BARRIERS AND BENEFITS OF THE INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM (ILP)
IN SACRAMENTO

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PROJECT

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BARRIERS AND BENEFITS OF THE INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM (ILP) IN SACRAMENTO

A Project

by

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Division of Social Work
Abstract of

BARRIERS AND BENEFITS OF THE INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM (ILP) IN SACRAMENTO

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This project is a collaboration of both authors. The authors jointly worked on the development of the research question, gathered and analyzed data for the literature review, and collected and coded the data. In addition, both authors jointly designed the questionnaire, the consent form for former foster youth to participate as research subjects, and the human subject application. Chapters one through five were prepared by both authors. Despite the fact that transitional living initiatives such as the Independent Living Program (ILP) have been enacted to improve the lives of foster youth who emancipate from the child welfare system in the United States, a significant number of youth experience detrimental outcomes after they leave care. These outcomes include, but are not limited to, homelessness, unemployment, incarceration, poor educational success, and a higher likelihood of becoming parents at a younger age. This study aimed to examine the barriers and problems that prevent emancipated foster youth from accessing the resources and benefits provided by the Independent Living Program (ILP) in Sacramento County. This project also aimed to understand
the benefits provided by this program. Participants were asked how the ILP impacted their lives, and about the experiences they had while accessing such services. The implications of social work regarding foster youth are also discussed in this project. An exploratory questionnaire was utilized for this study. The questionnaire was distributed to emancipated foster youth who had accessed or were currently accessing services through the Independent Living Program (ILP). Participants were recruited from the Guardian Scholars program at California State University, Sacramento, and through snowball referral. Based on data collected, the researchers were able to conclude that there is a need for comprehensive services for foster youth who are emancipating from the child welfare system. The researchers discovered that although the services provided by the Sacramento County ILP were comprehensive, these services were found to be inadequate (lacking) for those emancipated foster youth who managed to access the services.

____________________________

, Committee Chair
Susan Talamantes Eggman, PhD, MSW

____________________________

Date
DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to all foster youth.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dulce Ruatti

This thesis is the product of many long hours of writing and researching. I would like to thank everyone who has supported me in this endeavor. First and foremost, I would like to thank my family and friends for their support and encouragement throughout this process. Special thanks go to my son Giancarlo Ruatti, who, along with me, has made many sacrifices over the last few years while I completed my education. One more special thank you goes to my thesis partner Eréndida Vázquez who shared her wit, wisdom, patience, and time with me to make this effort possible. I would also like to thank our advisor Dr. Susan Eggman, for her supervision, encouragement, and support.

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Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM/ THE ISSUE

Introduction

The focus of this research project is to examine the barriers and problems that prevent emancipated foster youth from accessing the resources and benefits provided by the Independent Living Program (ILP). In general, the transition to adulthood is a difficult and challenging process in which youth are in need of emotional and financial support among other needs. A typical young adult from the general population relies mainly on family for support; in contrast, former foster youth who emancipate from the child welfare system are expected to be self-sufficient after emancipating (Administration for Children and Families, 2008; Leathers & Testa, 2006; Choca, Minoff, Angene, Byrnes, Kenneally, DeWayne, Pearn, & Rivers, 2004). In order to alleviate some of the negative consequences that these youth face, the ILP was created. ILP services were designed to support this population in their transition to adulthood by providing health and mental health services, educational opportunities, and employment trainings.

The goal of this research project is to examine the barriers and problems that these youth experience in the process of accessing these services. With the data that is gathered and examined, these researchers will demonstrate the importance of developing and maintaining comprehensive ILP services.
Statement of Collaboration

The authors jointly worked on the development of the research question, gathered and analyzed data for the literature review, and collected and coded the data. In addition, both authors jointly designed the questionnaire, the consent form for former foster youth to participate as research subjects, and prepared and submitted the human subject application. Chapters one through five were prepared by both authors. The first author, Dulce Ruatti, was responsible for maintaining chapters one and four, as well as the reference page. The second author, Eréndida Y. Vázquez, took the lead on chapter two, three, and five.

Background of the Problem

In 2006, there were an estimated of 26,517 foster youth aging out of the foster care system and attempting to live independently (Administration for Children and Families, 2008; Georgiades, 2005; Child Welfare League of America [CWLA], 2009a; Christenson, 2003; Montgomery, Dohkoh, & Underhill, 2006). Thirty to forty percent of foster youth in the child welfare system are teenagers between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, therefore, creating serious challenges in the process of accessing the resources and benefits provided by the ILP (CWLA, 2009a). Research suggested that foster youth who age out of the system continue coming out unprepared to live their own lives after being discharged from the system (Collins, 2004; Naccarato, & DeLorenzo, 2008; Montgomery, Donkoh, & Underhill, 2006; Greeson & Bowen, 2008).
In 1985, Congress recognized the need of foster youth who were emancipating from the system and established the Federal legislation (PL 99-271) known as the Independent Living Initiatives (ILI) to help foster care adolescents make the transition from childhood to adulthood (Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, 1985; Leathers & Testa, 2006). This legislation failed to meet the needs of foster youth, as a result in 1999 Congress passed the Foster Care Independent Act (PL 106-169) which amended the Social Security act creating the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independent Program (Foster Care Independent Act of 1999). This Act expanded and created independent living services by increasing the age of eligibility and extending services. Although, emancipated foster youth have benefited from the ILP legislation, they continue experiencing many barriers and problems in the process of accessing the resources and benefits provided by the ILP, which is why it is imperative that the ILP is maintained, kept and funded.

*Statement of the Research Problem*

Since youth emancipating from the child welfare system cannot rely on family members for support, they must rely on the state to assume parental responsibility and guide them to adulthood (Courtney, & Heuring, 2005; Children’s Advocacy Institute [CAI], 2007). However, in the process of assisting the foster youth population in its transition, states continue to struggle when trying to meet the needs of the increasing foster youth population who age out of the foster care system each year (Administration for Children and Families, 2008; Georgiades, 2005; Child Welfare
League of America [CWLA], 2009a). Studies indicate that foster youth continue exiting the child welfare system unprepared to successfully transition into adulthood.

Although it has been almost three decades since legislation was passed in order to address the needs of foster youth emancipating from the child welfare system; this population continues experiencing homelessness, unemployment, poor educational success, and early parenthood (Lemon, Hines & Merdinger, 2005; Berzin, 2008). This is due to the fact that legislation is not comprehensive enough to encompass the need for inclusive services. As a result, foster youth continue aging out of the foster care system unprepared to emancipate.

Purpose of the Study

The main purposes of this project is to understand the barriers that prevent emancipated youth from accessing the resources and benefits, demonstrate the importance of comprehensive services, as well as highlight the significance of maintaining, supporting, and funding the Independent Living Program of Sacramento County. These researchers want to learn about the ILP services available to foster youth who are emancipating and how these services are implemented. These researchers wish to provide evidence on why the ILP services must be comprehensive to the needs of foster youth. After gathering and analyzing the data, these researchers will demonstrate that addressing the shortcomings in the delivery of services foster youth will have chances at achieving self-sufficiency.
Research Question

This study explores the following research questions: What are the barriers that prevent emancipate foster youth from accessing the resources and benefits provided by the ILP, as well as the importance of maintaining, keeping, and funding this program in Sacramento County?

Theoretical Framework

For this project, these authors chose social system theory and risk and resiliency theory. This project utilizes two different theoretical frameworks because both frameworks provide explanations of how systems interact with one another and how positive and negative factors influence the foster youth population in their transition to adulthood.

Systems Theory

The systems theory utilizes a holistic approach that originates from the biological theory, which is rooted on the belief that all systems are composed of subsystems, which are made up of supers systems (Payne, 2005; Schriver, 2003). The systems theory focuses on individuals (micro), families and groups (messo), as well as organizations and societies (macro). This theory is concerned with people’s connections, relationships, and how they adapt to one another and work together.

The systems theory operates under the belief that there are three kinds of helping systems, which are, informal and natural (friends and family), formal (community groups), and societal systems (schools, CPS) (Payne, 2005). When in
place, these systems act as buffer for negative consequences. However, studies suggest that foster youth experience stressful relationship with one or all of these systems (Courtney, Dworsky, Cusick, Havlicek, Perez, & Keller, 2007; Lemon, Hines & Merdinger, 2005). The lack of family support, placement and school instability, as well as the lack of available services contribute to the negative relationships experienced by the foster youth population. When foster youth lack or have conflicting relationships with these systems they are more likely to experience difficulties when first transitioning to adulthood and throughout their lifetime (Votaw & Powell, 2005 as cited in Payne 1997).

Risk and Resiliency

The risk and resiliency theory (as well as system theory) describes the interactions between the individual and his environment. The main purpose of this theory is to describe how negative outcomes and protective factors influence the individual. In the process of transitioning to adulthood, research has shown that foster youth encounters more risk factors than their peers. Some of the risk factors that influence foster youth include multiple placements, childhood disorders and parental disorders, and trauma and neglect history. Among the protective factors that influence foster youth are youth’s personal qualities and social influences. Personal qualities include inherent traits and learned behavior; the social influences are observed through the ecological factors (Richman & Fraser, 2001).
Research suggest that foster youth who aged out of the system are at higher risk for negative outcomes which is why it is imperative to examine the barriers that foster youth have in the process of accessing the ILP services. According to Collins (2001), foster youth experience more stress in their transition to adulthood due to their history of abuse and/or neglect, lack of emotional and financial support suggesting that they develop protective factors that influence their development. Because resiliency is a type of coping mechanism, it is important to identify both positives and negative types of resiliency that foster youth are more likely to develop. By decreasing risky lifestyles such as drug use, early parenthood, school failure, and criminal involvement and by increasing positive types of resiliency the chances of achieving self-sufficiency are increased.

*Definition of Terms*

Emancipated foster youth: describes foster youth who are discharged from the foster care system when they attain a certain age (CAI, 2007).

Foster care: “is defined in the Code of Federal Regulations, title 45, Volume 4, part 1355. Section 57, as 24-hours substitute care for children outside their own homes. The reporting system includes all children who have or had been in foster care at least 24 hours” (Votaw & Powell, 2005).

Eligible foster youth: are those who receive state or federal foster care funds while they remain in foster care (Sacramento County Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.).
Aging out: are children between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one that are leaving the foster care system.

Independent Living Program: “Acquisition of skills enabling oneself successful integration into society” such skills should include the ability to meet basic needs such as shelter, food and clothing” (Gomez, 1998, p. 27)

Assumptions

There were a few assumptions made by these researchers when beginning this project. The first assumption was that emancipated foster youth have a difficult time transitioning to adulthood, thus, they are more likely to experience detrimental outcomes when emancipating. Another assumption is that foster youth do not access ILP services because they are unaware of such services, and those who are aware, lack the means to access such services. A third assumption made by these researchers was that youth who emancipate from the child welfare system lack emotional and financial support.

Justification

The purpose of this study is to embrace and follow the principles of the social work code of ethics. First, the “mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty” (Krogsrud, O’Melia, & DuBois, 2004, p. 470). Emancipated foster youth are vulnerable and often times oppressed because they leave the system
unprepared to transition to adulthood. They find themselves unemployed, unstable, and as a result are more likely to suffer from health and mental health issues.

These researchers hope that this project will identify the barriers preventing emancipated foster youth in Sacramento County from accessing the resources and benefits of the ILP. The results of this project will also be useful in demonstrating the importance of developing comprehensive ILP services.

Limitations

This project has several limitations that might affect its results. First of all, at the time this project was being developed, the Sacramento ILP was being restructured due to severe funding cuts. Thus, these researchers were unable to interview ILP social workers or participants, as a result, their opinions, perspectives and any concrete data on the outcomes of youth who accessed ILP services was unavailable. Another limitation of this project is that the ILP is a federally funded program that gives states the liberty to implement services at their own discretion, thus, there is no standardized curriculum or program throughout California. As a result, the quality, accessibility and success of each program may vary. A third limitation of this project is that it is limited in size and scope since it is focused on Sacramento County.

Summary

Chapter one of this project offers an introduction and background of the problem, a purpose for the study, the project research question and the theoretical frameworks utilized. In addition, chapter one also includes definitions for terms used,
as well as assumptions, justifications and limitations of the project. Chapter two provides a review of relevant and applicable literature. Chapter three offers an in depth description of the methodology that was used to complete this project. Chapter four presents the results of this project. Chapter five provides a summary of the findings and recommendations. Chapter five also includes implications for social work practice and policy.
Chapter 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Despite the fact that transitional living initiatives such as the Independent Living Program (ILP) have been enacted to improve the lives of foster youth who emancipate from the child welfare system in the United States, a significant number of youth continue experiencing detrimental outcomes after they leave care (Votaw & Powell, 2005; Lemon, Hines, & Merdinger 2005; Berzin, 2008). Statistics indicate that the foster youth population is both increasing in number and facing more challenges in their transition to adulthood. These challenges include homelessness, unemployment, poor educational success, and higher likelihood of becoming parents at a younger age among other issues (Lemon, Hines & Merdinger, 2005; Berzin, 2008).

In the following literature review, these authors will examine the barriers and problems that prevent emancipated foster youth from accessing the resources and benefits provided by the ILP, as well as the importance of maintaining, keeping, and funding this program in Sacramento County. First, these authors will provide a brief introduction which outlines the difficulties faced by foster youth in the process of transitioning to adulthood, as well as those faced by the state in providing the necessary services to help in the transition. The following section will provide an
overview of the enabling and most current federal legislation on the ILP including information in regards to California ILP legislation and services provided by the Sacramento county ILP. Then, these authors will provide an examination of foster youth needs for comprehensive health and mental healthcare, educational, employment services, and finally the obstacles emancipated foster youth face in accessing these services through the ILP. The gaps in the literature review will also be addressed.

Difficulties Faced by Foster Youth in the Process of Transitioning to Adulthood

Each year the United States child welfare system removes over 900,000 children from their homes due to abuse and neglect, out of which, approximately 550,000 will eventually be placed in out of home care (McGuiness & Dyer, 2007, as cited in the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, 2003). The purpose of separation is to protect children from potential or further harm by their caregivers. After removal, governmental agencies work with children and their families in an effort to provide reunification services to the families. Services are specifically designed to help parents and/or caregivers reunify with their children. When reunification efforts are not achieved, the state assumes parental responsibility over these youth, preparing them to make the transition to adulthood (Courtney, & Heuring, 2005; Children’s Advocacy Institute [CAI], 2007).

In the process of assisting this population in its transition to adulthood, states continue to struggle trying to meet the needs of the increasing number of foster youth
who “age out” of the system each year. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that in 1999 there were 20,000 youth who left the child welfare system, and in 2006, 26,517 adolescents, thirty percent of the total child welfare population, were emancipated, which equates to an increase of thirty-three percent in seven years (Administration for Children and Families, 2008; Georgiades, 2005; Child Welfare League of America [CWLA], 2009a; Christenson, 2003; Montgomery, Dohkoh, & Underhill, 2006). Studies also indicate that although states have established pre- and post-emancipation transitional living services for foster youth, many continue experiencing critical challenges that prevent them from successfully transitioning to adulthood. Available research indicates that in addition to the lack of emotional and financial support, emancipated foster youth often lack family and institutional support; therefore, they encounter many more life stressors (Naccarato & DeLorenzo, 2008; Daining & DePanfilis, 2007).

Research suggests that the average young adult is not fully independent until they reach the age of twenty-six (CAI, 2007). The transition to adulthood for all youth is a slow and gradual process in which youth are in need of emotional and financial support. Several studies concluded that the average young men and women in the general population live at home with one or both parents. A survey conducted in 2003 showed that approximately fifty-six percent of young people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four were living at home (Fields, 2004). Another study estimates that the average person between the ages of eighteen to thirty-four received financial
support adding up to approximately $38,000 from their parents (Courtney, Dworsky, Cusick, Havlicek, Perez, & Keller, 2007 as cited in Schoeni & Ross, 2004). A more recent study reported that the average youth continues to receive support until they are twenty-six years of age, stating that a typical eighteen year old youth is not considered emotionally, or financially ready to live independently (CAI, 2007). The same study claims that social and medical sciences, as well as family trends and public opinion studies agreed with these findings (CAI, 2007).

In contrast, the approximately 26,000 foster youth who are currently emancipating from the child welfare system each year are expected to be fully self-sufficient after they turn eighteen. Although the Independent Living Program (ILP) was designed to assist foster youth with making this transition, research suggests that an alarming number of them continue to experience negative consequences when transitioning into adulthood (Administration for Children and Families, 2008; Leathers & Testa, 2006; Choca, Minoff, Byrnes, Kenneally, DeWayne, Pearn, & Rivers, 2004). The literature states that foster youth who emancipate are unprepared and are at a higher risk for low educational attainment, homelessness, incarceration, unemployment, mental health disorders, and are more likely to be parents at a younger age (Lemon, Hines, & Merdinger, 2005; Lindsey, & Shlonsky, 2008; Collins, 2001; Nacarato, & DeLorenzo, 2008; Leathers & Testa, 2006).
The Independent Living Initiative (ILI) was designed to help foster care adolescents make the transition from childhood to adulthood. Past studies suggested that children exiting the foster care system were unprepared to live their own lives, and were being discharged without proper preparation, plans, or resources (Collins, 2004; Naccarato, & DeLorenzo, 2008; Montgomery, Donkoh, & Underhill, 2006; Greeson & Bowen, 2008). Sadly, foster youth continue to emancipate each year regardless of their level of preparedness (National Association of Social Work [NASW], 2009). In 1985 this concern led Congress to authorize the Independent Living Initiative, which established the Federal legislation (PL 99-272) to assist emancipating foster youth make the transition from the child welfare system to independent living (Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, 1985; Leathers & Testa, 2006). This initiative amended the title IV-E of the Social Security Act by providing $70 million to the ILI under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (Christenson, 2003; Kroner & Mares, 2008).

The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 provided funding to states to assist children between the ages of sixteen and eighteen who were making the transition from foster care to independent living. Furthermore, it established state agencies to contract with local government entities or private non-profit organizations to provide the ILI. In addition, it identified the program’s purpose and objectives for each program designed “to prepare [youth] to live independently
upon leaving foster care” (Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985, p. 295).

This legislation provided funds to state-run programs to establish educational resources that allowed foster youth to seek high school diplomas or vocational training. Each foster youth over the age of sixteen was provided with an independent living plan in which detailed information about services and assistance was provided. Foster youth were offered training in budgeting, career planning, locating and maintaining housing, and basic living skills, as well as the opportunity for individual counseling. In addition, outreach programs were designed to recruit individuals who were eligible to participate in the program (Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985). Despite all the services offered at this point, studies suggest that this legislation did not meet the needs of youth who were emancipating. Leathers & Testa (2006) reported that the effectiveness of this legislation was inconclusive suggesting that “about half of the foster youth continue[d] to be inadequately prepared for independent living” (p. 464; Collins, 2004).

Previous reports indicate that the 1985 legislation needed to be amended several times because foster youth continued to face many of the same challenges after they emancipated from the child welfare system (Dworsky, 2008). During the first three years funding for the Independent Living Initiative (ILI) was not necessarily available from one year to the next, causing states to rely on annual appropriations when Congress authorized states to use their title IV- E funds (Dworsky, 2008;
Collins, 2001). State agencies received funding based on the number of children who received federal foster care assistance (Collins, 2001). Another change came in 1990 when the federal government gave states the option of providing services to foster youth up to the age of twenty-one (Dworsky, 2008). Furthermore, in 1993, federal legislation (PL 103-66) gave states the freedom to provide a wide range of services, however, “the increases in funding did not keep pace with the growing population of foster youth eligible for services,” (Dworsky, 2008, p. 126). In spite of all these legislative changes foster youth continued to face monumental difficulties. The California Children’s Advocacy Institute (2007) reported that in 1999 a significant number of studies concluded that “the majority of former foster youth failed to achieve self-sufficiency” stating that sixty percent had been homeless at least one night, thirty-five percent had accessed public assistance, and forty percent of the homeless living in shelters were foster youth (p. 4).


As a result of the weaknesses of the enabling legislation, in 1999 federal legislation (PL 106-169) passed the Foster Care Independent Act. This Act amended the Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, replaced the Title IV-E, and created substantial changes in the Independent Living Initiatives (ILI) (Wertheimer, 2002). Section 477 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C 677) was amended to create the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program referred to as Chafee (Foster Care Independence Act of 1999). This Act expanded and created independent living
services by decreasing the age of eligibility to fourteen and expanding services for youth up to the age of twenty-one. In addition, this Act also extended services to include counseling, and financial and housing assistance (Naccarato & DeLorenzo, 2008; Center for Public Policy Priorities [CPPP], 2001; Foster Care Independent Act of 1999; Christenson, 2003). The funding available to states doubled, from $70 million to $140 million, and greater flexibility in how to carry out programs was allowed (CAI, 2007; Dworsky, 2008; Kroner & Mares, 2008). Under this Act states were also able to provide Medicaid insurance to emancipated foster youth from the age of eighteen to twenty-one. Moreover, this Act required that states develop outcome measures to ensure state performances which were not previously required (Foster Care Independent Act of 1999).

The John H. Chafee Foster Independence Program “is a set of state-run initiatives that intended to prepare youth for education and employment, to offer psychological support, and to facilitate the transitional years between 18 and 21” (Barth & Ferguson, 2004, as cited in Montgomery, Donkoh, & Underhill, 2006, p. 1436). The Chafee challenged state agencies to provide services and programs to foster youth in employment, education, housing, counseling, and life skills (National Association of Counties [NACO], 2008, p. 4). This important legislation also allowed states to use up to thirty percent of the Chafee funds to provide housing assistance, including stipends and/or transitional living programs to assist foster care youth in locating affordable housing (CAI, 2007; Dworsky, 2008). Using these funds states
were able to provide services such as education, employment, career planning, vocational training, and counseling to prevent substance abuse and unwanted pregnancies (Christenson, 2003). The effectiveness of these services were not evaluated at the time, although, evaluation was recommended (Christenson, 2003).

Considering that previous ILP services for foster youth terminated at age eighteen, this was an important change in legislation for foster youth; since research has shown that staying in care past the age of eighteen doubles the odds of successful transition (Dworsky, 2008). The Midwest Evaluation Study (2007) concluded that, compared to non-ILP participants, foster youth who remained in care made significant progress towards becoming independent (Courtney, et al., 2007). The Midwest evaluation is a descriptive large-scale longitudinal examination that shows how ILP participants avoided early parenthood and involvement with the criminal justice system. This study also found that foster youth were less likely to suffer from economic hardship, more likely to continue accessing basic independent living services, continue furthering their education and continue accessing health care services if they stay in care past the age of eighteen (Courtney, Dworsky, Dworsky, Cusick, Havliceck, Perez, & Keller, 2007). Despite these positive findings, studies show that the majority of states have legislation that authorize their courts to define eighteen as the age of majority, as a result, many foster youth are forced to emancipate at age eighteen regardless of their readiness (CAI, 2007). Courtney & Dworsky (2006), reports that Chicago, Illinois is one of the few jurisdictions in the nation that
allow foster youths to remain in care up to their twenty-first birthday, increasing their opportunities to have a successful transition to adulthood. This study found that fifty percent of foster youth who left care before the age of twenty-one were more likely to be experiencing detrimental outcomes and those who stayed in care experienced better outcomes (Courtney & Dworsky, 2006). Unfortunately, the ILP legislation does not require states to provide services to emancipated foster youth. The effectiveness of the ILP legislation will remain unknown since foster youth are terminated by state-courts at age eighteen and are not required to report back (Montgomery, Donkoh, & Underhill, 2006).

**Independent Living Program in California**

The legislation that governs the ILP is important to consider because over 4,000 foster youth emancipate from California each year without financial and emotional support (NASW, 2009). Studies conducted in California show that “former foster youth are far more likely than other youth to experience homelessness, unemployment, unplanned pregnancy and involvement with the legal system” (NASW, 2009, p. 15). Although California has the largest number of abused and neglected children in the nation, evaluations of the ILP services in California are not different from national reports. Statistics show that foster youth who exit the child welfare system are not achieving self-sufficiency (CAI, 2007). The Children’s Advocacy Institute (CAI) (2007) reported that of the approximately 4,000 foster youth emancipated in California each year, sixty-five percent leave care without a place to
live, fifty-one percent are unemployed, less than three percent of them attend college, and emancipated females are four times more likely to receive public assistances than females in the general population (CAI, 2007).

Although Chafee allows states to use federal funds to support foster youth beyond age eighteen, “the foster care termination statutes” in California authorize “the court to terminate foster care jurisdiction at the age 18” since states law defines eighteen as the age of majority (CAI, 2007, p 7). This termination of services is based on the “misplaced belief that federal funds could not be used to support foster youth beyond age 18” (CAI, 2007, p. 7). However, through the title IV-E, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) allots funding to its counties to provide employment, educational, and life skills services to emancipated foster youth (CAI, 2007; Kelly, 1998 as cited in Votaw & Powell, 2005).

Independent Living Program in Sacramento County

Research reports that former foster youth in Sacramento County were experiencing negative outcomes after emancipation, leading the Child Welfare agencies in this county to form a coalition of efforts in 1999 (Choca, Minoff, Angene, Byrnes, Kenneally, DeWayne, Pearn, & Rivers, 2004). In that year, both private and public agencies in Sacramento established the Sacramento Emancipation Collaboration to assist foster youth in making the transition out of foster care (Choca, et al., 2004; Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.). The purpose of this team was to increase housing opportunities, and ensure that both foster care
agencies as well as foster youth were informed about available resources including ILP services. In addition, the team wanted to decrease the number of homeless foster youth and take full advantage of housing funds and resources (Choca, et al., 2004). Currently the Sacramento County ILP has five full-time social workers, each with approximately 130 active cases, as well as foster youth social workers in every school district across Sacramento (P. Wiggins, personal communication, June 11, 2009).

The ILP of Sacramento County is a county administrated program which has been designed to assist the needs of foster youth in the area. The purpose of this program is to assist eligible foster youth between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one to become self-sufficient (Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.). Foster youth are referred to the ILP by their social workers, foster parents, probation officers, foster family agency social workers, county ILP coordinators, school district social workers, and by self-referral (Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, n.d). Acknowledging that foster youth lack a range of life skills, the Sacramento ILP helps foster youth develop a range of basic skill such as cooking, budgeting, filling out applications, and doing laundry (P. Wiggins, personal communication, June 11, 2009). In addition to workshops on personal growth, there are emancipation support groups offered (Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, n.d).

The Sacramento ILP has partnered with several agencies in the area to better serve the approximately 387 foster youth who exit from foster care in Sacramento
County each year, and assist them to successfully transition into adulthood (Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, 2009; Department Of Human Assistance [DHA], 2005). The ILP contracts with the American River College District which provides career training, self-esteem workshops, scholarships, and education services (Robertson, 2004). In addition, the Adolfo Housing Services (AHS) for former foster youths offers transitional and permanent housing options for youth up to the age of twenty-five (Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, 2009; DHA, 2005). Although transitional housing programs like the AHS are available in Sacramento, according to Choca et al. (2004) there is a shortage of transitional housing, and those facilities can only house a small percentage of the number of foster youth who emancipate from the program each year. In fact, the County of Sacramento reports that thirty percent of emancipated foster youth end up homeless and another thirty-three percent are on public assistance within twelve to eighteen months of leaving care (DHA, 2005).

Health and Mental Health Services and Needs

Each year the United States foster care system discharges more than 26,000 young adults who not only lack emotional and financial support, but they also suffer serious physical and mental health problems (Administration for Children and Families, 2008; CAI, 2007; Casey Family Programs [CFP], 2005). National research reported that foster care youth are in need of intensive healthcare and treatment services while they are in care, and those services continue to be needed even after
emancipation (Kerker & Dore, 2006; Burns, Philips, Wagner, Barth, Kolko, Campbell, & Landsverk, 2004). Although, the ILP services acknowledge the healthcare needs of this population, the existing system of health and mental healthcare services are insufficient, often times inadequate, difficult to access, and include many restrictions in eligibility (CAI, 2007; Kerker, & Morrison, 2006). In the following section these researchers will provide a brief review of the health and mental health needs of foster youth, then an examination of the ILP healthcare services available, and finally, some of the barriers that those youth encounter in the process of accessing existing services.

It has been well documented that in addition to the neglect and abuse experienced at the hands of their care givers prior to removal, foster youth endure further trauma while in foster care mainly due to placement disruption (English & Grasso, 2000; Newton, Litrownick, & Landsverk, 2000). Studies suggest that nearly fifty percent of foster children who enter the foster care system have poor health and suffer from developmental, physical, or mental health conditions directly related to the abuse and neglect suffered prior to entering the child welfare system (CAI, 2007; Simms, Dubowitz, & Szilagyi, 2000). Disabilities are over-represented in the foster population; between twenty to sixty percent of foster youth have a developmental disability or delay (National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability [NCWD], 2009). Chronic, acute, and disabling physical conditions are also common health problems among foster children and youth, as are mental health disabilities such as depression, anxiety, social phobia, panic syndrome, and post-traumatic stress disorders.
Research indicates that approximately twenty-five percent of adults who were in the foster care system experience PTSD (CWLA, 2007; CAI, 2007; CFP, 2005). Out-of-home-placement significantly intensifies children’s fears, guilt, and sense of being punished, oftentimes causing them to react negatively to placement (Simms, Dubowitz, & Szilagyi, 2000). Multiple placements exacerbate foster youths’ existing physical and mental health conditions; consequently, a range of psychological and behavioral problems arise increasing their need for specialized mental health services (Newton, Litrownick, & Landsverk, 2000; Simms, Dubowitz, & Szilagyi, 2000).

Past studies have shown that children do not receive “adequate preventive healthcare while they are in placement,” and they are often misdiagnosed, decreasing their opportunities to achieve self-sufficiency after emancipation (Simms, Dubowitz, and Szilagyi, 2000, p. 909). English and Grasso (2000) reported that among foster youth seventy-seven percent of teenagers nationwide were found to be in need of mental health referrals, thirty-eight percent were emotionally disturbed, and after being discharged from care they experienced multiple difficulties obtaining healthcare coverage. A recent study of 373 seventeen year old pre-emancipated foster youth found that fifty-three of them ended up having to live in care facilities due to their psychological disorders (McMillen, Zima, Scott, Auslander, Munson, Ollie, & Spitznagel, 2005). This study points out that despite the poor developmental trajectory foster youth who emancipate do not receive the adequate health and mental health
support that they need (McMillen, et al. 2005). Although changes have been
implemented to remedy healthcare accessibility, thirty-three percent of the foster care
alumni lack healthcare coverage, and many more do not receive comprehensive health
services (Simms, Dubowitz, & Szilagyi, 2000; CWLA, 2007). As a result of the
multiple untreated health conditions, foster youth leave the system exhibiting poor
developmental, physical, and psychological conditions which suggest the need for
intensified mental health services as well as accessibility to these services throughout
their transition to adulthood (McMillen, et al. 2005; Kerker, & Dore, 2006).

Due to the detrimental outcomes experienced by many emancipated foster
youth, President Clinton signed the Foster Care Independence Act in October of 1999.
This law provided states with the option of extending healthcare coverage under
Medicaid to youth who aged out of foster care (Courtney, et al. 2007; Georgiades,
2005). The federal government encouraged states to implement the Medicaid
expansion option to allow emancipated youth to receive Medicaid coverage after they
exit care up to the age of twenty-one (English & Grasso, 2000; CAI, 2007). This
legislation also gave states a great deal of flexibility to limit eligibility; for instance,
some states limited coverage by establishing an assets and income test, and others
limited eligibility by age “granting eligibility only to those under 20 or 19 rather than
21” (English & Grasso, 2000, p. 226). It was expected that states that chose to
implement this option would have allowed foster youth to access a wide range of
Medicaid benefits; however, states that selected this option passed legislation
restricting or modifying services. California, for instance, passed a bill that allowed Medicaid expansion coverage for foster youth between the ages of eighteen to twenty-one at the same time that it eliminated some existing resources for foster youth (CAI, 2007; English & Grasso, 2000).

Despite the fact that one of the purposes of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, currently known as ILP legislation, was to increase healthcare services to youth aging out of foster care, many of them still do not receive or qualify for health and mental healthcare services (Courtney, et. al, 2007; CAI, 2007). A study conducted with 732 participants found that fifty-one percent of them lack health insurance (Courtney, et. al, 2007). The available research also indicates that healthcare services include many restrictions and exceptions. States that chose to expand health services also established exceptions for eligibility. For instance, California expanded Medi-Cal (state Medical program) coverage providing health services to foster youth who emancipated from the system up to the age of twenty-one (CAI, 2007). However, an exception was made for those young adults who were in kinship (or Kin-Gap) placement or that were emancipated from the foster care system before their eighteenth birthday (CAI, 2007). Statistics show that forty-five percent of the foster care population is placed in kinship foster care (NCWD, 2009).

Another eligibility barrier is the lack of supportive services to transition from the child welfare Medicaid coverage plan to an emancipated Medicaid coverage plan. Many foster youth who emancipate and are eligible to receive Medicaid insurance
never receive it, as the process is difficult and complicated (NACO, 2008; Courtney, et al, 2007). A study reported that fifty percent of foster young adults had no health insurance, sixty percent had no dental insurance, and twenty percent reported not having received medical care in the past year due to the lack of health insurance (Courtney, et al., 2007). Moreover, the CWLA (2007) reported that accessibility and up-to-date medical records are other critical challenges in the process of receiving comprehensive healthcare. Although, the ILP federal legislation encouraged states to extend Medical coverage for foster youth who emancipate “only 17 states had implemented the extension as of December 2006” (CWLA, 2007, p. 2).

In spite of the increased benefits provided by the ILP, research suggests that the foster population continue to face substantial health and mental health challenges. As a result, emancipated foster youth leave the foster care system with a wide range of physical and mental health needs that go untreated. It is clear that the lack of comprehensive health and mental health services for emancipated foster youth is a primary factor preventing them from achieving self-sufficiency.

**Educational Services and Needs**

Throughout this literature review these authors found that emancipated foster youth face many obstacles in the process of accessing educational services through the ILP. Research has concluded that foster youth who exit from the child welfare system are at an increased risk for low educational attainment (Hass & Greydon, 2009; Zetlin, Weinberg, Shea, 2006 as cited in Noguera, 2002). Furthermore, research shows that
foster youth are less likely than their peers to graduate from high school, and, as a result, are less likely to pursue higher education than their peers from the general population (Merdinger, Hines, Osterling & Wyatt, 2005; CAI, 2007; Mongomery, Donkoh & Underhill, 2006). Thus, emancipated foster youth are at a disadvantage and lack the necessary skills to successfully transition into adulthood, which consequently makes them more likely to engage in crime, experience homelessness, abuse drugs and alcohol, and face employment and financial difficulties (Massinga & Pecora, 2004; Geenen & Powers, 2007). This section will provide information on educational problems that foster youth face while in care, an overview of educational services available to them through the ILP programs, and some of the barriers that they face when trying to access educational services.

Although children are placed in foster care for their safety and security, oftentimes these children do not find the security or stability they need in the foster care system. It is common for children to experience multiple placements in foster homes and/or licensed children’s institutions, and as a direct result of this it is very likely that they will transfer from school to school. It is estimated that children in foster care throughout California experience a change in placement about once every six months, and, as a result, they lose an average of four to six months of educational attainment every time that the move is accompanied by a change in school (California Foster Youth Educational Task Force [CFYETF], 2007b). As a result of this placement instability, children in foster care experience gaps in enrollment, difficulty
completing school credits, delays in transfer of school records, and have a propensity to fall behind academically (Zetlin, Weinberg & Kimm, 2004). As a direct consequence of all this, foster youth perform below grade level, are more likely to be held back one grade, are two times more likely to be suspended, and are four times more likely to be expelled. Moreover, children in foster care are more likely to have poor classroom performance, weaker cognitive abilities, and are more likely to suffer from learning disabilities and emotional disturbances (Naccarato & DeLorenzo, 2008; Altshuler, 2004; Zetlin, Weinberg, Kimm, 2004).

In addition to these limitations, a large number of children in foster care do not have access to extracurricular activities or special programs, and are not stimulated or encouraged to pursue higher education (Emerson & Lovitt, 2003). As a result, it is estimated that only about fifty percent of foster youth graduate from high school, compared to seventy-five percent of their peers (CCFYETF, 2007a; CCFYETF, 2007b). Furthermore, only sixteen percent of emancipated foster youth attend a postsecondary institution, and only about two percent graduate from that institution versus an average of twenty-seven percent of their peers (Hass & Graydon, 2008). Because of the educational shortcomings these youth experience while in foster care, they often leave the child welfare system with educational deficits that have a lasting impact on their adult life (Courtney & Dworsky, 2006; Altshuler, 2004). These educational deficits inhibit their ability to attend college even if resources are available to them. As a result, it is vital that comprehensive legislation focuses a greater
emphasis on K-12 education and college readiness for youth in care (National Foster Care Coalition [NFCC], 2007).

One of the biggest obstacles that youth face when trying to attend higher education institutions is finding the financial resources needed to pay for their education (Higher Education Outreach and Assistance Act for Emancipated Foster Youth 89340). In 2001, in response to this need the federal government amended the Foster Care Independent Act of 1999, to include the Chafee Educational Training Vouchers (ETV) program. Through the ETV program, Congress authorized up to $60 million dollars in discretionary funds to states in an effort to provide youth with the financial resources needed to attend a postsecondary or vocational institution (NFCC, 2007). The ETV’s main goal was to provide each eligible emancipated foster youth with a voucher of up to $5,000 for each school year in order to help pay for the costs of attending such institutions (NFCC, 2007). Despite the good intentions of this legislation, the ETV program fails to meet the higher educational needs of this population because it does not address the current financial need that exists. For instance, it is estimated that the cost of an undergraduate program at a University of California campus is approximately $100,000, showing that efforts to provide postsecondary or vocational education for this population are not comprehensive (NFCC, 2007).

Although states report that programs like the Educational Training Vouchers (EVT) have given foster youth the opportunity to pursue a secondary education, states
like California, with a high foster youth population, rapidly reach a point where applicants have to be turned away because of the lack of available funds (NFCC, 2007). To make matters worse, the program is currently underfunded; during the 2006 fiscal year, the program was only assigned $45 million, instead of the $60 million that was originally appointed (NFCC, 2007). In an effort to close this gap, during the 2006-2007 fiscal year, California allocated $5.7 million to create a state run program that would supplement the shortcomings of the ETV. However, additional funding is needed (CAI, 2007). Another shortcoming of the ETV program is the fact that the funding is restricted to youth who leave care after the age of sixteen. In addition, children who are adopted or enter into a permanent kinship arrangement do not qualify for ETV vouchers, critically affecting the forty-five percent of foster youth who are placed in kinship care (NFCC, 2007; National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability [NCWD], 2009). Like California, other states continue to struggle in order to make the ETV program a successful one. For example, Wyoming has experienced difficulties processing the federal funds and disbursing money to students. Montana had limited funding, thus, had trouble providing youth with enough money to cover basic living expenses, and had a hard time tracking down students who had accessed ETV.

Another Educational Training Vouchers (EVT) limitation is the fact that youth are only provided with monetary aid, and no educational advocacy or mentoring; this despite the fact that studies suggest that the lack of available mentors in the foster
youth community contributes to the lack of educational success (CAI, 2007; Zetlin, Weinberg, Kimm, 2004). As a result of their multiple placements and their troubled lives, emancipated foster youth have difficulty bonding or connecting with caring adults. While in foster care, children are often placed in group homes or institutions which offer the “least family-like” setting and, therefore, are unable to form substantial relationships with mentors who will be able to connect, guide, and act as a buffer against the negative consequences that they face (Courtney & Heuring, 2005, p. 1; Wagner & Wonacott, 2008; Greeson & Bowen, 2008). Without the assistance of a mentor, tasks such as applying to college and filing for financial aid can be taxing and overwhelming. Unfortunately, the current federal ILP legislation does not emphasize the importance of mentors.

Problems such as multiple placements, poor educational outcomes, inadequate financial resources, and the lack of available mentors all contribute to the low educational attainment among the foster youth community. As a result, emancipated foster youth continue facing many educational deficits that prevent them from reaching autonomy and becoming self-sufficient adults. Although the federal government is working on ways to improve the educational outcomes that are experienced by former foster youth, and the manner in which such services are accessed, there are current gaps that exist in services for this population. Foster youth will continue to suffer the consequences until they are provided with stable education
while in care, and are provided with the educational resources needed once they leave care.

**Employment Services and Needs**

Research concludes that youth who age out of the child welfare system are particularly vulnerable to poor economic and social outcomes. It is well documented that former foster youth have high unemployment rates, show unstable employment patterns, progress more slowly in the labor market, and earn wages farther below the poverty level than non-foster care youth (NFCC, 2007; George, Bilaver, Lee, Needell, Brookhart & Jackman, 2002). As a result of the uneven employment patterns that many foster youth experience, they often end up homeless, incarcerated, and dependent on public assistance (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 2008; Lemon, Hines, & Merendinger, 2005; Collins, 2001). This section will provide information about economic hardships youth face, employment services provided through the ILP, and some of the shortcomings of those services.

Prior to the passage of the Chaffee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, the ILP limited its services to foster youth under the age of eighteen that were still in care. At the time there were no programs designed to help former foster youth successfully transition to adulthood (George, et al., 2002; Collins, 2001). Following the passage of the 1999 Chaffee Act the federal government required that states match the funding they received by twenty percent, in order to provide services to former foster youth between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one, for the purposes of “obtaining a high
school diploma, career and employment exploration, vocational training, and job placement and retention” (George, et al., 2002 p. 5). Through this change in legislation, congress stressed the importance of preparing youth to successfully manage their adult responsibilities (Office of Children’s Administrative Research [OCAR], 2004).

Since children in the foster care system cannot rely on their family for guidance or support, they must depend on child welfare agencies for direction, support, and the acquisition of basic life skills (Geenen & Powers, 2007; Altshuler, 2004). Therefore, the ILP envisioned providing independent living skills training that teaches marketable employment skills. The goal was to design employment services that provided opportunities for foster youth. However, according to the United States General Accounting Office [GAO] (2004), numerous states failed to provide a clear description of their employment-related services making it difficult to formally evaluate these services. States that have provided detailed descriptions of their employment services indicate that such services are not comprehensive. Despite the many efforts by the federal government to enact legislation that best serves the foster youth population, studies have concluded that few working mechanisms exist to successfully support their emancipation; thus, foster youth are receiving inadequate services (Altshueler, 2004).

Research suggests that employment programs are not the main focus of state ILP programs, and those that do exist are too broad and general to meet the needs of
this population (Collins, 2001; OCAR, 2004). Often, youth are offered basic employment classes but such programs do not include actual employment opportunities for them; therefore, training might not be enough to obtain and maintain employment (Naccarato & DeLorenzo, 2008 as cited in Iglehart, 1994; OCAR, 2004). Another problem that has been identified is the lack of hands on activities such as learning how to behave during an interview, and how to fill out an employment application or prepare a resume. Florida’s ILP employment services were identified in many instances to be “haphazard” due to the shortcomings of the curriculum (GAO, 2004). In addition, the instructors in this program were reported to be unprepared to offer the proper guidance and support to these youth. Trainers at these employment workshops were not familiar with the stressors and issues plaguing the foster youth community, and they were not aware of the workings of the child welfare system (GAO, 2004; Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 2008).

Regardless of the change in legislation, former foster youth continue to suffer employment and economic hardships as adults (OCAR, 2004; Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 2008). The Adult Functioning Study followed 723 former foster youth for a period of five years in order to track their progress and see how they were fairing in their transition to adulthood (Courtney, Dworsky, Cusick, Havlicek, Perez & Keller, 2007). This study conducted three separate interviews with foster youth in which the last one reported that only half of those employed and three quarters of the ones that are employ had incomes at or below the poverty level,
earning less than $6,000 per year in wages (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 2008; Courtney, et. al, 2007). This same study found that wages for non-foster youth in the same year were reported to be $9,120 per year, showing a large income disparity. The study also found that among foster youth three-quarters of females and one-third of males were receiving government benefits in order to help meet basic needs. Despite this aid, the majority did not have enough income to pay for basic needs, such as, rent, food, and utilities (Courtney, et. al, 2007). This study concluded that foster youth are less likely to earn a living wage and more likely to experience economic hardships than their peers (Courtney, et. al, 2007).

Despite all the efforts of the federal legislation, emancipated youth continue to experience economic hardships, underemployment, and high rates of unemployment. ILP legislation has failed to solve the problems that it was created to solve. Similar studies suggest that although the Chafee legislation was designed to address some of the shortcomings of the ILP, foster youth continue to leave care unprepared to maintain or maintain employment.

**Gaps in the Literature**

These researchers found a tremendous amount of information in regards to the detrimental outcomes faced by pre- and post- emancipated foster youth. However, very few studies addressed the positive outcomes of foster youth who emancipate from the child welfare system. Many of the studies found were limited in their sample size, regional location, and failed to provide a youth perspective. In addition, there was
very little information on longitudinal studies, on how counties provide and implement ILP services, and on race and gender as contributing factors. Studies also failed to address specific employment services provided by the ILP. The few studies that made recommendations for present foster youth participants came mainly from California Youth Connection members.

**Summary**

Despite the fact that it has been almost three decades since legislation was passed to address the needs of youth emancipating from care, this population continues experiencing detrimental outcomes after emancipation. Past and present studies report that foster youth continue to face homelessness, poor educational success, and multiple health and mental health issues. Therefore, they must rely on ILP services for emotional and financial support to make a successful transition to adulthood. In the process of accessing these services emancipated foster youth encounter many difficulties and barriers.

One of the difficulties that the literature addresses is the changes that the ILP legislation has undergone. In 1985 Congress established the Independent Living Initiatives (ILI), which was designed to offer training in basic living skills to foster youth up to the age of sixteen. At this point, funding for this legislation was not able to keep up with the high demands and failed to meet the needs of this population. As a result, in 1999 the Chafee replaced the ILI and established the ILP. The Chafee also expanded services for youth up to the age of twenty-one including an expansion of
medical, educational, and employment services. Due to the serious health and mental health problems suffered by emancipated youth, the ILP encouraged states to implement the Medicaid expansion options, allowing them to receive health insurance after they exit care. This Act also allowed states to help close the educational and employment gaps by providing financial resources and other related services.

Despite these legislative changes, studies report that emancipated foster youth continue to face many barriers and problems while trying to access ILP services. The lack of comprehensive services has been found to be the most prevalent barrier because it fails to address the unique needs of the child welfare population. In the next chapter, these researchers will discuss and present the methodology for this project.
Chapter 3

METHODS

Introduction

This chapter describes the research design and the methodology used for this research project, the goal which is to understand the benefits provided by the ILP program. The research question, the study population, and the methods that were used for obtaining the sample will be discussed. This chapter also includes a description of the data gathering procedures, the collection instrumentation, and the data analysis. Finally, this chapter describes the steps that were taken in order to protect the human subjects.

Research Question

This study explores the following research questions: What are the barriers that prevent emancipated foster youth from accessing the resources and benefits provided by the ILP? What is the importance of maintaining this program in Sacramento County?

Study Design

For the purpose of this research project the researchers conducted survey questionnaires using quantitative content analysis to better understand the problem. This descriptive survey study also sought to identify and understand the relationship among key factors in order to describe them in more detail and understand their
dynamics. Therefore, these researchers gathered information regarding youth and their experiences with ILP services. This research project used two non-probability sampling methods, snowball sampling and purposive sampling. Snowball sampling was achieved through foster youth referrals, and purposive sampling was achieved by seeking participants with specific characteristics and information about ILP services. These researchers recruited participants through the CSUS Guarding Scholars Program and through snowball referrals from youth who have participated in the ILP.

The purpose of the survey questionnaire was to provide these researchers with an understanding of the importance of comprehensive services, as well as highlight the significance of maintaining, supporting, and funding the ILP in Sacramento County. Although, the objective of using quantitative methods in this study was to obtain valuable information about foster youth in general, the outcome from this project cannot be generalized to a larger population. Because the sample size was so narrow, these researchers cannot use the findings to describe the experiences of all emancipated foster youth that participate in ILP services.

**Study Population**

This study examined the personal experiences of twenty-two emancipated foster youth who are currently enrolled or were previously enrolled in ILP services through Sacramento County. Participants were at least 18 years of age. These researchers applied no racial or ethnic filters for the prospective group of participants but actively tried to collect a diverse sample. Actual data consisted of thirteen males
and nine females, nine were African American, seven were Caucasian, three were African American, one was Latino, one Hispanic American and one identified as other race/ethnicity. Participants were recruited through the CSUS Guardian Scholars Program, and through snowball referrals.

Instrumentation

Survey questionnaires were conducted with individuals that volunteered to take part in the study. Through the survey questionnaire, these researchers gathered basic demographic data such as gender and ethnicity; however, no personal information such as name, date of birth, or address was collected. The survey questionnaires consisted of sixteen questions (Appendix A). These researchers explained to participants the objectives of this research project, talked about confidentiality and the consent form, indicated how to participate, and answered questions. The locations where surveys were conducted were chosen out of convenience for the respondents.

Throughout the survey questionnaire, participants were asked how the ILP services impacted their lives, and what experiences they had while accessing such services. This survey questionnaire included a series of focused and coordinated, closed-ended and open-ended questions which gather only information relevant to the objectives of this study. Closed-ended questions were designed to obtain short answers and open-ended questions were designed to encourage a full, meaningful answer (Yuen, In press).

Survey questionnaires helped these researchers collect data in a written format in
which each respondent provided clear and defined answers. The advantage of collecting data using survey questionnaires is that “the data can be used to demonstrate specific examples of the observed outcome of national service programs” (Yuen, In press, p. 38). Among some of the constraints of this data collection instrument is the fact that “it is difficult to balance specific and general questions and ensure that large or unexpected issues are not missed” (Yuen, In press, p. 38). Another problem with this instrument is that if questionnaires are not fully completed, the results of the study can be biased (Yuen, In press).

Data Gathering Procedures

These researchers collected twenty-two questionnaires from former foster youth who have accessed or are accessing services through the Independent Living Program (ILP) in Sacramento County. Participants were recruited from the CSUS Guardian Scholars program and through snowball referral. Consent forms from these agencies were obtained prior to gathering data.

Participants recruited through the CSUS Guardian Scholars Program were contacted by the department through e-mail. The department intern e-mailed the consent form, survey questionnaire, as well as the community resources sheet to potential participants. Participants returned the completed questionnaire survey to a yellow envelope located in the Scholars’ office. A box of candy bars was available in the intern’s office for participants.

Participants recruited through snowball referrals were approached individually.
The participants contacted these researchers to participate and were met in a location chosen by the participant and the researcher. Upon meeting, the participants were told about the survey questionnaire, the consent form, and the risks and benefits of participation. Participants were also assured of their confidentiality and voluntary participation. These participants were also provided with community resources in case any psychological discomfort was experienced. Researchers provided youth with an opportunity to answer the survey questionnaire, and they were instructed to place their questionnaires in a yellow folder with other filled out questionnaires. These youth were also offered a candy bar. Only foster youth over the age of eighteen were considered for participation. Consent was obtained by having subjects sign the consent form (Appendix B).

Data Analysis

Once the survey questionnaires were completed, all of the raw data was coded and analyzed using the SPSS program. With the data that is analyzed these researchers hope to better understand the experiences of youth who are accessing, or have accessed in the past ILP services.

Protection of Human Subjects

Prior to the study, the authors obtained approval from the California State University, Sacramento Division of Social Work’s Human Subjects Review Committee, which found the study to pose minimal risk for participants (human subject approval number is: 09-10-085). Though, this study involved minimal risk for
participants, it was anticipated that some participants would experience some psychological discomfort because they were asked how the ILP has impacted their lives, as well as their experiences with accessing services. Therefore, participants were provided with contact information for available community resources in case any psychological discomfort was experienced (Appendix C).

For ethical and legal reasons, this study assured participants of their confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. Confidentiality was achieved by only collecting information relevant to this study; no personal information such as name, date of birth, or address was collected. The informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to the survey questionnaires. The consent form gave a detailed description of the proposed research project, as well as the risk and benefits of participation, confidentiality issues, and the voluntary nature of the study (Appendix B). Participants were informed that they were not required to answer any questions that made them feel uncomfortable, and participants were informed that they could withdraw from this survey at any time. While participants filled out the survey, these researchers stepped outside the room in order to assure confidentiality. Participants were asked to place the questionnaire in a yellow envelope, and were informed that the survey questionnaires would be destroyed at the conclusion of the research study.

Summary

This chapter presents a description of the study population, how a sample of this population was drawn, and the methodology utilized to collect data from
participants for this research project. In chapter 4, the results of the data are analyzed and presented.
Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS

Questionnaires were conducted with twenty-two emancipated foster youth from Sacramento County to determine the barriers that prevented them from accessing the resources and benefits provided by the Independent Living Program (ILP). The researchers discovered what services the emancipated foster youth found the most helpful to access and what barriers they encountered. The purpose of the study was to investigate the following research questions: What are the barriers that prevent emancipated foster youth from accessing the resources and benefits provided by the ILP? What is the importance of maintaining this program in Sacramento County? The researchers found that foster youth face many difficulties in the process of accessing ILP services, however, the services provided to youth were identified as helpful. Therefore, the researchers determined that the ILP in Sacramento County is vital, and it is imperative that it continues to be funded.

Overall findings

Demographics. This study examined the personal experiences of nine women and thirteen men who are emancipated foster youth currently or previously enrolled in ILP services through Sacramento County. The participants’ ages ranged from eighteen to twenty-eight. Four participants were eighteen, seven were nineteen, three were twenty, two were twenty-one, three were twenty-three, one was twenty-five, one
was twenty-six, and one was twenty-eight. Nine participants were African-American, seven Caucasian, three Asian-American, one Hispanic-American, one Latino, and one identified as being half African-American and half Caucasian.

Two of the participants entered the foster care system at the age of four, one at five, two at eight, two at ten, two at eleven, three at twelve, two at thirteen, three at fourteen, two at fifteen and three at sixteen. One of the participants emancipated from the foster care system at the age of seventeen, seventeen of them at eighteen, and four of them at nineteen. (Figure 1)
Two participants received information about the ILP through a friend or peer, two through the mail, three through their ILP worker, and fifteen were told by their social worker. Seventeen of the participants stated that they had been motivated to participate in the ILP by their social worker, two of them by their foster parents, and three did not answer this question. Seven of the participants stated that they had

Figure 1: Age in which participants entered the foster care system
enrolled in the program because they thought it would benefit them with their emancipation, six wanted to take advantage of the services, four were required to attend by their social worker, and five did not answer the question. No data about the manner in which participants entered the child welfare system was collected because it was not relevant to the topic.

Findings

Benefits of ILP. Based on the analysis of the surveys, the researchers concluded that ILP services provided by Sacramento County were beneficial to emancipated foster youth after they left foster care. The researchers asked participants to identify the most helpful ILP services that they received or are currently receiving. Fifteen votes were given to housing, fourteen votes were given to employment, thirteen votes were given to educational, eleven votes were given to healthcare coverage, ten votes were given to workshops, and seven votes went to other services, such as transportation, mentoring by ILP social worker, and counseling services. One participant noted that the California Youth Connection (CYC) was also helpful in the transition to adulthood. (Figure 2)
Barriers. The survey revealed that in the process of accessing ILP services foster youth encountered a variety of barriers and obstacles. Emancipated foster youth identified healthcare coverage (Medi-Cal) as being the most difficult service to access mostly due to lack of awareness. Some of their difficulties included a lack of information and knowledge about the process, as well as difficulty re-enrolling in Medi-Cal due to its lengthy process. The researchers were not surprised because this information was consistent with the literature review. Despite the fact that the Foster
Care Independent Act of 1999 provided states with the option of extending healthcare coverage to emancipated foster youth up to the age of twenty-one, this process is difficult and complicated (National Association of Counties [NACO], 2008; Courtney, Dworsky, Cusick, Havlicek, Perez, Keller, 2007; Georgiades, 2005). California passed a bill that allows emancipated foster youth to receive healthcare coverage up to the age of twenty-one; however, many of them still do not receive or qualify for health and mental healthcare services (Courtney, et. al, 2007; Children’s Advocacy Institute [CAI]2007; English & Grasso, 2000). In California, emancipated youth are required to re-enroll following emancipation in order to receive healthcare coverage (CAI, 2007).

Emancipated foster youth identified employment training as being the second most difficult service to access. Some of their difficulties included not having enough job related skills to secure employment, the lack of available jobs, and the fact that the ILP employment program does not meet all their needs. As stated in the literature review, employment services for foster youth are too broad and general to meet the needs of this population (Collins, 2001; Office of Children’s Administration Research [OCAR], 2004). The ILP in Sacramento County offers basic employment classes, but the program does not include actual employment opportunities for them; therefore, training might not be enough to obtain and maintain employment (Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, n.d; P. Wiggins, personal communication, June 11, 2009).
Emancipated foster youth identified housing as being the next most difficult service to access due to the competition of resources. Some of the difficulties include the lack of money, lack of available housing, and the long waiting list on transitional housing. Participants also noted that “the Adolfo program was slow”, “I was broke and didn’t know where to go”, and “ILP didn’t send the forms”. Despite the fact that the ILP in Sacramento offers transitional housing through Adolfo Housing Services (AHS), there is a shortage of housing options (Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, 2009; Department Of Human Assistance [DHA], 2005; and Choca et al., 2004). The available facilities in this county can only house a small percentage of the approximately 387 foster youth who exit foster care each year (Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). During an interview with an ILP worker, the researchers discovered that the ILP has twenty-five available spots making this service extremely difficult to access (P. Wiggins, personal communication, June 11, 2009).

Emancipated foster youth identified education as being the next most difficult service to access. Some of the difficulties include the lack of information available to youth in regards to educational vouchers, financial aid, and the fact that they do not automatically qualify for aid. One participant explained that he was told that “all foster youth qualify” for the Chafee money which is available for foster youth, and he was not eligible. In this research project the researchers found that the Chafee educational vouchers are currently underfunded; therefore, states like California, with
a high foster youth population, have to turn away many applicants (NFCC, 2007).

(Figure 3)

Moreover, two of the emancipated foster youth indicated that although the ILP workshops were not difficult to access, transportation to the workshops was an issue.

Figure 3: Most difficult services to access by the ILP

Moreover, two of the emancipated foster youth indicated that although the ILP workshops were not difficult to access, transportation to the workshops was an issue.
Other difficulties identified by the foster youth were psychological and emotional issues and car problems.

*Incentives and satisfaction.* The researchers found that compensation was very important to emancipated foster youth who participated in ILP workshops. Seventeen of them reported that compensation was “very important”, three reported that compensation was “important”, one reported that compensation was “not important”, and one participant did not answer. A variety of gifts were offered in compensation, with money and food being by far the most prevalent. Five participants reported that they did not receive any compensation. Participant noted that compensation was an incentive to attend the workshops, and while they were there they learned vital information about the ILP services provided by Sacramento County.

Participants were also asked to rate the ILP services. Nine responded that services were “excellent”, nine responded that services were “good”, and four responded that services were “satisfactory”. Overall emancipated foster youth stated that the services offered through the Sacramento ILP were needed for the development of life and social skills, and helped them prepare for living on their own. One of the participants said “I think if I hadn’t taken advantage of them (ILP services) I would have been lost and unknowledgeable about emancipation”.

The researchers also asked emancipated youth their opinion about the age at which ILP services should be available to youth. Two participants responded that services should be available at age twelve, two at age thirteen, two at age fourteen,
five at age fifteen, seven at age sixteen, three at age seventeen, and one did not answer. Participants were also asked at what age ILP services should no longer be available to youth. Three responded that services should no longer be available at age twenty-one, two at age twenty-two, one at twenty-three, five at twenty-four, eight at twenty-five, one at twenty-seven and two did not respond. The greatest number of participants believed that services should be available at age sixteen and should remain available up to the age of twenty-five.

Through the questionnaire participants shared their opinions about the ILP services with the researchers. Several themes were found to be the most relevant. Participants stated that ILP services for emancipated youth are underfunded and that there is a lack of awareness of how to access services. Two problems were noted, lack of information regarding both the types of services available to them and the purpose of the workshops. Participants stated that ILP services need to be comprehensive, need to provide individual support, need to offer more services, and should have a higher worker to client ratio. Participants also noted the importance of providing motivation and encouragement. Participants stated that the ILP services provided great support for the emancipated foster youth who received them, and therefore, they should be funded and maintained.

Summary

The purpose of exploring these issues was to examine the barriers and problems that prevented foster youth from accessing ILP resources, to understand the
importance of the need for comprehensive services, and to identify the impact of these services in the lives of emancipated youth with the hope to demonstrate the importance of developing and continuing comprehensive services.
Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Through the literature review, the researchers became aware that Independent Living Program (ILP) services throughout the nation were inadequate and difficult to access due to the lack of funding (United States General Accounting Office [GAO] 2004; Kerker & Dore, 2006). The information obtained from this study supports the literature that exists in regards to the need for comprehensive services for emancipated foster youth. The researchers discovered that although the services provided by the Sacramento County ILP were comprehensive, these services were found to be inadequate for those emancipated foster youth who managed to access the services. In this study, the researchers identified which ILP services were the most helpful to access, and what barriers foster youth encountered when accessing such services. Based on the data collected, the researchers were able to demonstrate the importance of developing and maintaining comprehensive ILP services.

The researchers found that emancipated foster youth in this study were knowledgeable about what they need in order to make the transition to adulthood. The researchers did not conduct in depth face to face interviews with participants; however, participants were allowed to express themselves in the questionnaire through open-ended questions.
Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommend that the ILP in Sacramento County be made mandatory for all foster youth who are within a year of emancipation. County social workers would make sure that foster youth are actively engaged in services through the ILP by making this a part of their case plan. Furthermore, social workers would work with youth so that they understand the important role that ILP services play in their emancipation. The current system mandates that foster youth be referred to the ILP program, however, it does not require that youth participate or engage in services (Northern CA Training Academy, 2005). Studies have concluded that foster youth who participate in ILP services double their odds of a successful transition into adulthood (Dworsky, 2008). The Midwest evaluation study (2007) compared ILP participants with non-ILP participants and concluded that foster youth who access services made significant progress towards becoming independent. It is presumed that if foster youth are mandated to participate in ILP services, they will become aware of available services and learn how to access both ILP and community services which will facilitate their transition to adulthood. The researchers believe that at age seventeen foster youth are ready to receive this information because they are aware of their upcoming emancipation.

Another recommendation is that caregivers such as foster parents or guardians become knowledgeable about the importance of encouraging and supporting foster youth to access ILP services. The researchers found that foster parents were not
motivating their foster youth to engage in ILP services. Only two percent of the participants indicated that their caregivers motivated them to participate in ILP services. It is imperative that caregivers become allies and work in conjunction with ILP workers to make sure that foster youth learn the skills needed for emancipation. Caregivers need to be aware of the important role that they play in the lives of the youth in their care. It is assumed that the number of youth that access ILP will increase if caregivers are aware of how to access services, the type of services available, and how fundamental these services are for emancipating foster youth. As a result, it would be mandated that foster parents be informed during orientation of this added responsibility when caring for a youth; furthermore, this information would be added to the contract that foster parents sign. Foster family agencies would also be required to support foster parents by providing bus passes or arranging transportation when foster parents are unavailable to transport youth.

In a similar manner, it is imperative that county social workers inform, enroll, and motivate foster youth to participate in ILP services. Ninety percent of participants indicated that they had become aware of the ILP program through their county social worker. Approximately eighty percent of participants stated that their social worker had motivated them to access ILP services. Current Child Protective Services (CPS) guidelines dictate that social workers refer foster youth to the ILP, therefore, social workers should spend time during their visits talking, informing, and motivating foster youth to access ILP services. It is assumed that if ILP services are mandated, and both
foster parents and social workers join efforts, the chances of foster youth achieving self-sufficiency will increase. Despite the budget cuts that Sacramento County is currently facing, social workers are still required to visit their clients on a monthly basis and provide them with appropriate services. Therefore, social workers would continue to be mandated to motivate youth to participate in ILP services.

The following recommendations are based on participants’ answers in regards to ILP services. All of the participants indicated that the ILP services are in general helpful because they target their basic needs. However, they are only helpful if foster youth are aware of their existence, and are able to access them. Based on the participants’ answers, the most comprehensive ILP services were workshops. Several of the participants indicated that by participating in the workshops, they had been able to learn vital information about available services, and connect with other foster youth. However, participants indicated that the biggest barrier to accessing workshops was transportation. Therefore, the researchers are recommending that foster parents be mandated to arrange transportation to the ILP workshops.

Based on the participants’ answers, ILP educational services were found to be lacking as well. Foster youth in this study felt that the information they received through the workshops about educational services was misleading or too basic. One of the participants stated that he had been told that all foster youth qualified for financial aid; however, when he applied he was “denied financial aid”. Another foster youth felt that ILP coordinators did not know enough about the FAFSA grant. The
researchers realize that one of the problems in the process of accessing educational services is the lack of communication. Therefore, the researches recommend that foster youth be connected with a mentor who is knowledgeable about educational services, such as grants, scholarships, and EVT vouchers.

The researchers were surprised to find that participants identified housing as incomprehensive rather than inadequate. Participants did not identify this service as difficult to access despite the fact that the literature states that housing in Sacramento County is extremely competitive due to the small percentage of available housing. The researchers concluded that additional funding is needed in order to allocate housing for foster youth who have emancipated from the child welfare system. The researchers acknowledge that the current budget crisis has a direct impact on available housing for youth, thus, the researchers recommend that the ILP partner with community agencies in order to close this gap.

The researchers were able to conclude that ILP employment services were non-comprehensive due to the lack of employment opportunities. These services are currently contracted out to community agencies, and are limited to resume writing and filling out applications. Six of the participants stated that after participating in the ILP employment services they still had a difficult time finding and securing employment. Therefore, the researchers recommend that employment opportunities include additional services such as internships, apprenticeships, and networking.
opportunities. This can be accomplished by having the ILP partner with other community agencies such as local community colleges.

The researchers were able to conclude that Medi-Cal services were inadequate and difficult to access. Several of the participants reported that they were promised Medi-cal until their twenty-first birthday but were cut off at the age of eighteen. The literature confirms that foster youth are eligible for Medi-cal until their twenty-first birthday, but they must re-enroll in the program at the time of emancipation (Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, 2007). Several of the participants indicated that they were unaware that they needed to re-enroll; others stated that they had a difficult time understanding the lengthy and complicated process and as a result they were unable to re-enroll in Medi-cal. Therefore, the researchers recommend that a pre-requisite to emancipation is that all foster youth are connected with a worker that will help them re-enroll in Medi-cal once they emancipate.

*Implications for Social Work Practice and Policy*

Social workers have an ethical responsibility to advocate for social justice. As the code of ethics dictates, all social workers must promote the empowerment of their clients. As a result, it is important that social workers are aware of the challenges faced by foster youth in order to advocate for comprehensive services for this population. Current studies suggest that the ILP legislation does not meet the needs of foster youth who have emancipated from the system. It is also imperative that social
workers empower clients to seek services that will help them in their transition to adulthood.

County social workers play an important role in the lives of foster youth, and, as a result, it is important that social workers are aware of ILP services available to youth in order to inform and motivate foster youth to participate in such services.

Evaluation/Limitations

If the researchers had to do a similar project to this one, they would use a bigger sample in order to draw a better conclusion. Furthermore, in order to have a more comprehensive study the researchers would not limit their study to participants who have accessed ILP services; they would also include the perspective of the foster youth who have not accessed ILP services.

The researchers encountered difficulties finding local studies. It is imperative that local studies are conducted in order to determine what challenges and barriers foster youth face in the process of emancipation.

Implementation

The information found in this study can be used by social work practitioners as well as agencies that serve the foster youth population to better understand the needs and barriers encountered by this population. This study demonstrated the importance of developing and maintaining comprehensive ILP services. The findings in this study can also be used to advocate and better serve emancipated foster youth.
As this project was being developed, Sacramento County was undergoing some severe budget cuts that will change the manner in which ILP services will be delivered to emancipated foster youth. The full impact of these budget cuts was unknown at the conclusion of the project.
APPENDIX A

Survey Questionnaire

This questionnaire is intended to examine the barriers and problems that prevent emancipated foster youth from accessing the resources and benefits provided by the Independent Living Program (ILP), as well as examine the impact that the ILP has had in your life. Your participation is important. If you consent to this questionnaire please fill it out and return it to the yellow folder. You do not have to answer any question you do not feel comfortable answering.

Gender: (circle one)  Age: ______________

Male    Female

Race/Ethnicity: (circle one)  

Hispanic-American    African American
Caucasian            Asian-American
Native-American      Other: (please specify) __________.

1. How old were you when you first entered the foster care system?

__________.

2. How old were you when you left the foster care system? ______________.

3. How old were you when you first learned about the Independent Living Program (ILP)? ______________.

4. How did you receive this information: (circle one)

Mail    Flyer    Social worker    ILP worker    Friend/Peer    Other____
5. Why did you choose to enroll in the ILP program? (Please explain why)

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

6. Did someone motivate/encourage you to seek ILP services? If yes, specify who? ________________________________________________

7. What services were the most helpful to you after you left foster care? (Please circle all that apply).

   Workshops                        Housing services
   Employment services               Medi-Cal coverage
   Educational services                          other _______________

8. At what age do you think ILP services should be available to foster youth?

   ________________________________

9. In your opinion, at what age should these services no longer be available to youth? ________________

10. What are the barriers or obstacles that you have encountered in the process of accessing ILP service? (Please circle all that apply).

    Difficulties participating in: Workshops, why____________________________

    Difficulties obtaining: Medi-Cal Coverage, why__________________________

    Difficulties obtaining: Housing Services, why____________________________

    Difficulties obtaining: Employment services, why________________________

    Difficulties obtaining: Educational vouchers / financial aid / scholarships, why___________________
11. Did you experience any other difficulties?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

12. Did you receiving any type of compensation for participating in ILP services? (Please circle all that apply).

Money  food/snacks  token  Other___________

13. How important have these types of compensations been for you? (circle one)

Very important  important  not really important  not important

14. How would you rate the ILP services you participated in: (circle one)

Excellent  Good  Satisfactory  Poor

15. Why?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

16. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the ILP program or services?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your time!
Dear participant,

You are being invited to participate in a research project, conducted by Dulce Ruatti and Eréndida Vázquez, social work students at California State University Sacramento (CSUS). This study will investigate the barriers and benefits of the Independent Living Program (ILP) in Sacramento. The objective of this research project is to survey young men and women who have gone through or are using the ILP in Sacramento County, in order to understand the struggles and barriers they have encountered while accessing ILP services. This study also attempts to understand the benefits provided by this program.

The information collected will assist these researchers in better understanding the role of the ILP in youth’s lives. Although, the information gathered might not benefit you directly, what is learned from this study should benefit future young men and women that participate in the ILP. There are no known risks if you decide to participate in this research study, nor are there any costs for participating. However, you may have some memories around your experiences with these services that may cause some psychological discomfort. If you experience any distress at any time after completing this survey, please refer to the attached card, which includes contact information for agencies who offer counseling services on a sliding fee scale.
The survey is voluntary so please do not write your name on it. If you choose to participate, please place the questionnaire in the yellow envelope. You are not required to answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable. The questionnaires will be kept in a locked box and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the research study. There is a candy bar available for answering the survey. If you have any questions, comments or concerns about completing the questionnaire or about being in this study, you may contact us at (916) 925-0338 or at erendida12@yahoo.com. This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Susan Talamantes Eggman, associate professor in the division of social work at California State University, Sacramento; she can be reached at (916) 278-7181.

Your signature below indicates that you have read this page and agree to participate in the research.

___________________________    _______________
Signature of participant      Date
APPENDIX C

Counseling Services

If you experience any psychological discomfort, please contact one of the following agencies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South Sacramento Counseling Center (SSCC)</th>
<th>Hope Counseling Center</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7486 Center Parkway</td>
<td>2623 24th St</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacramento, CA 95823</td>
<td>Sacramento, CA 95818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(916) 427-5208</td>
<td>(916) 444-2170 (Midtown Sacramento)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:mkef30@juno.com">mkef30@juno.com</a></td>
<td>916-780-1059 (Roseville)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:hopecounseling@earthlink.net">hopecounseling@earthlink.net</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Horizon Counseling Center</th>
<th>ASDL Services, Inc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3300 Walnut Ave</td>
<td>6615 Valley Hi Drive, Suite B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmichael, CA 95608-3240</td>
<td>Sacramento , CA 95823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(916) 485-1211</td>
<td>(916) 525-1227</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In need of other services? Call infoline Sacramento at 211 or (916) 498-1000.

**These agencies operate on a self-referral basis and their fees are on a sliding scale.**
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