their only responsibility.

Case manager 4 described her program as *having what it needs* to make students successful. She went on to say, “We just can’t go into the classroom with them.” Case manager 3 clarified the student “has to accept it,” meaning help provided through the program. Case manager 5 said students are very often in *survival mode* and may not be able to recognize how to obtain help or recognize when help is available or even needed.

The primary theme for answering “yes” was the student must be willing to accept the help. The primary reason for saying “no” is the campus must have a dedicated worker committed to just the students with a history of foster care.

Table 10. Case managers' thoughts on support from program to be successful.

| Receive enough support from your program to be successful? | | Times Mentioned |
|--|---|-----------------|
| Yes | 6 | |
| Yes Themes | As long as they accept it, willing | 3 |
| | As long as they are connected | 1 |
| | Have what we need | 1 |
| | If they are not in survival mode | 1 |
| | Think of our program as a family | 1 |
| No | 4 | |
| No Themes | Depends on campus, need dedicated program | 3 |
| | Some schools have a "light touch" | 1 |
| | As long as they are connected | 1 |
| | Even kids not in foster care don't get enough support | 1 |

Want to Graduate from School?

All ten case managers agreed students want to graduate. Case manager 3 exclaimed, "For sure they want to graduate." Case manager 5 said students from foster care, "See it as a way to a better life."

When discussing why students from foster care have such low graduation rates, case manager 10 said, "It has to do with self-esteem, do they think they can; they are afraid they can't make it." Case manager 7 said, "They are nervous, they worry about how to do it." Case manager 4 said, "They just need a little extra push, they don't believe they can." The primary theme on why former foster students may not succeed centered around self-esteem, believing they can, and generally thinking they can accomplish what it takes to graduate.

Table 11. Case managers' thoughts on whether students want to graduate.

| | Do students want to graduate from school? | Times Mentioned |
|------------|--|-----------------|
| Yes | 10 | |
| Yes Themes | Self-esteem, believing in one's self, confidence | 10 |
| | Want to graduate | 10 |
| | See graduation as a way out | 3 |
| No | 0 | |
| No Themes | | |

Would Do Better in a Trade or Vocational School Than a College or Community College?

All ten case managers said students from foster care would not necessarily fare better in a vocational program. However, the viewpoint vocational programs are not offered or even encouraged as much as they should be was a theme. All ten case managers clearly indicated a choice of trade school, vocational program, or college should be up to the student. The feelings expressed by the case managers were the only choice students hear is college; so, the student believes success means going to college and not going to a trade or vocational school.

Case manager 1 said, "We do push people to go to college, when a trade or vocational school may be better." Case manager 4 said, "Both programs should be pushed." Case manager 5 said, "It depends on the person, both options should be made available." Case manager 8 said, "There is a stigma against vocational schools, and that is not right. The top ten vocational degrees/certificates pay more on average than most social service degrees."

Only case manager 7, who voiced concerns promoting vocational certificates and degrees could lead to unwanted outcomes, he said, "Some students don't try college because they don't

think they can.” He went on to suggest being careful in promoting vocational programs means equally promoting both vocational and college as choices for post-secondary education.

When reading the table below, note the question asks “*Would (students in your program) do better in a trade or vocational school than a college or community college?*” The case managers all answered “no,” so the themes are categorized under the answer “no.” However, the table does not imply all ten case managers said a trade or vocational school is not a good idea.

Table 12. Case managers’ thoughts on trade /vocational school or college.

| Would do better in a trade or vocational school than a college or community college? | | Times Mentioned |
|--|---|-----------------|
| Yes | 0 | |
| Yes Themes | | |
| No | 10 | |
| No Themes | | |
| | Career choice should be up to the student | 10 |
| | Vocational programs should be offered more | 8 |
| | Success is only seen as a college degree | 2 |
| | Vocational programs are not encouraged | 3 |
| | Vocational certificates have more earning power | 1 |
| | Vocational certifications can be faster to earn | 1 |

Need a KVC Campus Specifically for Former Foster Care Students?

The question regarding the need for a KVC campus was asked because a nonprofit company named KVC acquired a vacated college campus with the goal of turning the campus into a program specifically designed for students with a history of foster care. KVC envisioned a program that could better serve students if each employee on the campus was trained in specialized care former foster care students may need; specifically, in the area of trauma. The students would live on campus in this uniquely designed program but attend classes in a community college setting with students from the local at-large community. The case managers

heard a verbal explanation describing a KVC campus model in addition to receiving a brief printed handout explaining the program.

In their responses to the question, the case managers provided a range of answers that included five clear “yes” answers, one clear “no” answer, one “possible” answer, two “do not know” answers, and one “depends” answer. For the purpose of this survey, the one “depends” answer will be counted as “yes” because it clarifies it “could be an amazing resource” for students. The two “do not know” answers will be counted as “no” because each case manager further clarified reasons the KVC program would not work. Case manager 3 answered “possible,” but clarified they are not “ruling it out,” so the “possible” answer will be counted as “yes.” Given the above clarifications the case managers answered with seven “yes” in favor of the KVC campus and three “no” answers regarding need for the KVC campus.

While the group of case managers provided a diversity of perspectives, themes developed out of their responses. Case manager 2 felt, “They could get the services they need but go to school with other students.” Case manager 6 felt the KVC campus could provide some services that students often have problems obtaining, “I think it would be a great thing, they could have counseling, transportation, and housing.” Case manager 7 said, “I love the idea; they could have someone they can trust.” Case manager 2 said, “It could be an amazing resource,” and went on to say, “we just need to make sure it does not turn into group home 2.0.”

Of the seven case managers that did say “yes” to the program, four did add the program needs to make sure the students did not become *labeled* or fail to make the student *feel normal*. Case manager 1 said, “The only issue is the kid may want to feel normal,” implying living on this campus may make the student not feel normal. Case manager 4 said, “We don’t want to label the kid.” Case manager 10 said, “It has potential if carefully done.”

Of the three case managers categorized as “no,” case manager 5 said, “It would seclude them from other kids, would not be beneficial.” Case manager 8 categorized as “no” said, “I would be concerned with putting or hoarding people in the same place. It could lead to an overabundance of people with that kind of history (trauma) in the same place.” Case manager 9 felt, “The primary concern is would kids feel comfortable? Foster care is just a part of who they are.”

Considering all the themes from both the “yes” and “no” categories, themes center around normalcy, labeling, comfortable feelings, trauma, and other negative feelings that could occur if the students were on a campus with other students with a similar history. Among most current programs, the long-term goal has been *normalcy* for students that have been in foster care.

In Table 13, the most frequently mentioned themes are encouraging for the KVC program: 1) supports such as transportation, housing, and counseling could be easier to provide; 2) the program has potential to provide services that allow students to succeed; and 3) the program could develop into a place of trust.

Table 13. Case managers’ thoughts on a KVC campus.

| Need a KVC campus specifically for former foster care students? | | Times Mentioned |
|---|--|-----------------|
| Yes | 7 | |
| Yes Themes | Could provide services that are needed, transportation, counseling, housing, supports. | 7 |
| | Needs carefully done, does not need to turn into group home 2.0, normalcy. | 6 |
| No | 3 | |
| No Themes | Would they feel comfortable? | 1 |
| | Foster care is just a part of who they are | 1 |
| | Too much history (trauma) in the same place | 1 |

What Do You Think Former Foster Care Students Need More Than Anything Else to Be Successful?

All ten case managers provided very similar answers focused on support, but with slightly different degrees of support. The themes can be broken down into support from a program or organization; such as support that helps provide transportation, financial resources, housing, etc. The other theme was having at least one person, or mentor to turn to that believed in or supported the student's efforts; this type of support is called *personal support*.

Six case managers felt it was important to not only have support for housing, transportation, food, etc., but to also have support that could be considered personal support. The personal support described could come from an employee within a program on campus or someone outside the campus, such as family or a friend.

Case manager 8 said he was told by another case manager years ago that what students with a history of foster care need is a *parent*. He said he originally dismissed that idea as the “*obvious*” and did not learn much from it. Later, he now looks back on that and thinks the support provided by the parent can be provided by someone else and is what the student needs; this is the personal support he thinks is necessary for success.

Case manager 7 said, “They need a cheerleader; has to be someone they can trust.” Case manager 2 said, “At least one positive role model with knowledge on how to help.” Case manager 3 said, “Trust, relationships, and unconditional support, is what students need in the program.” Case manager 10 described the supports as “Someone that is patient, and cares for them. Having someone that checks on them is a *game changer*.”

Table 14. Case managers’ thoughts on what foster care alumni need more than anything else.

| What do you think former foster care students need more than anything else to be successful? | | Times Mentioned |
|--|--|-----------------|
| Resources Support | 4 | |
| Resources Themes | Support all the way around. | 4 |
| | Support and resources, transportation, housing, etc. | 4 |
| Resources Support plus Personal Support | 6 | |
| Personal Support Themes | At least one mentor to turn to | 2 |
| | A “parent” or someone like a parent | 1 |
| | A role model with knowledge | 2 |
| | Unconditional support/trust | 2 |
| | Someone that is positive in their life | 2 |
| | A cheerleader | 1 |
| | Someone patient, reliable, stable, and consistent | 4 |
| | To be part of something | 1 |
| | Someone to care, love, and check on them | |

STUDENT RESULTS

Ten students were interviewed for the study. They were asked 14 questions regarding the services their program provided to students with a history of foster care. Each question is separated out with the results below. Students may have elaborated on a question and discussed more themes than one; for that reason the total number of themes could exceed the number of students.

Need More Support in College Than Other Non-Foster Care Students?

All ten students said students with a history of foster care require more support than non-foster care students. There was also agreement among all ten students foster kids need additional support to attend secondary education.

Student number 8 said, “Foster care students already lack fundamental support.” Student 7 said, “Traditional college does not provide the support.” Student 7 also said, “If it were not for my program I would not be here.” Student 4 said, “I only have the people in my program, I am overwhelmed.” It was clear when talking to each student they felt their individual programs provided support they would not otherwise receive (e.g., the programs gave support to them they otherwise would not have.)

Student 2 described a time when his car was broken down and he had no one to help him figure out how to resolve the problem. He had to depend on the program for support during this time to motivate him to work through the issue. Student 1 changed the clutch himself because he could not afford to hire someone to fix his car. He showed considerable ingenuity by watching *You Tube* Videos to learn how to change a clutch. Student 1 also found a group of other former foster care students to have companionship with; student 1 said, “I know of people that drop out because they have no companionship.”

Two of the students had significant others that provided some support and it was clear they leaned on them for support; these were both female students. One other female student that was considerably older than the other students said, “People will live with other people even under abusive circumstances just to have a place to live.” The female students with companions in this case did not indicate they were being abused, but it became apparent discussing support former foster care students are in such dire need of help they sometimes have great potential to be at-risk of leaning on the wrong people for support.

Table 15. Students' thoughts on whether more support is needed.

| Need more support in college than other non-foster care students? | | Times Mentioned |
|---|--|-----------------|
| Yes | 10 | |
| Yes Themes | Lack support. | 10 |
| | Without program I would not be here. | 1 |
| | So much trauma in foster care you have to have support/come with deficits. | 2 |
| | I'm overwhelmed going to school. | 2 |
| | I have no one to call, except for the program. | 3 |
| No | 0 | |
| No Themes | | |

Receive Enough Emotional Counseling Support to Be Successful?

Six students said there was not enough counseling support while four students said there was enough support. One common theme between students, regardless of whether they answered “yes” or “no” to the question, was schools often have no dedicated counselors employed specifically for the programs or students from foster care. None of the three programs researched had a counselor or dedicated mental health professional on staff, and it became clear the students looked to the case managers to fill that need. The students put a lot of trust in the case managers whom they worked with, and no student was unhappy with a current case manager. Although one student did mention there were times when they did not have good interactions with previous case managers.

Student 2 said they would take advantage of a counselor if one was available and student 3 said they were autistic and sometimes needed support to overcome those issues associated with relationships they have with other students and school staff. Student 3 was a particularly difficult student to interview. She often paused during the interview and engaged other people during the

conversation, only to resume the interview again after awkward pauses. Student 3 expressed several times she understood conversations with her could be awkward. She also indicated other students with diagnosed issues often needed help expressing themselves or help understanding what other people were trying to express.

Student 1 said he often tries to help students that have emotional issues because he understands they feel *overwhelmed*. Student 4 said he personally does not need help but knew people that do need support. There was a recognition among most of the students whether they answered “no” or “yes” to the question students with a history of foster care lack social skills and need support. The difference was the students that answered “no” were getting the emotional support needed from the case managers and did not suggest outside services were needed.

Table 16. Students’ thoughts on emotional counseling.

| Receive enough emotional counseling support to be successful? | | Times Mentioned |
|---|---|-----------------|
| Yes | 4 | |
| Yes Themes | Programs do not have counselors. | 4 |
| | Talk to case manager in place of a counselor. | 1 |
| | Available if needed. | 1 |
| | Wraparound services available. | 1 |
| | Kids lack social skills, need support, cannot express themselves. | 4 |
| No | 6 | |
| No Themes | Case managers are not real counselors. | 2 |
| | Kids lack social skills, need support, cannot express themselves. | 3 |
| | Programs do not have counselors. | 6 |

Receive Enough Transportation Support?

Eight of the students interviewed said they do not get enough help with transportation. Only students 8 and 10 said enough transportation support was provided. Student 10 said their

program got her help repairing her car when it broke down and student 8 said, “I get bus passes from my case manager to get back and forth.” Student 8 and 10 also received gas cards or knew of gas cards being available if they were needed. Student 10, who was very complimentary of her case manager, explained her case manager helped her understand the process to get insurance, get a car registered, and get a driver’s license. Later, the case manager took student 10 to get her car registered and to an insurance agent; she had help *navigating* how to make a car legal to own and drive.

Student 9 said transportation was a problem in general for all *poor* students, whether they were in foster care or not. Student 6 had a small child and expressed she would not use public transportation if she was taking her child because she feared for her child’s safety. Student 6 had to find a babysitter if she used public transportation and this was often very difficult to arrange. Student 5 also said he was afraid to use public transportation because it was dangerous in the city where he lived and student 2 could not find affordable housing close to the campus. Ultimately, the only affordable place he could find was one and a half hour away, making it effectively impossible to use public transportation.

The students attending community colleges had significant issues with transportation. Because they did not live on campus, they needed transportation to get to school. Public transportation bus routes often require switching from one bus to another and the route times rarely match up with a student’s schedule. All students indicated the programs they were part of would offer gas cards and even money for car repairs if the money was available. Even with this help only students 2 and 10 could afford a vehicle. Being able to afford a vehicle also meant they worked full-time hours which lessened time to study and caused feelings of being overwhelmed. For most of these students, transportation was a significant problem.

Table 17. Students' thoughts on transportation.

| | Receive enough transportation support? | Times Mentioned |
|------------|--|-----------------|
| Yes | 2 | |
| Yes Themes | Received bus passes. | 1 |
| | Received help with repairs, gas cards. | 2 |
| | Bus routes do not match needs. | 2 |
| No | 8 | |
| No Themes | Problem for people in general. | 2 |
| | Public transportation is not safe. | 2 |
| | Bus routes do not match needs. | 8 |
| | Rural areas do not have buses. | 8 |
| | Received help with repairs, gas cards. | 8 |

Receive Enough Tutoring Support?

No program studied had a tutoring service specifically for the students. Students with a history of foster care were expected to use the college tutoring service every other student used as part of the school. There were four students that said there was not enough support and six students said there was enough support for tutoring services.

Student 1 said they could link with the college tutoring program. Student 4 said the tutors provided by the college were *amazing*; students 10 and 9 said the case managers would make sure if they needed a tutor, they would get one through the school. Student 8 said there was tutoring services available through the program that would meet the needs of the students. She went on to say there were, "Even funds available to find outside tutors if needed."

Student 2 said his girlfriend was in the program and she needed a tutor, but one was not available; student 2 said he was good at math, but his girlfriend was not good at math and he was trying to tutor her. Student 3 said a lot of students struggle in the program and need a tutor;

student 3 said, “The school needs a dedicated program specifically for students in the program.”

Student 5 said he had a bad experience in the school tutoring program and said a program for only foster care students is needed.

Student 7 said his major was in business and the tutoring services provided to the students was only in reading, writing and math, but not advanced math that he said he needed in his business program. Student 2 indicated he was good at math too, but a lot of students struggle in math and the tutors provided were not always any better in math than the students in the program, or the students in the general college population.

Table 18. Students’ thoughts on tutoring.

| | Receive enough tutoring support? | Times Mentioned |
|------------|---|-----------------|
| Yes | 6 | |
| Yes Themes | Tutoring was good. | 6 |
| | Case managers make sure tutoring is available if you want it. | 6 |
| No | 4 | |
| No Themes | Tutoring not specific to some degrees. | 2 |
| | The tutors were often poor in math. | 2 |
| | Problem for people in general in college. | 2 |
| | Tutoring is basic. | 2 |

Currently Have a Safe Place to Live?

Eight of 10 students said there is a problem with safe housing. One of the main issues with safe housing is it is often not available for students that attend a community college. Student 2 had to move 90 minutes away to find a safe place to live, which created a transportation issue because there was no bus route that went to his school. Before he moved, he was living in a

home with wiring problems that forced him to use an electric heater; this ran his electric bill up to \$1,800. He could not pay the bill and got a bad credit rating.

Student 1 said she was in a poor neighborhood and got depressed because the environment was bad. She had to live alone, and the depression was worse because she had no one to talk to. She also had no transportation to take to get out of the home to go see people; she said she felt isolated.

Students 3 and 4 said they had to live with a significant other to have a safe place to stay; Student 9 said she “*took beatings*” in her life just to be able to have a place to live, she would have left the abusive behavior if she had a place to go. Student 10 said she knew another student in the program she suspected of being in an abusive home situation.

Student 6 talked about how she lived in the projects and was hoping to move as soon as she could. She also had a small child and was afraid to take public transportation in her part of town when she had her child. Student 5 said he did not have a place to live in the summer when school was out, so even if you have a dorm room, in the summer months you may not have a place to live.

Student 7 said, “Housing is the number one problem with students. Rent is expensive, even when the state provides help with bills it is not enough to pay for rent in a safe place.”

Student 5 said he knew of students that did not have a place to live and were homeless.

The only students that said housing was not a problem were students 4 and 8. Student 4 lived with her boyfriend and student 8 said the program would help find housing for those that needed it. Student 8 said the program she was in would coordinate with local agencies and landlords to find affordable housing. Student 2 described an incident in one program where a

student *trashed* the apartment the program helped him find. As a result, the landlord of the apartment then stopped working with the program that helped students find apartments.

Table 19. Students’ thoughts on safe housing.

| | Currently have a safe place to live? | Times Mentioned |
|------------|---|-----------------|
| Yes | 2 | |
| Yes Themes | Program would coordinate with local agencies or landlords. | 1 |
| | Some students live with significant others. | 1 |
| | Some states do have money available to help with rent. | 2 |
| No | 8 | |
| No Themes | Rent is too expensive, even with help from the state. | 8 |
| | Neighborhoods are unsafe. | 8 |
| | Affordable housing is far from campus. | 8 |
| | Housing has significant maintenance issues that affect quality of life. | 2 |
| | Living alone can be lonely. | 1 |
| | People stay with abusive people to have a place to live. | 2 |

Receive Enough Medical Care?

In all programs and states in the study, medical coverage is provided to former foster care students unless they sign themselves out of state care. In two cases students did not have Medicaid coverage because they had moved frequently and did not receive mail that was sent to them for annual enrollment. Student 7 had coverage but said there were students that do not know about coverage they can receive through Medicaid. Student 5 also said the state does a good job providing coverage, but students do not know about the benefits they can receive. Student 5 said the students are unfamiliar with how medical coverage works because no one has ever taught them about insurance and how it works. Student 5 also said, “Students are

intimidated by people in a doctor’s office and will even avoid going to the doctor until it is an emergency, in which case they then go to an emergency room.”

Table 20. Students’ thoughts on medical care.

| | Receive enough medical care? | Times Mentioned |
|------------|---|-----------------|
| Yes | 6 | |
| Yes Themes | Resources are there, students do not use them. | 3 |
| | Use emergency rooms more than they should. | 3 |
| | Coverage is covered through the state. | 6 |
| No | 4 | |
| No Themes | Do not receive mail because of moves. | 2 |
| | Do not know they are eligible. | 2 |
| | Intimidated by a doctor. | 1 |
| | Often use emergency rooms instead of preventive medicine. | 1 |

Receive Enough Financial Support?

Seven of the 10 students said there were not enough financial resources provided. The interesting part is none of the students that thought there was a lack of financial support felt college could not be paid for with the support the state provided. The seven students indicated the issues were a lack of financial resources for transportation, housing, and other living expenses not associated with tuition, room, and board.

Student 7 said housing was expensive in the city he lived in and there were not enough financial resources for a phone or any social activities like eating out or going to the movies. Student 4 said she did not go to a four-year college because she thought it would be too expensive.

Student 3 said, “The support provided through the program pays for school and nothing else.” Student 2 also said the program, “Does a good job covering school costs, but transportation and housing is still a problem.” Student 1 echoed Students 2 and 3 by saying, “Tuition and school is paid for, it is the other bills, you have gaps.” Student 7 said, “Sometimes you need more than just school paid for, you need bills paid for that are not school related like electricity.”

Of the students that said there were enough financial resources, Student 10 said, “The program will find help.” Students 8 and 6 were the only other students that indicated there was enough financial support. They both reported the programs will help find ways to get gas cards, housing needs met, and other issues taken care of if the students will ask for the help.

Table 21. Students’ thoughts on financial support.

| | Receive enough financial support? | Times Mentioned |
|------------|---|-----------------|
| Yes | 3 | |
| Yes Themes | Program will provide the needed support. | 3 |
| No | 7 | |
| No Themes | Not enough support for housing. | 7 |
| | Not enough support for transportation. | 7 |
| | Not enough support for social activities. | 3 |

Understand What Services Are Available from Your Program?

Of the 10 students questioned, five said students understand what services are available to them, leaving five students that said students do not understand. Of the five that said students do understand, Student 3 said the programs do a good job of letting people know what services are available. Student 4 said, “The programs send out letters and emails letting people know what is

available.” Student 5 said people learn what is available, “If they sit down and talk to their worker.”

Student 8 said even the college employees not in the program will redirect the students in foster care back to their coach if they need help. She said, “College coaches are on campus and have a good working relationship with all staff in order to encourage the students to seek the support they need. Staff members at college often redirect students to the college coaches.”

Student 9 talked about the need for the student to be able to express themselves to learn what services are available. She said, “The kid has to be able to express their concerns. If I had not asked for help, I could not have gotten it.” Student 6 believed students do know what services are available, but also added “If you sit down and talk to your worker.”

Student 10 said, “It’s all about the coach. I personally know about services, but I have family in the same program in other schools that do not know about services I know about. I was enrolled in the school before I learned about the program.” Student 1 had some similar comments as student 10. Student 1 said, “Some kids do not get an introduction to the program until they are already in school and may have missed some services; they don’t get educated prior to college while in foster care.” Five of the students that said “no,” said if a student knew about a service it had a lot to do with the coach or case manager they were assigned to.

Student 7 said, “Youth want to run as far from the system as possible. My real problems began when I got to foster care. Students are turned off and do not want to take the time to listen to understand the program.” Student 7 said students sometimes do not know because they do not listen.

Table 22. Students' thoughts on whether students understand services available.

| | Understand what services are available from your program? | Times Mentioned |
|------------|---|-----------------|
| Yes | 5 | |
| Yes Themes | Must talk to your worker, have to be able to express themselves. | 2 |
| | Programs send out information through emails and letters. | 2 |
| | Program coordinates with school professionals. | 1 |
| No | 5 | |
| No Themes | Depends on the case manager/coach. | 5 |
| | Must talk to your workers, have to be able to express themselves. | 2 |
| | Introduction to program does not happen. | 2 |

Take Advantage of All Services in Your Program?

All 10 students said they take advantage of all services provided to them. Five students said the key to taking advantage and knowing about the services was largely due to the program and the case manager; the knowledge came through orientation, trainings, or regular communication from the program.

Student 7 said, “The case managers have very high turnover and it affects the students and how they get information. Poor training on the part of case managers affects what students know. We need trained professionals to be case managers.” Student 10 had family members in the same program in other schools; she said, “I have family that do not take advantage of the services while I do.” In a previous answer student 10 said her family members often do not know about the same services she knew about, indicating there was a difference in how the program was rolled out in different schools.

Student 9 said students will take advantage of services if the student knows about the services that are in the program. Students 1 and 3 had similar responses as student 9; they both said students will take advantage of services if they realize the service is available and they need it. Student 8 said in her program students learn about services through engaging in the activities and events set up through the program and said, “Students must participate in the program to understand the services are there.” Student 2 indicated students will take advantage of services, but also indicated he found out about the program through his girlfriend; he said he is motivated to take advantage of the program.

There were 4 students that said the student had to be committed to the program to understand what services are out there. These four students put some responsibility on the student to learn about the services and it was important for the student to try to understand what services are available.

Table 23. Students’ thoughts on whether students take advantage of services.

| Take advantage of all services in your program? | | Times Mentioned |
|---|--|-----------------|
| Yes | 10 | |
| Yes Themes | School events teach what services are available. | 2 |
| | Have to be committed. | 4 |
| | Have to know about the service through the program and case manager. | 7 |
| No | 0 | |
| No Themes | | |

Receive Enough Support from Your Program to Be Successful?

Eight of 10 students said there was enough support from the programs to be successful. The two students that said there was not enough support were students 2 and 5. Student 2 said

there needed to be more tutoring and individual support. Student 2 said she had an autism diagnosis and went on to say, “I struggle with getting used to college, staying organized, studying, and writing. I struggle with social skills.”

Student 5 said, “The person running the program makes the difference.” Student 7 said the support was there; the problem is some students do not know how to ask for the help. He said, “The problem is we do not know how to express the idea that we need support; we find ways to bury the need, we may need support, but we bury the need.”

Student 9 said, “It’s way more support than you would get without the program. I could not make it without the program.” Student 8 said, “Students greatly rely on their college coaches.” Student 2 gave a very similar answer as student 9, stating, “I got the basics; I would not be here without the program.” Student 1 said kids get enough support, but also said kids do drop out because they get overwhelmed.

Even though the students said the support was there, there was an acknowledgment that kids had to be willing to accept the help and kids do get overwhelmed and at times do not know how to ask for help. There was acknowledgment that the case managers were utilized a great deal to help solve all sorts of problems from transportation issues, housing problems, tutoring issues, and emotional support.

If you take the “yes” and “no” answers together, you find that four people said it had a lot to do with the student whether or not they made it; the students’ effort made a difference as to whether they were successful was a thought four of the students had.

Table 24. Students' thoughts on support from program to be successful.

| Receive enough support from your program to be successful? | | Times Mentioned |
|--|--|-----------------|
| Yes | 8 | |
| Yes Themes | Students rely on case managers for support. | 8 |
| | If you want to you can make it. | 2 |
| | More than you would get without the program. | 3 |
| | Have to be able to ask for help. | 3 |
| No | 2 | |
| No Themes | Have to be able to ask for help. | 2 |
| | Person running programs make a difference. | 2 |

Want to Graduate from School?

All ten students agreed not only did they want to graduate; they felt the other students in the program wanted to graduate. Student 6 said, "Even if a student drops out it does not mean they do not want to graduate; the situations in life is what discourages them." Student 3 said "The problem is some people do not have any support to help them." Student 1 was adamant about wanting to graduate, but also said "It's not resources, it's relationships, community and trust that is the problem."

Student 2 also said she wanted to graduate but added, "I think they have learned you can't. Some foster homes take you down, some people do foster care for other reasons other than caring about the kid; your confidence gets torn down."

Student 7 said the university really does not care about the student. Student 7 said, "The university does not care as much as the program does. The program is our motivation to graduate." Student 10 said, "Even if the student does not know what they want to do, they still want to graduate."

Student 5 also said at times students have been told college is the way to success; student 5 said, “Of course students want to graduate, but for so long success has been to go to college; nothing else was considered important and that is not always true, success can be other things.”

Table 25. Students’ thoughts on whether students want to graduate.

| | Do students want to graduate? | Times Mentioned |
|------------|--|-----------------|
| Yes | 10 | |
| Yes Themes | Life, circumstances, and lack of support prevent graduation. | 10 |
| | Success has always been defined as college. | 1 |
| | Being in foster care can reduce self-esteem. | 2 |
| No | 0 | |
| No Themes | | |

Would Do Better in a Trade or Vocational School Than a College or Community College?

All ten students felt students should get an opportunity to choose whether they would like to go to college or to a vocational program. Student 5 said, “So long success has been to go to college, not told success can be getting a job that does not require getting a college degree or going to a vocational program; we need to make it more of an option.” Student 7 was clear he felt he should go to college, but he said, “It depends on the student, kids can bomb out of college and do well in a vocational program and learn a trade. For me, it was college; for others it could be a vocational program. Focus on what the kid likes.”

Student 9 discussed a stigma associated with going to a vocational program; often kids feel as if they are a failure for going to anything other than a college, she said, “It depends on the kids, but sometimes there is a stigma attached to going to a vocational program that should not be there.” Student 10 thought more kids would probably prefer college, she said, “Most people

would probably prefer college, but there are vocational programs at my school; I think students should have a choice to do what they want.” Student 8 also felt most kids are probably trying to go to college, but the student should get a choice.

Student 3 said they always wanted to go to college; the problem was they had to overcome feelings they were not good enough. Student 3 said, “It boils down to the person, I did not think I was good enough to go to college; it was something I always wanted to do, I had to be pushed to go or I would never have went.”

Table 26. Students’ thoughts on trade /vocational school or college.

| Would do better in a trade or vocational school than a college or community college? | | Times Mentioned |
|--|--|-----------------|
| Yes | 0 | |
| Yes Themes | | |
| No | 10 | |
| No Themes | Should get the choice to choose vocational or college. | 10 |
| | Most people would prefer college. | 2 |
| | Stigma attached to vocational schools. | 2 |

Need a KVC Campus Especially for Former Foster Care Students?

The question regarding the need for a KVC campus was asked because a nonprofit company named KVC acquired a vacated college campus with the goal of turning the campus into a program specifically designed for students with a history of foster care. KVC envisioned a program that could better serve students if each employee on the campus was trained in specialized care former foster care students may need; specifically, in the area of trauma. The students would live on campus in this uniquely designed program but attend classes in a community college setting with students from the local at-large community. The students heard a

verbal explanation describing a KVC campus model in addition to receiving a brief printed handout explaining the program.

Seven of 10 students felt it would be a good idea to have a KVC campus. Two students felt it was a bad idea and one student would not commit either way on an answer. The two students that said it was a bad idea were students 9 and 7. Student 7 said, “Inclusion is needed; it would be playing out foster care and it’s not normal. The concept is growth and we need to be able to bond with others; living in these foster care environments does not make you a happy camper.” Student 7 further explained, playing *out foster care* means just a *redo or play again* of the same old foster care program. Student 9 said, “It’s a bad idea; the idea is to learn new ways, you need to learn diversity.”

Of the seven students that felt it was a good idea, student 1 said, “Having someone on campus could help, having a therapist on campus can help; I can really see the benefits, it sounds like a good idea.” Student 2 had similar comments to make, stating, “I can easily say I think it would be a good thing. Foster kids inevitably have problems, some kids want to confide in others that have similar problems; it would help you understand your emotions better. Sometimes people want to get away from the system; I do not feel that way.”

Student 3 talked about how it could help students stay in school, she said, “I think it would be great, it would help provide supports students need to stay in school such as a place to stay; it could help depending on the person.”

Student 4 said it was a good idea, but they would not choose to go there, she said, “Some students would do good. I think some people would judge them too. I think it could benefit to have trained staff, but I would choose to go to a regular school. I feel like some people do judge you.”

Student 5 also thought it was a good idea, but said, “Too many kids with similar problems with similar issues could be a problem. I personally loved going to camps and events with other foster kids, but they have issues and are vulnerable. Too many kids with that many problems could be a problem. I’d be for the KVC campus more than against it.”

Student 6 talked about the staffing at the campus; she felt the staff had to be well trained and serious about the job. Student 6 said, “It depends on the people that work there, if the staff are not serious, it will not work. If it’s a nice set up, then yes it will work. I feel like it could be a kind of home; people there would not look down on you, you would not have to keep information to yourself.” Student 10 simply said “It would be a good idea; it could solve some of the issues students have, it’s hard out there.” When asked what those issues were, student 10 said “Stuff like food, having a place to stay, someone could be there.”

Table 27. Students’ thoughts on a KVC campus.

| Need a KVC campus specifically for former foster care students? | | Times Mentioned |
|---|--|-----------------|
| Yes | 7 | |
| Yes Themes | Would benefit to have trained staff. | 7 |
| | Could be a home like environment. | 3 |
| | Could be a stigma associated with it, but still good idea. | 3 |
| No | 2 | |
| No Themes | Need diversity, need inclusion. | 2 |
| | It is not normal. | 2 |
| Did not Know | No commitment either way/would not elaborate. | |

What Do You Think Former Foster Care Students Need More Than Anything Else to Be Successful?

All ten students provided very similar answers, explaining the need for support to be successful. Unlike the case managers, the support the students think they needed always included *personal support* provided through another person. Whether it was someone through the program or just someone to talk to, it was important to the student to know someone was supportive of what the student was trying to accomplish. The students agreed with case managers that *resource supports* were needed, but the students also included personal support.

Student 1 said, “The trauma needs to be identified; it needs to heal. They (students) know they have a problem, but they don’t know what to do about it. I would be self-destructive if I did not deal with the trauma.” Student 2 said, “Having a place to stay and not having to worry about leaving. We all have issues and having a counselor would probably help too.”

Student 3 said, “I need a good support system, and to understand what’s out there. They need someone to have one to one with.” Very similar to student 3, student 4 said, “I need support people, I need someone in my corner.”

The theme of personal support continued when student 5 said, “The single most important thing is to have someone believe in you and support you.” Student 6 was from the projects and at times had been made to feel as if she was not important, she said, “Support is what you need; you need a professional that’s not *stuck up*. A professional you can turn to and get emotional support from.”

Student 9 wanted a positive influence in her life, she said, “I am learning there is a different way. I think you need someone in your face every day telling you there is another way.” Student 7 did not think someone needed to be a paid employee to be the support a student needs,

student 7 described it as, “It’s nice to have someone to talk to, not just because they are paid. To have someone that really cares about the progress I make.”

Student 8 felt there were more than issues on campus that were a problem; there were also life issues, she said, “I need an effective support system to guide me through circumstances on and off campus.”

Table 28. Students’ thoughts on what foster care alumni need more than anything else.

| <i>What do you think former foster care students need more than anything else to be successful?</i> | | Times Mentioned |
|---|---|-----------------|
| Resources Support plus Personal Support | 10 | |
| Personal Support Themes | Need someone to be dependable to be there. Trained people that care. Trauma needs identified/treated. | 10 5 2 |

RESULTS TO ADDRESS THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What Supports Do Foster Care Students and Case Managers Feel Are Currently Lacking or Working in Existing Programs?

Medical

The case managers and students did not have similar views on whether medical care is a problem; only one case manager felt it was a problem while four students felt medical care was a problem. Students felt they lacked medical care not realizing in all states studied students from foster care have a medical card provided by the state while in college up to age 26. The students’ problems with not understanding they were covered stemmed from their inability to receive mail explaining benefits or enrollment times, lack of communication from case workers, and a general misunderstanding of what services are available. Case managers are more familiar with what

services are available; they were more aware of the student having the benefit of medical coverage, even if the student did not know.

The study also asked students and case managers if they thought students were aware of services available to them. Five students in the study said they felt students do not always know about services that are available. When case managers were asked whether students knew about all services they could obtain, nine of the case managers said students often do not know about services they could receive.

Both case managers and students said one reason students may not know about a service depends upon the case manager. There is a recognition on the part of case managers and students some information may not get passed on to students unless the case manager passes the information on.

Emotional Counseling

Most of the case managers and most students felt there was not enough emotional counseling support in the programs. Six students felt this way and eight case managers expressed it was a problem. In each program across all states the programs studied relied upon the school to provide emotional counseling. There were no dedicated counselors on campus in any program that was specifically for the students with a history of foster care. In all cases, case managers often served as the *unofficial* counselor for the students; the students were very dependent upon the case managers for advice on any issue that was a problem for the student. Counseling services is a need that both case managers and students agree needs addressed.

Transportation

There was significant agreement transportation is a problem for students in the programs and it was also apparent each program was very creative in trying to solve the problem. All

programs had bus passes, funds for personal car repairs, and even gas cards students could obtain to pay for fuel. All these things as creative as they are do not cover the students' transportation needs.

The biggest problem identified was bus routes were not dependable and, in some cases, not even available. Students in community colleges do not have a campus to live on which requires they find somewhere off campus to live; in some cases, affordable housing is far away from the college and in places there is not bus service. Even if a bus services exists, the bus may not have provided services at the time a student needs the bus, resulting in extremely long waits for the next bus or the need to transfer from one bus to the next, meaning time is frequently wasted. Students in most cases could not find a bus that meets the needs of scheduled classes and several students in urban settings also complained they were afraid of using public transportation.

Gas cards were very helpful to several students, but most students were not in a financial position to own a vehicle. In instances where students owned vehicles, they often had costly repairs that in some cases could be taken care of with funds from the programs. These funds, however, are not exhaustive and in one case did not cover all the repairs one student needed. Transportation is a problem for students and there was agreement between case managers and students the problem did exist.

Transportation was also a problem for students in between semesters. Some students had a very difficult time finding transportation to another place to live in between semesters when students leave the campus in four-year schools. In one case the student could not find a ride to another place to stay and was asked to leave by campus security; in that case the student also did not have a place to go in between semesters.

Tutoring

Each program relied upon the school to provide tutoring support to the students. Tutoring was considered a problem by four students and five case managers who agreed it was an issue, but it was not as significant a problem as most of the other needs studied. Tutoring was found to be generic in that in all cases basic reading, writing, and math were covered. This finding was more than likely a problem across all students in the college system and not just the students with a history of foster care. Two students specifically complained they would like to have more specialized tutoring if available, since both were in coursework that was more demanding than basic mathematics tutors usually addressed.

Safe Place to Live

All ten case managers and eight students agreed that a safe place to live was a problem. The biggest issue was for students in community college settings. These students relied upon housing that was nearby enough to make classes on time and affordable enough to pay for. Close affordable housing was especially hard to find across all states and settings studied whether in rural or urban areas. Transportation also played a role in housing, in some cases, students had to travel farther from the college than they would like to find affordable housing. While students may have solved one problem by traveling farther to find affordable housing, the solution presents a transportation problem; to get from the house they find to the school there may not be a bus line.

Another issue with housing occurs in between semesters or during summer months when a student may not be enrolled in college. The student does not always have a place to spend summer months when they are not enrolled. For several students, this created a significant amount of anxiety because they had to depend on other people that they were not related to for a

place to stay. They often engaged in *couch surfing*, the act of frequently moving from one location to the next just to find a place to sleep.

Lack of safe housing highlighted another issue; in three cases, female students were known to have lived with significant others. While two of these students said housing was not a problem for them, one of the three had acknowledged she had been through other recent relationships that failed. The lack of housing can put stress on students to live with people that in other situations they may not choose to live with. One student acknowledged she took “*beatings*” in her life just to have a safe place to stay. The case managers and students both agreed safe housing is a problem for students in the study.

Financial Support

Seven students and 10 case managers agreed there was not enough financial support for students. The issue is not school cannot be paid for; each program was particularly good at ensuring the students tuition, room and board, and other school related needs were taken care of. The problem was there were not enough financial resources for transportation needs, clothing, food needs for off campus students, and housing needs including utilities. The schools and programs have done very well at finding resources for students to pay for school, but it is the other financial necessities that are very often a problem especially for community college students. Very often the costs of transportation, housing, food, and other living expenses that occur and are part of the students’ lives are not addressed through financial aid packages.

In research conducted by Sara Goldrick-Rab and discussed in the 2016 book *Paying the Price; College Costs, Financial Aid, and the Betrayal of the American Dream*, Goldrick Rab explains how since 1996 the biggest increases in the total cost to attend college came from transportation, housing, and associated costs; increases are from 50 to 80%. These are costs a

student’s family has traditionally absorbed as state governments cut support to universities and schools. Former foster care students are now expected to cover these increasing costs even though they probably lack the family support other students without a history of foster care are more likely to have.

The states address the tuition and dorm cost needs of students from foster care very well. With these costs usually paid for, it is the transportation and housing costs for community college students that pose huge problems for the student that does not usually have a family to assist in picking up those costs.

Student and Case Manager Agreement

When discussing the services that lack in the programs studied, the case managers and students shared similar views in all cases but medical care. Students in four cases felt medical care was an issue while only one case manager felt medical care was a problem. Medical care is the only need studied in which more students felt there was more of a need than the case managers; in all other needs studied, the case managers felt there were more unidentified needs than the students did.

Table 29. Student and case manager agreement on supports needed.

| Need | Number of students that say it is lacking. | Number of case managers that say it is lacking. |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Need more emotional counseling? | 6 | 8 |
| Need more transportation support? | 8 | 10 |
| Need more tutoring support? | 4 | 5 |
| Need a safe place to live? | 8 | 10 |
| Need more medical care? | 4 | 1 |
| Need more financial support? | 7 | 10 |

Do Former Foster Care Students Understand What Services They Can Receive in the Identified Programs?

Five students and one case manager said students understand what services are available for the student. The primary reason the students and the case managers felt a student may not realize they were eligible for a service was the case manager not telling the student. The most important asset for a student from foster care to get needed services was how well the case manager could perform their job.

Just because a state requires a case manager to assist children from foster care, it does not mean the state funds the requirement. In several colleges, the case managers performed other jobs on campus and were not entirely dedicated to just working with students with a history of foster care. It depends on the campus and how many resources the campus has overall that determines how much time the case managers can devote to the students. It is not uncommon for case managers to have other job functions at the college in addition to the programs serving foster care alumni.

Case managers and students also acknowledge some students are not aware of programs until after they start post-secondary education. They may accidentally find out about programs for former foster children through other students. Another reason a student may not understand services is because the student is overwhelmed, students from foster care also have a higher likelihood of having emotional issues than your average student; this complicates remembering important things about college expectations and what services are available.

Former foster students also admit you must ask questions and take part in activities when given opportunities; this is not necessarily easy for foster care alumni. They may lack emotional maturity during their college years as well as lack support from anyone to help guide them

through understanding who and when to ask for help. Information is also sent to foster children prior to college and they may not have workers or foster family that informs them of services, putting them behind from the onset.

Eight of 10 case managers and 10 of 10 students said if a student does realize a service is available, the student will generally take advantage of the service if they need it. It is not felt students decline services; they first must understand the service is available before they can take advantage of the service.

How Do Foster Care Students and Case Managers Feel about the Campus KVC Envisions?

Most students and case managers agreed that a KVC campus would be beneficial for students with a history of foster care; seven students and seven case managers said the KVC campus would help students from foster care be more successful in college.

The themes around why case managers thought the program was a good idea centered around the idea services otherwise not likely to be available could be provided on a KVC campus. Case managers felt therapy and counseling would help the students; eight case managers recognized that emotional services were a need for the students in their programs. Seven case managers said the emotional counseling that could be provided on a KVC campus would help fill that need.

The case managers also recognized transportation and housing issues could possibly be resolved if students lived on a campus. The case managers worked with a significant number of students attending community colleges that have transportation and housing needs.

Transportation and housing needs are issues for students from foster care because former foster children are less likely to have options to stay with family members near a community college than the average student attending community college.

The benefits of having a KVC campus may provide solutions to more issues than just treating trauma or providing counseling; transportation and housing issues could be solved by a KVC campus. Students also felt the KVC campus would provide trained staff that could better guide them. They also felt they could have more of a home like environment and have opportunities to be with people that better understood their issues. The students overwhelmingly liked the idea of having someone close and local they could depend on.

The case managers and students that did not like the idea of a KVC campus said no to the idea for the same reasons; the reasons were around stigmas and judgements others may have for a program that was all foster care. One case manager went so far to say, “It (KVC campus) could become group home 2.0.” Even three of the students that agreed with the KVC idea and said it was a good idea cautioned that having that many people in one place with similar problems could have potential for harm; one of the three cautioned the program would need to be supervised. Student 6 had similar thoughts, she said, “It depends on the people that work there, if the staff are not serious, it will not work. If it’s a nice set up, then yes it will work.”

Table 31. How students and case managers feel about the KVC campus.

| Need | Number of students that approve the KVC campus. | Number of case managers that approve the KVC campus. |
|---|---|--|
| Need a KVC Campus specifically for former foster care students. | 7 | 7 |

What Do Foster Care Students and Case Managers Feel Is Needed to Make Former Foster Care Children Successful in Post-secondary Education?

Students and case managers all said support was needed which can be broken down into two types of support. The first type of support was categorized as resource support, consisting of

financial resources, transportation support, and housing. The second type of support combined two categories - resources support plus personal support. Personal support included, for example, someone that would cheer the student on, be there for emotional times, or just be someone in the student’s corner. All ten case managers and all ten students agreed resources were needed for students with a history of foster care to finish post-secondary education. Six of the case managers also said the student needed resources plus personal support, but all ten of the students said resources plus personal support was needed.

Table 32. What do you think former foster care students need more than anything else to be successful?

| Need more than anything else to be successful? | | |
|--|---------------|----------|
| | Case Managers | Students |
| Resources | 10 | 10 |
| Resources Plus Personal support | 6 | 10 |

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Question One: What Supports Do Foster Care Students and Case Managers Feel Are Currently Lacking or Working in Existing Programs?

In most cases the case managers felt there was a greater need than the students on most issues; for example when looking at emotional counseling, transportation, tutoring, a safe place to live, and financial support, the case managers and students were in near agreement, but the case managers felt the need was slightly greater than the students did.

In the research for the study it was found students often kept issues of loneliness and emotional problems to themselves because they felt it was their *problem to deal with*. Research conducted by Dworsky and Perez (2009) suggests that college-bound foster care children have a fear of being alone when they are in college. What was also surprising about their findings was children often keep these feelings of loneliness to themselves because they feel it is a problem they should overcome on their own without help. The results of the study suggest students may feel problems other than loneliness and emotional issues may be problems they have to deal with on their own as well.

There was also a tendency on the part of some of the students to play down the need of some services and place more responsibility on the student for success, while case managers more often felt the student would not be successful because of a lack of services and not a *flaw* on the part of the student. Students seemed to be more critical of themselves and other students for failing to succeed than the case managers were critical of students.

Table 33. Student and case manager agreement on supports needed.

| Need | Number of students that say it is lacking. | Number of case managers that say it is lacking. |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| Emotional counseling? | 6 | 8 |
| Transportation support? | 8 | 10 |
| Tutoring support? | 4 | 5 |
| Safe place to live? | 8 | 10 |
| Medical care? | 4 | 1 |
| Financial support? | 7 | 10 |

The one difference between students' perception of an unmet need that did differ from the case managers was the need for medical care. Only one case manager felt medical care was a current need for the students, but four students felt it was a need. The reasons for this are most likely caused by the knowledge of the case manager that is not effectively passed on to the student and frequent relocation on the part of the student.

All states studied have some form of medical care established for former foster care students in college; the problem is the student may not know about the coverage because they were not told, or they may move so many times the ability to enroll annually is missed because the student switches mail-box addresses with each move, preventing annual enrollment information from reaching students.

The lack of knowledge regarding medical care and moving frequently are also tied to the student responses regarding a safe place to live and taking advantage of services available to them. Moving frequently was also an issue surrounding housing. Because housing is not always stable for students from foster care, this can exacerbate not just problems with a place to live, but with receiving information through mail. Two students fell into the category of moving so frequently they could not keep up with mail and two students simply did not know they were eligible.

When case managers were asked whether students knew about all services they could obtain, nine of the case managers said students often do not know about services they could receive. There was an acknowledgment from students if the case manager did not tell the student about a particular benefit then the student would not likely know about the benefit.

Research Question Two: Are Former Foster Care Students Aware of Services They Can Receive in the Identified Programs?

Most case managers and half of the students felt students are not always aware of services they could take advantage of if needed. Both students and case managers say the most important source of information for a student to understand services for which they are eligible is the student's assigned case manager. This study also found case managers often have more than one job to do on a college campus; just because the state mandates all colleges will have a case manager assigned to students from foster care, it does not mean the state will *fund* the mandate. It is not uncommon for a case manager to have another job on campus in addition to serving students from foster care.

Former foster care alumni also must engage the program to take advantage of the resources; foster children often have emotional issues and trauma from their foster care years that interfere with how they communicate with others, including the case manager. The lack of communication interferes with how students engage and learn about services that are offered.

The college experience is also an intimidating time for most students including students from foster care, but former foster care students very often lack the support from family or the community in general to approach the school to obtain answers about services. It is not uncommon for a foster care child to enroll in college without the knowledge there is a case manager on campus that can be assigned to them for guidance.

Research Question Three: How Do Foster Care Students and Case Managers Feel about the Campus KVC Envisions?

Seven students and seven case managers agreed that a KVC campus would be beneficial to some students from foster care. Six students and eight case managers said there is a lack of emotional counseling services and each program studied did indicate there was no specific counselor or therapist available to students in the program. Several case managers said they could refer a student out for services with another provider even though none of the case managers said they had ever made a referral, even though eight case managers acknowledged the need for the service. Six of the students said there is a need for emotional counseling, indicating most of the case managers and students agree emotional counseling is needed.

As reviewed in the literature review, research in 2014 conducted by Geenen, et al., (2014) the Better Futures program, a project of the Pathways to Positive Futures Research and Training Center at the Regional Research Institute for Human Services at Portland State University, found improved performance in post-secondary education when students participated in the Better Futures program. The program provided support to former foster care children on emotional and trauma issues suggesting the treatment of mental health issues was a very important part of ensuring success in post-secondary education for former foster care children. The KVC campus could provide access to counseling and other services a student with a history of trauma would need.

The results of the study mirrors past research that indicates students with a history of receiving counseling services while in foster care receive far less counseling or emotional support services once exiting care (Courtney, et al., 2001; National Council on Disability, 2017). The six students and eight case managers that indicate emotional counseling support is needed

echo the results from previous research that indicates there is a lack of emotional support and counseling for foster care alumni past age 18. Similar results were also found by Manno, et al., (2014); even if a student with a history of foster care wants counseling services, the counseling service is probably not going to be available in post-secondary education programs.

There was also a realization a KVC campus could help solve some transportation problems for students in rural and urban settings. Research for this study suggests transportation can be a serious issue for students in college and especially for students with a history of foster care living; not having a stable family or social circle often means foster care students rely on public transportation or friends to get from one place to another (Conner, 2018). In this study 10 case managers and eight students felt transportation was a significant issue for students, especially in community college settings. All programs studied did provide gas cards, bus passes, and funds for car repairs; the problem is students most likely could not afford a car and bus routes are not available to meet needs for students. A KVC campus could resolve those issues for some students, especially in rural settings with very few avenues for public transportation and for students that must commute to school; staying on a campus eliminates some of the transportation issues.

The KVC campus could be a solution that meets housing needs for community college students. Students without a history of foster care are more likely to have a family member to stay with while attending a local community college; students with a history of foster care are very likely to depend on housing they can afford close enough to attend their local community college. Housing and transportation go together when considering safe housing that is affordable; very often students must go far away to find affordable safe housing to an area that does not have

suitable public transportation. The availability of a KVC campus could help students with this problem.

In the literature review Harrison-Jackson (2009) highlighted the importance of stability in secondary education and how stability by staying in a secure, safe, and consistent setting increased the foster child's success in secondary education. A KVC campus could provide the stability needed by the post-secondary education student to be successful. If a child moves around a lot while in college, such as in *couch surfing*, stability is probably not present the same as it would be when the student was in foster care. Stability issues highlight a problem faced by children in foster care - the lack of assistance once a child reaches the age of 18.

The literature review also found when foster children age out of care and attempt to go to college or other post-secondary education, they still need money to meet needs such as food, transportation, and clothing; students very often have a difficult time meeting those financial obligations because of unemployment or the inability to work full-time hours because of school (Courtney, et al., 2001).

In the literature review a Hallett, et al. (2018) study centered around triggers the students would see, hear, or imagine that made it difficult for them to attend class. As defined in the Hallett, et al. study, a trigger is an event, observation, thought, or any other manifestation, imaginary or real, that reminds or evokes a negative response in someone. Students in the Hallett, et al. (2018) study described examples of triggers that made them want to leave a classroom. One example is discussion of alcoholism or abuse in a social science class; the discussion in school created a trigger that reminded the foster child of past experiences, making it too difficult to stay in class. Some of the children in the study suggested it would be helpful if professors in the classrooms were more sensitive to the needs of former foster care children. A

KVC campus could potentially provide the support described as needed by Hallett, et al. in their 2018 study.

Research Question Four: What Do Foster Care Students and Case Managers Feel is Needed to Make Former Foster Care Children Successful in Post-secondary Education?

All case managers and students agreed former foster care students need resources such as financial support to be successful in college, but there was an additional type of support all 10 students said was needed and six of the 10 case managers said was necessary for success. That type of support can be referred to as personal support.

Personal support can best be described as having someone to be there that is dependable. Some students said trained people that care could be a type of personal support; case managers could provide personal support, or a knowledgeable friend, a family member that is supportive, or any person or group of people that provide the student someone to talk to about problems the student is having. Overall, there was an acknowledgement that former foster care students have a need to be able to turn to someone, either paid or someone unpaid to discuss problems, get ideas from, or just to have someone *in their corner*.

The research review was rich with literature describing the need for emotional support and counseling for children in foster care and young adults transitioning from foster care. In a 2011 study published in 2012, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) reported that 64% of students that drop out of college do so because of a mental health issue (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2012). Since 85% of foster care children are estimated to have a mental illness, the foster care alumni attending college are likely to be part of the 64% of student dropouts in post-secondary education. When former foster children describe the need for

personal support and having someone in their corner, it highlights the need for emotional support, counseling, and connections with other people that foster care alumni need.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation One: Study the Efficacy of a KVC Campus for Short Term Training Programs in Community College Settings

As discussed in the literature review, one of the most heard reasons for not having a KVC campus or a residential type program past childhood is to provide the young adult with a history of foster care an opportunity to be included in society as any other person would be. The prevailing thought is inclusion is the best route for foster care alumni to be happy and learn to function and feel like an ordinary person in their community; there is no argument that inclusion is desirable and should be considered the goal (Testa, Nwabuzor, Wu. & White, 2013).

The reality is students with a history of foster care do not suddenly resolve all emotional problems and trauma, have access to transportation, and access to safe housing just because they turn 18 and attend college. Students from foster care are still dependent upon others to assist them during the college years the same as a student without a history of foster care depends upon parents or family for emotional support, transportation, and housing during college years.

It is recommended that a KVC campus be further examined as a potential avenue of education for students attending a community college program, especially in short term programs like vocational programs. Students that attend a four-year college may not have some of the issues regarding transportation and safe housing a student attending a community college may have. In those cases, unless the four-year student needs additional emotional support, a four-year program without a KVC campus may be the appropriate option.

Foster care alumni have emotional and counseling needs on average greater than the traditional student. A KVC campus could help these students with their emotional and counseling needs. In addition, the student with a history of foster care has the same financial needs the traditional student has with no family to provide the support. These financial needs are geared toward the cost of attending schools, transportation, housing, and cost of living needs. The KVC campus may also be able to help solve the financial needs of community college students that are working on specific technical programs that are traditionally taught in a community college setting. The KVC campus could provide a safe place to live, lessen transportation issues, and provide the emotional guidance and counseling described as personal support all 10 students in the study expressed is necessary for success.

Recommendation Two: Look for More Ways to Improve Transportation and Safe Housing in College

All students face increasing challenges to meet costs beyond just tuition and fees; increasingly students are dropping out of school because families are unable to meet financial obligations and pay for housing, transportation and food while attending college (Goldrick-Rab, 2016). If families of students not in foster care are failing to meet transportation, housing, and food needs, what chance would a former foster care student have at meeting college educational goals and pay for housing, transportation, and food without the assistance of a family? If colleges and state agencies cannot develop a KVC style campus for former foster care students, then additional resources may need to be developed to cover the expenses college students face that are in addition to tuition and fees. Students with a history of foster care probably do not have family to help with those costs.

Some students may not want a KVC campus for reasons centering around stigma, or they may have a stable home but lack transportation. This study was clear that transportation is a significant issue for the majority of foster care alumni in college; for more students from foster care to be successful, the educational and state programs working to provide post-secondary education to foster children need to identify more options for effective, safe travel that students from foster care can access.

Recommendation Three: Work to Have a Full Time Dedicated on Campus Case Manager to Work with Foster Care Programs

It is also recommended that college programs work toward providing a full-time dedicated case manager to work with students with a history of foster care. The study uncovered several programs that have a case manager wearing many different hats that makes it difficult for case managers to be available to students and dedicate the time needed for the program to be successful. The results of the study indicated the information students received from school had a lot to do with the availability of the case manager in the program the student is part of.

The research leading up to the study revealed foster care alumni have a greater risk of emotional issues and a strong likelihood of not understanding how to navigate the college system (DeVaul, 2014; Stone, et al., 2007). The case manager on campus may be the only person the student has to contact to gain knowledge needed to work through questions that need answered to be successful. The results of the study also indicate students recognize they need someone they see as in their corner and very often the case manager is that person. The more available the case manager to assist the more likely the personal support the student needs can be obtained.

Recommendation Four: Research Whether Students are More Critical of Themselves Than Case Managers are Critical of Students

One result of the study was the students feel supports were more available than case managers thought, with four students saying or implying if the student failed it was more the student's fault than supports lacking. While the opinions are very similar between case managers and students from foster care, Table 29 demonstrates this slight difference in thinking between the two groups. It may be that students are more critical of themselves and their peers than case managers are.

It is recommended that more research be conducted to see if students are more critical of themselves than case managers are critical of students. If it is true that students are generally more critical of themselves than others, is this a helpful way to think or harmful? Are students too critical or is being critical of yourself a helpful way to think that increases your chances of success. Personal responsibility is important for success, but with a population that has a demonstrated history of experiencing trauma at a higher rate than the general population, is this thought process helpful?

The research did provide one example of students that were lonely feeling it was their problem to deal with. Research conducted by Dworsky and Perez (2009) suggests that college-bound foster care children have a fear of being alone when they are in college, but also felt it was an emotion they had to work out on their own. When students feel this way is there an expectation on their part to look for emotional supports? If not, more research may need to be done to allow educational programs to identify students with these issues so the needed help can be obtained.

Recommendation Five: Conduct a Mixed Method Study

The original research design for this study included a quantitative component that would send a questionnaire via email to case managers and students; the questionnaire was composed of 13 items that asked each respondent how they felt about certain services or supports they were receiving in their programs. Respondents would answer by using a Likert scale choice of 1) strongly disagree, 2) disagree, 3) neutral, 4) agree, or 5) strongly agree. One open ended question at the end of the survey was an additional tool to gather further insights into students' feelings about their programs. Data from this question would have been used to assist with triangulation techniques during analysis of the Likert-style responses and answers to the qualitative questions.

This original design was abandoned because no single data base of email addresses could be found that would allow the questionnaire to be sent via email to either the case managers or the students involved in the programs for this study. Finding data bases for several programs may be very difficult to accomplish, but by distributing questionnaires to case managers and students at one program instead of three, may make the task more manageable. Distributing questionnaires during scheduled program events that are part of training for the case managers or orientation for the students may allow for students and case managers to complete questionnaires by pen and paper or electronically. It is recommended that a mixed method study be attempted to see if results are like this study.

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APPENDIX A-IRB APPROVAL



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Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board
One John Marshall Drive
Huntington, WV 25755

FWA 00002704

IRB1 #00002205
IRB2 #00003206

July 23, 2019

Luke Eric Lassiter, Ph. D.
Curriculum & Instruction

RE: IRBNet ID# 1456525-1
At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Lassiter:

Protocol Title: [1456525-1] STAKEHOLDERS PERCEPTION OF A SUCCESSFUL
CAMPUS FOR FORMER FOSTER CARE CHILDREN ATTENDING POST
SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Site Location: MU
Submission Type: New Project APPROVED
Review Type: Exempt Review

In accordance with 45CFR46.104(d)(2), the above study was granted Exempted approval today by the
Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Designee. No further submission
(or closure) is required for an Exempt study unless there is an amendment to the study. All amendments
must be submitted and approved by the IRB Chair/Designee.

This study is for student Jeffrey Shrewsbury.

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/
Behavioral) Coordinator Anna Robinson at (304) 696-2477 or robinsonn1@marshall.edu. Please include
your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Bruce F. Day, ThD, CIP
Director, Office of Research Integrity

APPENDIX B- QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW

Qualitative Interview

Date _____

Student _____

Case Manager _____

Do you think students in your program.....

1. Need more support in college than other non-foster care students?
2. Receive enough emotional counseling support to be successful?
3. Receive enough transportation support?
4. Receive enough tutoring support?
5. Currently have a safe place to live?
6. Receive enough medical care?
7. Receive enough financial support?
8. Understand what services are available from your program?
9. Take advantage of all services in your program?
10. Receive enough support from your program to be successful?
11. Want to graduate from school?
12. Would do better in a trade or vocational school than a college or community college?
13. Need a KVC campus especially for former foster care students?
14. What do you think former foster care students need more than anything else to be successful?

APPENDIX C- CURRICULUM VITAE

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EDUCATION

- *Marshall University Graduate College*, South Charleston, West Virginia, 1997-2002
M.A. Industrial Psychology
- *Concord University*, Athens, West Virginia, 1989-1992
B.A. in Psychology

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- MUGC Graduate Thesis- Perceptions of Job Satisfaction in an ICF/MR Group Home, 2002
- MUGC Graduate Qualitative Research Class, Summer, 2017.
- MUGC Graduate Mixed Methods Research Class, Fall, 2017.
- MUGC Graduate Research Design Class, Fall, 2015

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- What influences job satisfaction.
- Perceptions of fairness at work and in school.
- Affirmative action.
- Memory and cognition.
- Educational opportunities with children diagnosed with IDD and in Foster Care.
- The benefits of wraparound services working with children in impoverished circumstances.