

BRIEF REPORT ON EDUCATION

Based on the *Link* Program Evaluation Study



Link Evaluation - Overview and Methodology

For the past 25 years, Aunt Leah's Place has been providing programs for youth in foster care, teen moms, and those transitioning out of foster care.

The *Link* Program - designed for former foster youth aged 19 and older - provides: housing-related support, life skills workshops, help with resumes, job searches and applications, drop-in, emergency food and clothing, outreach and one-to-one support tailored to issues identified by each youth.

In 2012-2014, researchers from the University of Victoria School of Social Work conducted and evaluation of the *Link*. A total of 53 people were interviewed twice at 6-9 month intervals.

- 21 *Link* program participants
- 22 youth from care who had not accessed the *Link* program (comparison group)
- 6 program staff; and
- 4 support people (of the youths)

This brief report offers a summary of findings related to education based on interviews with a total of 43 youth from foster care at Time 1 and 31 at Time 2.

WHAT WAS THE EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF YOUTH IN THE EVALUATION STUDY?

Highlights of the Findings

- 43% (18/42¹) completed Grade 12
- 57% (24/42) did not complete high school
 - 13 completed Grade 11
 - 7 completed Grade 10
 - 4 completed Grade 9 or less
- 12% (5/42) were taking high school courses or were enrolled a training course
- 14% (6/42) were taking courses at a post secondary program, college, or university; all of these were youth who had completed Grade 12.

¹ Note, the calculation is based on 42 youth; 1 participant did not answer the question.

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Painting "The Things We Remember" by Cori Creed

WHAT WERE THE EDUCATIONAL PLANS OF YOUTH IN THE EVALUATION STUDY?

The youth were asked about their educational plans and status in relation to completing high school or continuing with their education or training.

Highlights of the Findings

- At the Time 1 interview, 26% of participants (11/43) were actively engaged in some form of education – i.e., taking high school upgrading courses or enrolled in a training program, college, or university program. Another 46% were “thinking about attending” a program, although most had made no firm commitment or decision.
- At the second interview, this shifted. While the number of youth actively engaged in some type of education or training remained consistent (11/31 or 35%), the number of youth who expressed no interest in attending school increased noticeably (i.e., from 21% to 36%). This may be explained in part by who was remaining in the study and who was lost through attrition (9/12 lost to attrition said they were thinking about attending school, had plans, or were attending school).

Table 1: Study Participants’ Education Plans

PLANS FOR EDUCATION	Time 1 n = 43	Time 2 n = 31
Thinking about attending and have a (concrete) plan about applying	14%	6%
Thinking about attending but no plan yet	32%	20%
Not interested or planning to attend school	21%	36%
Currently taking courses to complete high school	12%	13%
Attending college, university, training program	14%	23%
Applied to college or training program	7%	3%

WHAT DO YOUTH FROM CARE SAY IN RELATION TO WANTING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION?

Highlights of the Findings

- At both Time 1 and Time 2, education was among the most frequently identified areas of life in which study participants said that additional support would be helpful.

“I need to get my Grade 12. My life kept getting in the way. I dropped out in Grade 10, so it gets harder as I get older, to go back.”

“I want funding for education.”

“I would like to get school done. Right now I just need Grade 12 English.”

Table 2: Study Participants’ Responses Regarding “What Additional Supports Would be Helpful?”

TYPE OF ADDITIONAL SUPPORT WANTED	LINK		CG	
	Time 1 (n=21)	Time 2 (n=16)	Time 1 (n=22)	Time 2 (n=15)
Budgeting/financial literacy	33%	0%	24%	7%
Employment	29%	19%	29%	20%
Education	19%	13%	24%	27%
Income	19%	25%	14%	20%
Legal/advocacy	29%	0%	10%	7%
Housing	14%	6%	14%	20%
Mental health	10%	0%	29%	13%
Parenting/childcare	10%	12%	0%	0%

A full report of the evaluation can be accessed at: <http://www.uvic.ca/hsd/socialwork/research/home/projects/index.php>