

ORANGE COUNTY IS NO CAMELOT FOR EMANCIPATED YOUTH

SUMMARY

Every year hundreds of foster care and group home youths are emancipated in Orange County. The term emancipation refers to the release of teenagers from the control of the Juvenile Dependency Court System and the care of the County Social Services Agency. At 18 years, they “age out,” and the law requires them to leave the system because they are no longer the responsibility of the County, and are expected to fend for themselves.

For some foster teenagers, the transition is relatively smooth. However, for the majority it is very difficult. According to the *Little Hoover Commission Report*, young adults today, even those from loving, caring and motivating families, are not as well prepared to enter the workforce, start families, and assume full-adult responsibilities until later in life, as compared to prior generations. As a result, an increasing number of youths stay in the home longer, put off careers in favor of education, and generally assume self-sufficiency more slowly.

Young adults today leaving the foster care system are expected to find housing, a vital need, in a county with apartment rents at 23% above the national norm.

Until recently the Orange County Social Services Agency had expected young adults leaving foster care at age 18, with no family, financial, or emotional support, to immediately assume full-adult responsibilities. Many of these youths do not have a high school diploma, have few job skills, and have received limited training in independent living and survival skills. Consequently, they may become part of the homeless population, become involved in gangs, drug abuse, or crime, and may eventually become dependent on public funds. These teenagers have been expected to find housing, a vital need, in a county with apartment rents at 23% above the national norm. Most of them have minimum wage jobs.

THE SQUARE WHEEL
There are many Orange County agencies and private caregivers—each with their own agendas and budgets—all doing their own thing with little direction or collaboration. There are many spokes but no hub.

Orange County does not have an overall countywide umbrella to coordinate programs, data, services, and transitional housing for emancipated youth. The missing linchpin is a director with authority to coordinate the efforts of all involved agencies. Orange County should take responsibility for the more than 200 young adults emancipating each year.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

1. To ascertain the current status of emancipated youth in Orange County and to report whether their needs are being met.
2. To determine the County’s immediate plans to implement transitional housing for emancipated youth.
3. To promote a program of transitional housing for emancipated foster youths, closely following the L.A. County model of the Bridges to Independence Program.
4. To review the County’s tracking system, data, and computer information regarding youths leaving the foster care system
5. To convince the Board of Supervisors and the County Executive Office of Orange County to appoint a director to coordinate county, state, federal, and private efforts so that transitional housing for emancipated youths can be fully implemented.

METHOD OF STUDY

In conducting this study, the current 1999–2000 Orange County Grand Jury began with a follow-up on the findings and recommendations of prior grand juries and the responses from the Board of Supervisors and Social Services Agency. Members of this year’s Grand Jury also reviewed the recent legislation at both the federal and state levels enacted to help youth in the difficult transition to independent living and productive adulthood.

FOCUS OF THE CONFERENCE
“An exciting opportunity to learn about housing for emancipated youth.”

Members of the Grand Jury attended a two-day conference: *Developing Transitional Housing for Emancipated Foster Youth*. The United Friends of the Children Bridges (UFC Bridges) Los Angeles County offered the seminar. Members from UFC Bridges have been on TV and radio and have been invited to speak at the White House regarding the plight of emancipated youths. In this report there will be many references to the UFC Bridges, the organization that runs the program, Bridges to Independence. The program has received national acclaim and is considered the benchmark for transitional housing.

The conference presented the opportunity to meet people from UFC Bridges, L. A. County collaborative agencies, and private foundations. Nearly one hundred people from social service agencies across the nation were in attendance, representing the states of New York, New Jersey, and Wyoming, as well as California. The majority attending were social workers from California counties. The State Department of Social Services representatives attending the conference expressed concern to Grand Jury members that no one from Orange County Social Services Agency made use of this opportunity to learn more about transitional housing.

UFC Bridges is considered the benchmark for transitional housing.

There is very little data regarding youths who have exited foster care. One young man who was emancipated, claims they are the invisible society. Once they leave foster care, they fly off the radar screen at age 18. State and local officials have a great deal of difficulty in tracking youths to determine their living status once they leave foster care. There are only a few available studies that track youths who have exited foster care. The General Accounting Office (GAO) has reviewed three recent studies in a report, *Foster Care: Challenges in Helping Youths Live Independently*. The three studies reviewed:

- Westat, Inc., *A National Evaluation of Title IV-E Foster Care Independent Living Programs for Youth*, a study of 810 former foster youth.
- Mark E. Courtney and Irving Piliavin, *Outcomes Foster Youth Transitions to Adulthood, 12 to 18 Months After Leaving Out-of-Home Care*, a study of 113 foster care youth.
- Richard P. Barth, *On Their Own: The Experiences of Youth After Foster Care*, a study of 55 former foster youths in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The Grand Jury was also able to obtain data and outcome information for 38 former foster care youths in Orange County. This information came from interviews with several emancipated youths, from Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) reports, and from private group homes and shelters. Findings from these studies are summarized in Appendix A.

In this Grand Jury report we will use the outcome information provided by the University of Wisconsin study. This study has received national recognition and has been the information source used by the State of California Little Hoover Commission *Now in Our Hands: Caring for California's Abused and Neglected Children*, the National Foster Care Awareness Project and the Crittenton Services for Children and Families Report.

Many fact-gathering interviews with local and state agencies were utilized to obtain information and to test various assumptions. A complete listing of interviews, visits, tours, reviews, seminars, conferences, and workshops can be found in Appendix C.

BACKGROUND

For the majority of children growing up in Orange County, parents are the primary source of learning and character development. Children carry their parents' values with them the rest of their lives, for good or evil. For teenagers leaving foster care and entering young adulthood, the community should assume the role of parents and lend a helping hand. This helping hand may be the difference between a lifetime of dependence or independence.

This is an opportune time for this study because of the intensified participation and efforts at

There is growing concern on the federal and state level that services should be continued and expanded to young adults when they leave the court system. Assistance should be available to help them secure firm footing on the path to adulthood.

both the federal and state levels to help prepare foster youths for emancipation and to aid them after they turn 18. One of the most important programs for pre-emancipation is the Independent Living Program (ILP). This program was initially authorized in 1985 by Public Law (PL99-272). Congress recognized the exceptional needs of foster youths aged 16 and older who are about to make the difficult transition to independent living. As a result, the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 (PL103-66) permanently

authorized the Independent Living Program.

PRESIDENT CLINTON SIGNS THE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE ACT INTO LAW.

The new law offers additional assistance to foster youth aging out of care until age 21. The new law also allows states to use 30% of the allocated funds for transitional housing and to extend Medicaid to youth who have left foster care.

On June 25, 1999, the House of Representatives passed HR1802, the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, which doubled funds from \$70 million to \$140 million. This money must be specifically used to assist youths to make the transition from foster care to independent living. The states may use up to 30% of these funds for services and assistance for older youths who have left foster care but have not yet reached age 21. SB1327 is the Senate version of this bill. In November 1999 the House and Senate approved HR3443, a compromise version of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999.

On December 14, 1999, President Clinton signed into law HR3443, the Title IV-E Independent Living Program, renamed the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program in honor of the late Senator John Chafee (R-RI).

The purpose of this bill is to provide states with flexible funding to help foster youths who have already, or are likely to, "age out" of the foster care system, to make the transition to self-sufficiency. Marking a significant change in policy and a recognition that foster youths are at-risk for homelessness, the new law allows states to use 30% of the newly allocated money for transitional housing. The law also gives states the option of extending Medicaid to youths who have left foster care.

In California the Independent Living Program was initially made available for youths age 16 to emancipation. Senate Bill 933, Chapter 311, Statutes of 1998, expanded services for youths until age 21. In July 1999 Governor Davis signed into law AB1111, Chapter 147, Statutes of 1998, in which section 10609.4 is added to the Welfare and Institutions Code and mandates statewide standards for the implementation and administration of independent living programs. AB1111 prioritizes living skills and there is greater emphasis on education. Obtaining a high school diploma and providing job-readiness training and placement were given the highest priority.

For the current federal fiscal year, California received \$13,513,143 in federal funds for the Independent Living Program. This allocation is combined with \$11,364,000 in state funds. Orange County's allocation is \$779,605. There is no County match required for this program.

INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

The goal of the Independent Living Program is to enable foster youths to achieve self-sufficiency by providing independent living skills, assessment, training, services, and a written plan for each participating youth.

There are five basic skills needed for a successful emancipation:

1. Basic Academic Knowledge and Skills.

The goal is for youths to learn and possess basic academic skills necessary to complete high school. In this skill area they will obtain knowledge about tutoring, financial aid, college credits required, and they will develop their individual strengths and talents.

2. Career and/or Vocational Goals.

The goal is for youths to obtain knowledge about work permits, employment referrals, vocational-training options, work ethics, and career goals that will assist in the pursuit of satisfying career choices and the responsibilities of maintaining employment.

3. Daily Living Skills.

The goal is for youths to learn and have the opportunity to practice skills in areas of money management, food management, living independently, and personal hygiene. This skill area will also teach them how to use local transportation and access the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Social Security Office, and other community resources.

4. Survival Skills.

The goal is for youths to learn how to obtain and use information and resources regarding financial aid, emergency services, drug/alcohol abuse, sex education, prenatal care and parenting issues, and medical and dental needs.

5. Interpersonal and Social Skills.

The goal is for youths to develop social and interpersonal skills that will help promote positive peer relationships, adult acceptance, and adjustment to school, home, and community environments. These skills relate to communication, values, goals, self-esteem, and relationships.

Each youth is given a copy of his or her written transitional living plan, in which his background, strengths, and weaknesses in the areas of education, vocational training, job experience, and financial sources are documented.

A significant part of AB1111 states that each participant must be provided with a written transitional living plan that will be based on an assessment of his or her needs and that will be incorporated into his or her case plan. Each participant's background, strengths, and weaknesses are documented in the areas of education, vocational training, employment experience, financial sources, and budgeting experience. Training, employment objectives, and long-term goals should also be included in the plan.

As part of the Independent Living Program, certain essential elements must be obtained to complete the emancipation process. These elements should be obtained far in advance so that they will be available at the time youths are emancipated. These elements are:

- Vital records, such as Social Security card, certified copy of birth certificate, and parent's death certificate, if applicable.
- Children and Family Services documents, such as copies of medical and educational records, family history, placement history, and the whereabouts of siblings, if applicable.
- Verification of an income source, education/employment, medical coverage, living arrangements, and tracking with a follow-up program.

There are also required actions such as:

- Advising youths of emancipation date.
- Providing youths with telephone numbers for Independent Living Program coordinator.
- Providing youths with money certificate and food voucher.
- Obtaining name and telephone number of a person who will know how to locate the youths after emancipation.

The Independent Living Program provides specific services but is not a complete program for emancipating youths. It does not address the housing problem, which is the most important need.

In August 1999 a member of the State of California Department of Social Services was the

“The Independent Living Program without housing is like Driver's Ed. without a car.”

main speaker at a conference on transitional housing held in Santa Ana. In the presentation, the following succinct statement was made, which is a good description of the Independent Living Program without housing, “The Independent Living Program without housing is like Driver's Ed without a car.”

The Independent Living Program is presented in many different ways and with different priorities. When it is presented to 16- and 17-year-olds in the system, it is usually not taken very seriously. They have yet to experience living on their own. When we talk about independent living, we are actually talking about interdependence. No young person can survive without a network of support. If policy-makers and community leaders want to make sure that young people leaving foster care are better prepared to face the world, they need to provide supports like housing and medical assistance. Aging out of foster care shouldn't mean being totally on your own.

The Independent Living Program and the basic skills program work best in a program that includes transitional housing.

Consensus among social service providers reveals that currently the components of independent living programs do not provide the impact of independent living. The practical applications of budget, time, employment, education, and other independent living skills are absent. Youths learn best when they have to take the action on their own behalf. The basic skills program also can be easier to organize and present in a transitional housing milieu. Attendance is a requirement in the transitional housing program, whereas it is voluntary in the pre-emancipation Independent Living Program.

PREPAREDNESS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

In the University of Wisconsin report previously mentioned, 113 former foster youths were interviewed 12 to 18 months after leaving the system. The report stated that 55% had completed high school. It also stated that 35% of the population studied were back on public assistance. The youths were asked to describe how prepared they were for independent living. Table 1 summarizes the results.

**TABLE 1
PREPAREDNESS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING**

Independent Living Skills	Not at all prepared (%)	Not very well prepared (%)	Somewhat prepared (%)	Very prepared (%)
Getting a job	10.8	20.7	34.2	34.2
Health information	4.5	18.0	44.1	33.3
Knowledge of resources	9.9	18.0	48.6	23.4
Living on own	8.0	21.4	45.5	25.0
Managing money	11.7	19.8	36.9	31.5
Obtaining housing	12.0	19.4	42.6	25.9
Obtaining transportation	10.9	10.9	29.1	49.1
Parenting	23.4	20.6	34.6	21.5

Of those interviewed, 32% indicated that training came mostly from specialized independent living training programs. Training, however, can consist of anything from informal discussion, to classes, to more concrete assistance such as actually carrying out a particular task with foster youths (e.g., seeking housing, looking for a job, or obtaining medical

records). Table 2 indicates areas where emancipated foster youths felt that more concrete assistance would have been very beneficial in preparing for independent living.

TABLE 2

CONCRETE ASSISTANCE IN PREPARING FOR INDEPENDENCE PRIOR TO DISCHARGE	
Type of Assistance Provided	Percent Reporting Receiving Assistance
Job Training	18%
Conducting a job interview	11%
Help finding a job	14%
Obtaining housing	12%
Obtaining personal health records	15%
Obtaining health insurance	11%
How to obtain public assistance	11%

The Grand Jury received permission to use the following true stories in this report. The stories illustrate the need for both the Independent Living Program and transitional housing for emancipated youths. These young adults had been residents of foster group homes. Jack had a good job; Jill had the skills.

JACK	JILL
<p>In a group home there is a young man we will call Jack. Jack spent many years in foster care after being removed from his home. Due to the abuse Jack received, his maturity level has developed at a slower pace. Jack came into our program hoping to achieve his goal and to have the sense of family he so desperately needs. After months working with his personal case management, Jack was able to obtain a job in a prestigious computer company. Jack started with a pay rate of \$7 per hour. After proving his skills he was promoted and within months Jack was making \$25 per hour. Along with his promotion came new responsibilities that included staff meetings. Lacking maturity and having few social skills, Jack started to burn bridges with his co-workers and soon found himself jobless.</p> <p>The loss of his job was one more blow that could have stopped him from going on. Jack is still in our program and is working on his social and living skills.</p>	<p>Several years ago, Jill, a young woman being served in a group home, was honored as valedictorian of her graduating class. She received a financial aid scholarship to a university in Southern California. During her first year she discovered that the student dormitory where she lived would be closed during the Christmas holiday break. Her only option was to sleep in the car of a friend since she had no family to stay with during the Christmas holidays. While this is an example of the unique needs of these dependent children who transition into adulthood, the advancements made in securing housing for these students has been impressive. Now we need to take the additional steps to be proactive in meeting other needs, before the children are 'left sleeping in a car.' Your focus on developing a transitional living facility and program for emancipated foster youths is paramount in making sure that these youth are supported in their efforts to launch into adulthood.</p>

The Grand Jury interviewed several emancipated youths regarding problems they have experienced since discharge. The most common responses were:

- Money—always broke—can't seem to budget or save.
- Renting—no credit history and no first and last payment.
- Finding a good job—I'm sick of working fast food places.
- Education—I want to get my GED but I have to get my act together.
- Decision-making—most 18-year-olds aging out of the system do the dumbest things.
- Depression—I wish I could feel good about myself.
- Preparation—participation in the Independent Living Program should be required, not optional.

The Grand Jury received follow-up information on 15 Orange County foster youths that emancipated during 1998–1999. Nine were young women and six were young men. Three of these young women were teen moms. One teen mom lost her child. The Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) feels that if housing for teen moms had been available, this would not have happened. She has recovered from the trauma and earned a high school diploma and is employed full time. Three of the young women are doing well and have full-time jobs and share apartments with friends. The remaining women are not doing well. Three have high school diplomas but are very hostile and have a difficult time maintaining part-time jobs. Another has moved out of the county to find more affordable housing and her friends are worried she is in trouble. The prognosis for the last young woman is poor because of her intellectual limits.

One articulate bright young lady with much potential told of her plight. She emancipated and was trying to work three part-time jobs in order to go to college. Completely alone, she just could not make it financially, so she had to quit school and work more hours. Her future success is restricted by the sad reality that she has no family support and the difficulties of putting a roof over her head and food on the table.

Of the six young men who were tracked, one is disabled and is living in a support house. One is working full time, is enrolled in a community college, and plans to eventually attend a four-year college. The remaining four young men have not earned a high-school diploma, are unemployed, and one is on drugs. All are very depressed.

In March 1999, the annual conference of the California Youth Connection (CYC) was held in Newport Beach. The CYC is a statewide organization of current and former foster youth. Approximately 200 attendees spent two days in workshops regarding emancipation, social worker support, and job training. Almost all of their findings and recommendations focused on the need for more emancipation services to help foster youth make it on their own when they leave the system. “A most critical need is housing, transitional housing with available support like counseling, job training, and job placement services.” Youths also stated there is

a major problem with records and data. In addition they have a difficult time obtaining referral information, educational data, credits for college, etc. The Children and Family Services Agency stated that outcome data and information for youths after emancipation is anecdotal. The agency is at least beginning to track where youths go immediately upon terminating dependency.

These findings are suggestive of both the scope of the challenges facing foster youths who age out of the system, i.e., reach age 18, and of some of the missing links in providing

YOUTH LEAVING THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM:
Within 12-18 months of leaving the foster care system:
27% of the males and 10% of the females had been incarcerated.
33% were receiving public assistance.
37% had not finished high school.
50% were unemployed.

needed services to this group. There is little doubt that a significant number of foster youths have a very difficult time making the transition to self-sufficiency. Only 50% of the youths interviewed were employed 12–18 months after the child welfare system had relinquished its responsibility for them. Most of those who were employed were paid minimum wage. When they needed medical care they did not know how to obtain it. After emancipation many of the young adults fell into crisis situations including incarceration, homelessness, victimization, or unemployment. This dramatically emphasizes the need for transitional support to facilitate their move into independent living.

In our interviews with personnel from Children and Family Services (CFS), a division of the Social Services Agency (SSA) and group foster homes, it became apparent that there are three classes of emancipating youths, and all three have different transitional housing needs. (Table 3)

TABLE 3
ORANGE COUNTY EMANCIPATED YOUTH CONCEPTUAL MODEL

10%	This group would be successful on their own, but will continue to need occasional support.
60%	Target group for transitional housing. Physically, mentally, and emotionally ready to live independently with transitional support. Without help, 50% would become homeless and/or have major problems: crime, addiction, gangs, etc.
30%	This group needs more than transitional housing. Youths with special needs: mental or health issues, physically disabled, emotionally disturbed, learning disabilities, substance abuse problems.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

As stated earlier in this report, the Transitional Housing Program in Los Angeles County is sponsored by the organization known as Friends of the Children Bridges. This program has received national recognition and is considered the benchmark for transitional housing. The following is their description of this successful program.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAM FOR EMANCIPATED FOSTER YOUTH

The L.A. Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) operates a rapidly expanding Homeless Foster Youth Program designed to provide transitional housing support for emancipated foster youths who are not ready to live independently. The initial funding came from two Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Grants awarded in 1992 and 1994. These two grants were in full operation in 1996 and provided the capacity for 70 youths in apartments. An apartment building was also purchased and managed through the Los Angeles County Community Development Commission (CDC) for this population. The program is dramatically expanding.

Los Angeles County has received 11 HUD grants totaling \$23 million for the Transitional Housing Program, and the Weingart Foundation made a \$10 million five-year grant to United Friends of the Children.

In late 1996 the Weingart Foundation approved a \$10.7 million five-year grant to United Friends of the Children (UFC) Bridges specifically to provide help for this population. DCFS has been awarded eleven additional HUD grants, which will allow DCFS to acquire significantly more housing units. The UFC/Weingart agreement and the new HUD grants complement each other. The goal was to have 300 beds by November 1999.

Goals

- Prevent emancipated foster youths, who are at imminent risk of homelessness, from becoming homeless.
- Provide youths with the necessary life skills to become self-supporting.
- Provide follow-up services for six months after participants exit the program.
- Serve as a nationwide model for programs serving former foster youths.

Target Group

The target group is emancipated former foster youths, ages 18–21 years old, who are homeless or at imminent risk for becoming homeless.

Length of Assistance

The estimated average length of time a youth will receive housing assistance is one year with a maximum allowable assistance of 18 months. Six-month follow-up is provided.

Description of Services

- Furnished apartments and paid utilities (not phones).
- Case Management Services—weekly meetings with a social worker.
- Independent Living Skills training.

- Educational guidance.
- Food stipend per month of \$200 (teen mothers with children, \$250).
- Assistance to secure medical coverage.
- Career counseling/educational counseling.
- Job training and job search assistance.
- Assistance with locating apartments upon exit from the program.
- Follow-up services with all emancipated youths who have completed the program.

Rules and Regulations

- They must get a job or actively pursue employment.
- 10% of their pay is used to pay rent (this is returned when leaving transitional housing).
- They must open a bank account and save 10% of earnings.
- They must attend weekly Independent Living Program meetings.

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has adopted a vision statement declaring that children should reach adulthood having experienced a safe, healthy, and nurturing childhood that prepares them to become responsible and contributing members of the community.

The best option for creating transitional housing is through collaboration between county social services agencies, local housing authorities, private agencies and, most important, leadership from the Board of Supervisors. Several counties in California have low-income apartments for their emancipated youths because someone was motivated to make it happen and was able to create the necessary linkages.

The Los Angeles County Collaborative Partners are:

United Friends of the Children Bridges (UFC Bridges)
 City of Los Angeles Housing Department
 Community Development Commission
 Covenant House California and the Salvation Army
 Department of Children and Family Services and HUD
 University of Southern California
 Weingart Foundation and the James Irvine Foundation
 YMCA and YWCA and The Alliance for Children's Rights

EXAMPLE OF TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

In Los Angeles County, Casa Esperanza is a good example of transitional housing. The transitional living model is a combination of both scattered-site housing and multi-unit apartment buildings. The plan is to have 10–12 clusters of 20–30 youths in reasonably close proximity to bus stops, food marts, and community colleges. It is described in Appendix B.

THE CURRENT STATUS OF TRANSITIONAL HOUSING IN ORANGE COUNTY

At present the County has almost no housing options available to transitional youths. A few small programs are currently providing services but are not able to accommodate the estimated number of youths needing transitional housing services. In 1998 there were about 200 foster youths in Orange County who emancipated. The number 200 is an estimate only because the exact number is not available. Twelve youths were placed in the Shelter for the Homeless Transitional Housing Program.

Orange County currently has very few housing options available for emancipating youth. A few small programs are in development, but will not be able to accommodate the estimated number of youth needing transitional support.

- **Shelter For The Homeless** recently opened two transitional homes to provide housing for young adults who have outgrown the foster care system. A male shelter opened in August 1998 and a female shelter programmed for single parents was opened in August 1999. The transitional housing is offered in a group setting, with youths living together in shared households. An Independent Living Program is offered, which involves concrete assistance in preparing for a variety of life skills prior to discharge, with emphasis on education and employment.
- **Crittenton Services for Children and Families** recently opened Stepping Stones, a transitional living program in two single-family houses in Fullerton. The transitional houses can accommodate up to eight young women ages 18 to 21 and up to four infants or toddlers. Chemical dependency counseling, and pregnancy prevention services are available for residents of this program.
- **YWCA of Santa Ana** opened 6 beds in 1999 for emancipated foster youths. In addition to housing, YWCA offers a GED tutor for those without a high school diploma, a job coordinator, computer classes, and counseling. Also, a case manager meets with residents on a weekly basis to assist them with independent living skills.
- **YWCA of Orange** will open their transitional housing project in the spring of 2000. They will provide housing for 14 emancipated single females. This project was funded through the 1998 Continuum of Care consolidated application.
- **The Orangewood Children's Foundation**, in collaboration with a group of concerned investors called Rising Tide and with the Mariner's Church, is pursuing the development of a transitional housing program for emancipated youths. This plan is known as the Rising Tide Venture. The current plan is to open two apartments to serve six foster youths in early 2000.

COUNTY PRIORITIES AND FUNDING

Before the plight of emancipated youths surfaced a few years ago, emancipated homeless foster youths sought shelter from various emergency shelters in Orange County. Some of these were shelters for single men or women, domestic violence shelters, shelters for

pregnant women, and shelters for single parents. The solution was strictly to provide a place to live and a roof over their heads. There were few programs to provide transitional housing that included independence with some supervision, coaching and a support network, especially in the areas of education and employment.

In the HUD Super Notice of Funding Availability grants (NOFA), priority was given to programs that serve homeless youths.

Recently, there seems to be a new direction and leadership in Orange County addressing the problem of homelessness. In 1998, the County Department of Housing and Community Development (H&CD) and the Continuum of Care Steering Committee identified priorities for the Super Notice of Funding Availability (HUD Super NOFA) application. Priority was given to applications that provided assistance to special need populations. One of these priority programs was designed to

serve homeless youths.

The top three priorities for emancipated youths identified by this special group were:

1. Transitional housing with enhanced supportive services.
2. Coordinated creative housing options, such as shared housing and rental aid.
3. Enhanced supportive services, which include services for pregnant and parenting youths, connecting transitional housing with higher education, transportation, and vocational training.

**HUD Super NOFA
These grants are very competitive and are awarded to counties that have extensive community collaboration supporting the grant proposal. Successful programs in other counties have been the result of far-reaching and hard-won cooperation between a large number of public and private agencies that were able to set aside many turf issues.**

For the past two years, Orange County has been proactive in requesting HUD grants for emancipated youths. In 1998, two HUD grants were awarded to Orange County for transitional housing for emancipated youths. Shelter for the Homeless received a grant for \$410,445. YWCA of Central Orange County received a grant for \$627,000. In 1999, Olive Crest Treatment Center was awarded funds in the amount of \$257,250 to provide services for homeless youths, ages 17 to 22.

CONCLUSION

The State of California Department of Social Services reports that all counties now offer some type of independent living or transitional services to foster youths. The extent and effectiveness of these programs varies considerably. Studies following youths emancipating from the foster care system demonstrate the failure of the system. The Independent Living Programs can consist of anything from informal discussions, to classes, to concrete assistance. Even if the County's Independent Living Program is delivered with an excellent evaluation, it is nonetheless, incomplete. Very few young people reach age 18 and are immediately able to fully support themselves financially and emotionally.

Studies following youth emancipation reveal the failure of the system.

50% were unemployed

37% had not finished high school

27% of the males and 10% of the females had been incarcerated.

The Orange County Continuum of Care Steering Committee identified transitional housing as most critical in the difficult transition to independent living and productive adulthood.

Housing specifically designed for transitional youths in Orange County is almost nonexistent. Yet, many agencies and organizations involved in independent living programs deem such housing to be critical. The relatively few programs that do exist are scattered, fragmented, and those who operate them often do so without knowledge of other similar programs. The *Little Hoover Commission Report* states that, "The State puts its investment in foster youth at risk by failing to help children 'aging out' of the child welfare system to successfully transition to self-sufficiency."

The County of Orange does not have an overall countywide umbrella to coordinate programs, data, and services for emancipating youth. The missing linchpin is a director with authority and responsibility to coordinate and collaborate the efforts of all concerned agencies. He or she should be held accountable for the performance and evaluation of these programs.

Several County agencies, non-profit group homes, and community organizations have some responsibility for foster care youths. Yet, no one person or agency is acting with responsibility and accountability for ensuring that efforts are coordinated. The best option for creating housing for former foster youths is through collaboration between County social service agencies, local housing authorities, private grants, and most importantly, the Board of Supervisors.

FINDINGS

Under *California Penal Code* Sections 933 and 933.05, responses are required to all findings. The 1999–2000 Orange County Grand Jury has arrived at the following findings:

1. The County database and information about foster youths is inadequate. There has been very little tracking of youths in foster care and group homes. As a result, answers to such questions as their health and educational background are not readily available for appropriate decision making. County projections about the number of emancipated youths are strictly an estimate. There is no information about what percentage have a high school diploma, about how many attend college, or how many end up homeless.

A response is required for Finding 1 from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

2. The current Independent Living Program for emancipated youths in Orange County, which is a critical program for self-sufficiency and independent living, can be considered mediocre at best. To be effective, it should be presented in a transitional housing milieu with attendance mandatory.

A response is required for Finding 2 from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

3. The measure of success for a pre-emancipation Independent Living Program, following the instruction of AB1111, should be enabling participants to seek a high school diploma, providing vocational training and job readiness, locating and obtaining housing, providing daily living skills and providing individual and group counseling. The Independent Living Program should be more than discussion and classes. There should be “hands on” experience and concrete assistance in preparing for independence prior to discharge.

A response is required for Finding 3 from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

4. The new John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (HR3443) requires more extensive assessment of performance based on certain outcomes, including education, employment, avoidance of dependency, homelessness, non-marital childbirth, and incarceration.

A response is required for Finding 4 from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

5. The relatively few programs in Orange County designed to serve emancipated youths are scattered and fragmented. Those who operate them often do so without knowledge of other similar programs.

A response is required for Finding 5 from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

6. In spite of the past two Grand Jury reports alerting the Orange County Board of Supervisors to this critical situation, the Board of Supervisors has not budgeted funds for transitional housing, or taken formal action on transitional housing for emancipated youths. The Social Services Agency has responded to prior Grand Jury reports of the past two years by claiming that they are developing and implementing transitional housing for youths after emancipation. At the present time, Orange County has very few housing options available for emancipating youths. A few small privately-funded programs are providing services but are not available to accommodate the number of estimated youths needing transitional housing services.

A response is required for Finding 6 from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

7. The County of Orange does not have an administrative umbrella to coordinate programs and services for emancipating youths. The missing linchpin is a director with authority and responsibility to coordinate the efforts of all concerned agencies and private non-profit caregivers.

A response is required for Finding 7 from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **County Executive Office** and the **Social Services Agency**.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In accordance with *California Penal Code* Sections 933 and 933.05, each recommendation must be responded to by the government entity to which it is addressed. These responses are submitted to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court. Based on the findings, the 1999–2000 Orange County Grand Jury recommends that:

1. The Social Services Agency should direct the Technology Services Department to develop a tracking system to collect data for 16- to 21-year-old foster youths.

A response is required for Recommendation 1 from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

2. The Independent Living Program for emancipated youths should be presented with a transitional housing program which includes independence but also supervision and coaching and counseling, especially in the areas of education and employment. The transitional housing programs that exist in Orange County should be authorized to present the Independent Living Program and should also be compensated.

A response is required for Recommendation 2 from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

3. The pre-emancipation Independent Living Program should be improved by authorizing and compensating group homes for presenting the Independent Living Program because they will be able to provide more concrete and hands-on assistance and address the transportation problem. Group homes are better qualified to monitor educational progress and provide tutors, if needed, to help their youths obtain a high school diploma, which is the most important element of the Independent Living Program.

A response is required for Recommendation 3 from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

4. The Independent Living Program should focus on key areas that are critical to independent living: education, employment, housing, and reducing the probability of early parenthood. A study with specific recommendations should be initiated to evaluate the Independent Living Program in Orange County. An evaluation of the program is needed that links the objectives of the program with the results.

A response is required for Recommendation 4 from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **County Executive Office** and the **Social Services Agency**.

5. The Social Services Agency should take the leadership role in coordinating all of the current, fragmented programs for emancipated youths currently in Orange County.

A response is required for Recommendation 5 from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **County Executive Office**.

6. The Board of Supervisors, County Executive Office, and the Social Services Agency, following leadership on both the federal and state levels, should elevate transitional housing for emancipated youths to the highest priority.

A response is required for Recommendation 6 from the **Board of Supervisors**, and requested from the **County Executive Office**, and the **Social Services Agency**.

7. An administrative position should be created whose purpose is to coordinate all of the County and private agencies similar to the collaborative efforts of Friends of the Children Bridges and the Probation Department's Children and Family Resource Centers. This position would also have the responsibility and accountability for all pre- and post-emancipated Independent Living Programs.

A response is required for Recommendation 7 from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **County Executive Office**.

COMMENDATIONS

The 1999–2000 Orange County Grand Jury commends:

Probation Department County of Orange For its outstanding accomplishments and leadership, the Probation Department is commended for its nationally renowned *8% Solution* and for coordinating the collaborative team to develop Youth and Family Resource Centers in the West, Central, South, and North regions of the County of Orange.

Shelter for the Homeless In addition to the 45 properties owned and operated by this care-giving agency and the National Guard Armory emergency shelters that they operate during the cold weather months, Shelter for the Homeless opened two new shelters for emancipated youths. A male shelter was opened August 1998 and a female shelter programmed for single mothers was opened August 1999. This agency also has a program called *Women of Worth* (WOW) designed to help young women develop life skills, which will help them become independent with a feeling of self worth.

Crittenton Services for Children and Families In September 1999, to improve the odds for emancipating women, Crittenton Services opened Stepping Stones, a transitional living program in two houses in Fullerton. Presently they can accommodate up to eight young women ages 18 to 21 and up to four infants or toddlers.

Orange County Rescue Mission One of the largest private nonprofit organizations assisting the homeless, serving more than 40,000 people each year in Orange County. The Rescue Mission has received national recognition for The House of Hope, which rebuilds the lives of mothers with their children in a warm family atmosphere.

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Over 300 dedicated, concerned, volunteer adults who serve as mentors for foster children, provide continuity and a stable presence in the child's life. They establish meaningful relationships, which are most important for foster youths and especially for emancipated foster youths.

United Friends of the Children Bridges For creating and supporting a benchmark program for transitional housing for emancipated youths, and for holding the conference in July 1999 to show their housing and to share their program, the UFC Bridges should be commended.

Study of Orange County Emancipated Youths
Common Acronyms

ARC	Alumni Resource Center (Alumni of foster care system)
CAR	Child Abuse Registry
CASA	Court Appointed Special Advocates
CAST	Child Abuse Service Team
DCFS	Department of Child and Family Services
CDC	Community Development Commission
CDSS	California Department of Social Services
CFS	Children and Family Services
CHDO	Community Housing Development Organization
CSA	Community Services Agency
CSOP	Children's System of Care
CSP	Community Service Program
CWS/CMS	Child Welfare Services/Case Management System
CYA	California Youth Authority
CYC	California Youth Connection
CYS	Children and Youth Services
DOE	Department of Education
DSS	Department of Social Services (California State Department)
ECP	Economic and Community Partnerships
FFA	Foster Family Agency
FaCT	Family and Communities Together
GAO	General Accounting Office
HCDD	Housing and Community Development Department
HUD	Housing and Urban Development
ILP	Independent Living Program
JJC	Juvenile Justice Commission
JTPA	Job Training Partnership Act
NOFA	Notice of Funding Availability (HUD Competitive Grant)
OCF	Orangewood Children's Foundation
OCH	Orangewood Children's Home
RCL	Rate Classification Levels
RFP	Request for Proposal
ROP	Regional Occupational Programs (Department of Education)
Section 8	HUD's Rental Assistance Program
SHP	Supportive Housing Program
SSA	Social Services Agency
Super NOFA	Notice of Funding Availability – HUD Combined Grants
THPP	Transitional Housing Placement Program
UFC	United Friends of the Children Bridges
WORKS	O.C. Works provides job readiness training programs.
WOW	Women of Worth
YFRC	Youth and Family Resource Center

APPENDIX A

GAO outcome information on former foster care youths reported in recent studies

Study on which percentages are based	Outcome information on former foster care youths
<p>Westat 1991 study of 810 former foster in eight states at 2.5 to 4 years after leaving care.</p>	<p>Education 46% had not completed high school</p> <p>Employment 51% were unemployed 62% had not maintained a job for at least one year</p> <p>Other 40% were a cost to the community 25% had experienced homelessness 42% had birthed or fathered a child</p>
<p>Courtney and Piliavin 1998 study of 113 former foster care youths at 12–18 months after leaving care.</p>	<p>Education 37% had not completed high school</p> <p>Employment 50% were unemployed 19% had not held a job since leaving care</p> <p>Other 32% received some kind of public assistance 12% were homeless at least once 22% had lived in four or more places in one year 44% reported problems with medical care 27% of males and 10% of females had been incarcerated</p>
<p>Barth 1990 Study of 55 former foster care youths in the San Francisco Bay area at least one year after leaving care.</p>	<p>Education 38% had not completed high school</p> <p>Employment 25% were unemployed</p> <p>Other 47% had problems paying for food or housing 35% were homeless 38% did not have health or medical coverage 40% of females reported a pregnancy 35% had been arrested or spent time in jail or prison</p>
<p>Grand Jury 2000 Study of 38 former foster care youths in Orange County</p>	<p>Education 60% of females had high school diplomas 45% of males had high school diplomas</p> <p>Employment 55% were unemployed</p> <p>Other 45% were involved with out of wedlock births 20% had been incarcerated (theft, drugs, gangs)</p>

APPENDIX B

**CASA Esperanza
10215 Runoff Avenue
Whittier, CA 90604**

Project Description: Casa Esperanza, located in Whittier, provides transitional housing for emancipating foster youths. The six-building complex includes 20 rehabilitated apartments and a newly constructed community center. Casa Esperanza was completed in 1998.

Description of Developer: The Community Development Commission, County of Los Angeles (CDC) developed Casa Esperanza as part of its ongoing partnership with the County of Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and United Friends of the Children Bridges (UFC) Bridges. CDC funds and develops affordable and special-needs housing throughout the County. CDC remains the owner of the apartments, and UFC leased the property from CDC for 55 years.

Description of Property Management: UFC contracts with Community Housing Management Services (CHMS) for property management. CHMS is a nonprofit firm with extensive experience in affordable and special-needs housing management.

Housing Type: Rehabilitation of five structures, each consisting of four two-bedroom apartments.

Population Served: Emancipating foster youths who have “aged out” of the County of Los Angeles’ foster care system. The young adults, ages 18–22, can live at the site for 12 to 18 months while they prepare themselves for independent living. Some of the residents are young single mothers.

Number of Units: Twenty, two-bedroom apartments. Each unit houses two emancipating foster youths. Two units are reserved for resident managers.

Services Provided: DCFS provides social services on site. Services provided include case management, childcare for parents, assistance with the development of employment money management, food preparation, and purchase skills. We also provide funds for food, bus passes, personal items, and childcare.

Methodology of Services Provided: These services are provided by DCFS social workers directly or by referrals to community-based organizations.

Resident Participation: Residents at sites with only program participants have resident councils which meet regularly. The social workers meet individually and in groups with other residents in scattered sites.

APPENDIX C

MEETINGS AND TOURS

July 9, 1999. Interview with 1998–99 Orange County Grand Jury Juvenile Services Committee.

July 15, 1999. Attended a two day workshop and seminar sponsored by United Friends of Children Bridges: Developing Transitional Housing for Emancipated Youth.

July 15, 1999. Interview with Weingart Foundation managers.

July 15, 1999. Interview with social workers at Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services Housing Services.

July 16, 1999. Meeting with University of Southern California Social Science Department.

July 16, 1999. Meeting with State of California Department of Social Services.

July 16, 1999. Tour of several Transitional Housing Apartments in Los Angeles County: Casa Esperanza, Margarita Mendez Apartments, Ruoff and Coteau 1 Apartments.

July 29, 1999. Interview with Orange County Social Services Agency, Children and Family Services, and Economic and Community Partnerships.

July—January 1999. Attended monthly meetings with Orange County Juvenile Justice Commission.

August 5, 1999. Interview with Orangewood Children’s Foundation.

August 9, 1999. Interview with Orange County WORKS.

August 12, 1999. Toured the new Youth and Family Resource Center in Santa Ana and attended the grand opening ceremonies sponsored by the Probation Department and received a copy of the Probation Department video, *The 8% Solution*.

August 17, 1999. Toured the Orangewood Children’s Home.

August 18, 1999. Toured Juvenile Hall and visited the Fischer School at the hall.

August 18, 1999. Visited the Orangewood Children’s Foundation Offices and the Independent Living Program operation of Orangewood Children’s Foundation.

August 19, 1999. Attended Conference on Transitional Housing Placement Program presented by both the State and County Social Service Agencies.

August—November 1999. Visited several group homes.

August 31, 1999. Visited Rising Tide Offices located with the Foundation for Christian Stewardship.

September 9, 1999. Toured two new transitional housing units for emancipated youths at Shelter for the Homeless in Santa Ana.

September 14, 1999. Visited Orangewood Children's Home and participated in a roundtable discussion with Orangewood Children's Foundation, Social Services Agency, and private agencies.

September 23, 1999. Interview with County Executive Office, Orange County Strategic and Intergovernmental Affairs.

September 23, 1999. Interview with Court Appointed Special Advocates.

October—January, 1999. Participated in group home forums held at Olive Crest.

October 5, 1999. Visited House of Hope Rescue Mission.

October 5, 1999. Interview with Mariners Church personnel.

October 21, 1999. Attended Children's System of Care Steering Committee meeting.

October 21, 1999. Interview with Children's Network, San Bernardino, Ca.

November 4, 1999. Visited Stepping-Stones transitional housing residences, Crittenton Services, Fullerton.

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