

CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM and EDUCATION and TRAINING VOUCHER PROGRAM

Summary 2011

Introduction

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) has used its Chafee Foster Care Independence Program grant funds to support a variety of services with the objectives of preparing youth and young adults ages 14-21 for successful transitions to adulthood while assisting them to develop permanent connections to caring and committed adults. The Chafee funded programs have been based on the principles of positive youth development and address each of the five purpose areas of the legislation:

- Help youth transition from dependency to self-sufficiency.
- Help youth receive education, training and services necessary to obtain employment.
- Help youth prepare for, enter and succeed in post-secondary training and educational institutions.
- Provide personal and emotional support to youth through mentors and the promotion of interactions with dedicated adults.
- Provide financial, housing, counseling, employment, education, and other appropriate support services to former foster care youth ages 18-21.

Understanding that success for youth is multi-dimensional, we strive to provide holistic services to youth and address all three key components of safety, permanency and well being. Educational achievement and life skill mastery with permanent connections to family and/or other caring enduring relationships with adults are the goals for our youth.

Overview

There were 9,726 individuals in placement with DCF on the last day of the 4th Quarter of FY'2010. Included in this count are 8,097 children (less than 18 years old) and 1,629 young adults (18 to 23 years old).

There were 7,424 consumers in foster care and 1,880 consumers in congregate care on the last day of the 4th Quarter of FY'2010.

The service needs of these youth are significant and varied. In addition to case management, DCF provides placement services for children and youth; the type of placement services include a range of settings - Departmental foster care, kinship care, contracted intensive foster care, congregate care, independent living programs, etc. depending on the youth's individual needs. In addition, support and stabilization services offer youth and families a variety of services to address safety, permanency and well being. These services strengthen, support, or maintain a family's ability to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children and youth. These services are designed to build upon the existing strengths and resources of family members and to enhance the ability of

youth and families to better meet their goals and identified needs. Stabilization services may be delivered in a variety of settings for the purpose of achieving any of the permanency plans as defined by the agency.

Accomplishments

Following is a summary of the continuing progress the agency has been made during this past year to achieve our program goals.

- DCF held a Youth Leadership Institute in June 2010. Forty youth attended the 2-day Institute and workshops on Strategic Sharing, Professional Presentation Skills, and an overview of DCF with a question and answer session. The evaluations were very positive and recommended an annual Leadership event. This July 12 and 13 DCF will present a Youth Summit preceded by a Youth Leadership Event.
- Recognition celebrations were held again this year for youth across the state to honor their educational/vocational achievements. DCF honored 32 graduates with Bachelor Degrees and 23 with Associate Degrees.
- DCF held the annual statewide College Fair for foster youth, providers, parents and staff to learn about the opportunities of post-secondary education as well as the state and federal financial support available.
- DCF successfully implemented efforts to comply with the National Youth in Transition Database requirements utilizing guidance for our Youth Advisory Boards.
- Additional accomplishments are noted in relevant topic sections within this report.

Adolescent Outreach Program

The Adolescent Outreach Program employs a strength-based approach, providing intensive, individualized life skill assessment and training services to current foster youth and young adults ages 14-21 from across the state to assist them in developing necessary skills and supports to achieve their potential. Program services are also available to youth who were guardianship or adopted from DCF after attaining age 16 and to former foster youth who discharged from DCF between ages 18-21 and in some instances youth who discharged from agency care at age 17 and request services. This extension of eligibility will continue as program funds allow.

Outreach services as a whole address each of the purpose areas of the Chafee legislation assisting youth with life skill development, access to education, training and other services necessary to obtain employment, support through mentors and connections to family and life long supports. The Outreach staff also assist youth with planning for and succeeding in post-secondary educational settings. DCF would like to continue to extend eligibility for Chafee services, as available, to foster youth who

leave care/custody at age 17 but request services after age 18. This extension would provide a safety net for those young adults who are in need of additional transitional services.

Serving Youth Across the State

The services funded with the Chafee Foster Care Independence Grant funds are available to eligible youth and young adults across the state – internships, discharge support, etc. In the area offices where there is not an Adolescent Outreach worker assigned, the regional Outreach Program Supervisor will be available to assist youth.

Serving Youth of Various Ages and States of Achieving Independence

The DCF life skill curriculum, Preparing Youth for Young Adulthood (PAYA), is the standard tool used to guide the life skill development of youth ages 14 and older. The delivery of life skills training using the PAYA curriculum is mandated by all youth ages 14 and older in residential and group care settings, independent living programs, and youth in contracted foster care. Foster parents, providers, and staff are encouraged to integrate the information and activities suggested in the modules into the daily learning opportunities for youth in their care. The PAYA incentive program is also available to these youth.

For youth under age 16, PAYA is the most common method of life skill preparation utilized although it is available to all youth.

For youth ages 16 -21, the Adolescent Outreach Program is a resource offered – intensive life skills training and support with educational achievement, job readiness, placement and maintenance, informed decision making, money management, etc. are some of the targeted services. Access to full Outreach services may be limited by the availability of an Outreach worker in specific geographic locations.

Youth who, after attaining age 16, left foster care for adoption or guardianship will be eligible for the same services. The Independent Living Support Program is also available to youth ages 14 and older (depending on funding limitations); it provides funding for life skill related items and activities.

Youth Served

From July 2010 to June 2011, the Outreach staff served 1110 youth and young adults. Of these, 380 youth and young adults received or are presently receiving intensive, weekly individualized life skill assessment to identify their strengths, life skills training to address their needs, as well as assistance for youth in developing and strengthening life long connections to caring adults. These services support the youth in mastering the skills they will need to live successfully in the community upon discharge from agency care. During this same time period, 730 additional youth received assistance from Outreach staff to assist with job search, education, financial aid/college applications, housing support, Mass Health applications, and/or referral/resource information.

Permanency and self-sufficiency for current and former foster youth are two of the principal objectives Outreach staff work toward. This program enhances the agency's capacity to better prepare youth, age 14-21 for moving from agency care to permanence and strengthens their chances of leading productive lives within the community after

discharge. This relational model of programming provides a highly individualized approach and accommodates youth with a variety of clinical issues and cognitive functions.

The majority of youth served in the program are age 17 and older. The majority, 93% of the youth on the active caseload as of June 2011 were open for case management services with DCF, and 3.5% of the active Outreach caseload had been discharged from DCF at age 18 or later and were recently re-opened with DCF for services. These young adults include self-referrals and those referred to the program by community service agencies, homeless shelters, former foster parents, DCF social workers, etc.

The program is presently staffed by 15 Outreach workers (14.20 FTE) as well as 3 Outreach supervisors. Overall program management is provided by the Director of Adolescent Support Services.

Staffing and Service Overview

Each full-time Outreach Worker carries an active caseload of 15 adolescents. The each staff works closely with the DCF case managers, foster parents, group care providers, community service providers and adults important to the youth to offer opportunities for youth and young adults to learn life skills through practical activities and achievements in their communities. Assisting youth identify their educational/vocational goals and develop strategies to realize their potential are critical tasks for program staff.

Fundamental to the program's success is its strength-based approach and focus on youth development. Youth are essential partners in their own goal setting, service planning, and life skill training, a key factor which facilitates their successful transitions into the community. Youth are encouraged to practice newly acquired skills and utilize problem-solving techniques effectively - within a safety net of adult supervision and support. Youth are continually empowered to establish goals, make decisions and practice newly acquired skills. Youth are also prepared to handle mistakes, disappointments and failures. The ultimate goal is to equip youth to live interdependently within the community, become self-supportive and able to advocate for themselves, as necessary. Through focused discussions around decision-making/problem solving, community-based activities and goal-focused skill building tasks, youth develop the skills necessary to cope with the challenges of adulthood and live self-sufficiently in their communities.

In addition, the workers also provide six months of follow-up tracking services to the adolescents who have been discharged from the program. Following the six months of tracking, youth are moved to a closed status. However, prior to the closing, all youth are encouraged to contact the program should they ever need additional services.

Outreach workers also provide resource information to youth, staff, providers and foster parents. Often Outreach workers will provide short term services to youth around education, housing, and life skills or any number of other issues that may arise. The program categorizes this work as contact services and does not include these youth in the active caseload count. This past year staff provided 730 youth with such support. This number is likely under reported as the Outreach staff have assisted many youth with completing the NYTD survey this year and in the process have provided information on DCF support services, educational programs, etc.

Outcomes

Since its implementation, the Adolescent Outreach Program has continued to assist youth reach their life skill goals. Highlights of the most recent statistical review in June 2011 are presented below. The percentages are based on a total of 181 youth who had received program services this year, but have been discharged from the program. Seventy-one percent (71%) of these cases remain open with DCF, 4% were cases that DCF re-opened after the youth left at age 18 and 24% were closed cases.

Education

- 67% attained a high school diploma
- 9% attained a GED certificate
- 13% were still enrolled in high school
- 7% were enrolled in a GED program
- 2% are on wait list for GED or Job Corps
- <1% were enrolled in 766 alternative school
- 1% of youth dropped out of high school with no other educational services in place

Among these 138 youth who completed high school or a GED ----

- 31% were enrolled in a 2 year college;
- 17% were enrolled in a 4 year college;
- 5% were enrolled in a post-secondary vocational training program
- 8% had completed a post-secondary vocational training program
- 8% have been accepted to a 2 year college to begin in the fall;
- 4% have been accepted to a 4 year college to begin in the fall;
- 1% received an Associates Degree

Employment

- 15% of the youth were employed full-time
- 47% part-time
- 14% were working part-time during school year and full time in the summer
- 3% have secured jobs for the summer
- 5% were not working due to pregnancy or parenting responsibilities
- 2% were not working due to placement issues
- 4% were not working due to educational commitments
- 1% were not working due to documented disability
- 3% in internships or volunteer work
- 3% unknown

Additional Information

- 4% were participating in an internship or volunteer position in addition to employment
- 25% were enrolled with a Career Center
- 5% had applied to WIA for employment

The employment statistics reflect the fact that 80% of these youth were still attending high school, GED classes, college or vocational training.

Other Source of Income

- 3% were receiving Social Security disability benefits
- 59% were receiving state funded youth support payments
- 5% were receiving TANF
- 25% were receiving SNAP benefits
- 41% received ETV payments this year
- 39% used the MA Tuition and Fee Waiver
- 25% received state Foster Child Grant funds for full time post-secondary education
- 2% were utilizing a Family Unification Voucher through the Outreach Program

Placement

- 36% were living in their own apartments with or without roommates
- 17% were living in DCF foster homes
- 13% had returned to live with their immediate or extended family
- 7% were living in college dorms
- 7% were living with friends & paying rent
- 5% were living in an independent living program or group care
- 4% were living in a kinship foster home
- 2% were living in a contracted Intensive Foster care placement
- 2% were renting a room
- 2% were living with friends-not paying rent
- 1% were living with former foster parent – paying rent
- 1% were in a substance abuse rehabilitation program
- <1% were in the military
- <1% were in jail/prison
- <1% were at Job Corps
- <1% were living in a Young Parents Program
- 0% were in shelter
- 2% were unknown

Other Services

- 10.5% of the youth were taking psychotropic medications as prescribed
- 1.1% were prescribed psychotropic medications but were not taking them
- 1.1% were receiving substance abuse services
- none of youth were receiving services from the Dept. of Mental Health
- 3% were receiving services from the MA Rehabilitation Commission
- 3% were on probation through the courts

Additional Outcomes

- 83% had a connection their birth parent(s)
 - ❖ *10% were in touch via telephone only*
 - ❖ *73% were visiting or living with parents*
- 97% of youth have a community support system
- 99% of youth have an identified life long connection
- 95% of the youth who had siblings were connected with them; of these youth:
 - ❖ *5% through phone calls only*
 - ❖ *90% were visiting or living with their siblings*
- 88% of the youth have a connection with their extended birth family;
 - of these youth:
 - ❖ *15% through phone calls only*
 - ❖ *84% are visiting with extended family*

The full reports for the Closed/Tracking Caseload Statistics, June 2011, and the Active Caseload Statistics, June 2011 are all available.

At this time, there are no significant changes to the program planned beyond continued outreach to youth serving agencies to increase collaboration.

Collaboration and Outcomes

- On May 1 this year DCF again partnered with Jordan's Furniture Store to present the annual statewide Youth Achievement Celebration honoring youth who graduated from high school, college, a vocational training program or received a GED during the year. This year more 562 youth were invited to the celebration to share food, activities and a movie. The graduates were also given a certificate of achievement and donated gifts to commemorate their accomplishments. Three regions will also celebrate their graduates this June at local events.

- DCF has continued its efforts to strengthen connections with WIA funded agencies for current and former foster youth. The Outreach Program staff have made concerted efforts of collaboration with their local WIA agencies and career centers to access services and supports for our foster youth. This year 26% of the youth who were served by Outreach were enrolled at a Career Center in June 2011. This is an increase of 3% over last year at this time.
- Solutions Desk: Community of Practice Phone Call (formally Shared Youth Vision): Monthly participation in the Community of Practice conference call hosted by the National Resource Center for Youth Services. These phone calls focus on best case practice with members from across the country. They allow insight to national best practices, and provide support and suggestions around supporting transition aged youth.
- EHS Task Force on Employment: the Executive Office of Health and Human Services developed the Task Force to bring together interagency staff to identify strategies to assist individuals served by the EHS agencies with accessing employment. The task force has provided a forum for agencies to work together to address the needs of common consumers around employment.

This year the Task Force has worked to two main goals: Labor Market Driven Job Development and an interagency unified approach to working with job developers. The Task Force has built upon work of last year and has continued to develop an online resource for job developers and consumers to utilize the latest labor market analysis. It also has provided a message board and newsletter to keep staff updated of trends in both goals. The Task force conducted statewide training open to all EHS agencies in how to best use the on line resources. This resource also includes access to JOB Quest, an online Massachusetts job bank. Transition-aged youth are included in the target population of supporting employment opportunities. Outreach staff have been informed of the online resources and have, in turn, shared with youth seeking employment.

- The state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and DCF have continued to work collaboratively to improve the data sharing activities. The two agencies have a Data Sharing MOU which is now providing DCF social workers with information on the MCAS (MA Comprehensive Assessment System) scores for youth in its care/custody. This information improves social workers' understanding of how youth in care are progressing in school and if remedial assistance is necessary. The data is provided three times per year based on a match of our children and youth in placement with data that ESE receives from the school districts. We are in the process of beginning to distribute these reports to our local area offices so that they can address trends and work with districts to improve service delivery.
- Two area offices have been working with their local school districts with support from our IT folks through an MOU to share pertinent school attendance data and grades with the expectation of improving school continuity and performance (New Bedford and Springfield). We hope to expand this collaborative MOU to other districts.

- Governor established a **Child and Youth Readiness Cabinet** in October 2008, a state leadership team chaired jointly by the Secretaries of Education and Human Services to focus on streamlining efforts to improve services for children and families in the commonwealth.
- DCF has developed and been managing for the past 5 years, an initiative jointly funded by DCF, ESE and DMH called the **Integrated, Comprehensive Resources in Schools (ICRS)**. This initiative has developed a model of service integration and collaboration in the schools to support all children, but particularly those identified as high risk. Nine school districts have been involved in this activity. Two of the school districts have been directly involved with the development and support of one of the Family Resource Centers (**Athol/Orange**). All 9 districts have developed partnerships with behavioral health agencies and have been focusing on integrating social/emotional learning into the school curricula and activities. The ICRS school districts: Athol, Orange, W. Springfield, Agawam, Attleboro, Lowell, New Bedford, Beverly, Weymouth.
- DCF is working to distribute a joint guidance document and FAQ with ESE on **Fostering Connections to Success** to support educational stability and academic achievement.
- DCF has 29 Education Coordinators affiliated with each of our geographical area offices to provide assistance, training and support to workers and families for all education and special education related concerns that impact our children and youth. This includes school enrollment, school engagement and supporting transitions for youth who are hospitalized or returning from congregate care placements.
- The DCF Adolescent Services staff have continued to develop collaborative working relationships the Board of Higher Education and with staff (support services and financial aid) from the state 2 and 4 year public colleges as well as the University of MA campuses to enhance the availability of and access to these resources for our students. During next few years focused efforts will continue to strengthen and expand these collaborations. These working relationships have been very helpful in resolving issues on behalf of our shared students.
- The Department remains an active participant in the statewide teen pregnancy prevention workgroup. Other members include public health staff, pregnancy prevention advocates, and community based agencies serving at risk youth.
- **Jordan's Furniture Store – DCF Youth Donation Program**
The Department of Children and Families has formed a partnership with Jordan's Furniture to assist youth who are transitioning into their first apartments. In an effort to support these youth, Jordan's Furniture provides stipends in the form of gift cards to put toward needed furniture. Eligible youth are between the ages of 17-23 who are leaving placement or who will move into housing in order to pursue

- Twenty five foster youth participated in 2 legal seminars entitled, Empower Yourself, that were presented by two community volunteers, a retired attorney and financial consultant. Each seminar included 6 sessions with topics ranging from credit and debt management to the judicial system.

Independent Living Support Program

This program provides Chafee funds for youth ages 14 -21 in placement or those youth who discharged from placement at or after age 18 to support their life skill development and transition needs, such as bus passes, SAT fees, senior class expenses, athletic uniforms, sports fees, tutoring, furniture, computers, etc. Between July 2010 and June 2011, 564 youth (total of \$305,730) received funding from this program.

Life Skill Curriculum

Preparing Adolescents for Young Adulthood (PAYA) is the Department's own life skill curriculum that has been successfully used by the foster parents, residential and group care programs and intensive contracted foster care agencies for more than 20 years to help ensure continuity in the life skills training for youth in out- of- home placement. The components of the PAY A curriculum include five (5) life skills modules, each of which incorporates a number of related skill areas as described below:

Module 1: Money, Home and Food Management

Module 2: Personal Care, Health, Safety and Decision-Making

Module 3: Education, Job Seeking and Job Maintenance

Module 4: Housing, Transportation, Community Resources, Laws and Recreation

Module 5: Young Parents Guide – Sexuality, Reproduction, Decision-Making, Pre-Natal Care, Pregnancy, Child Development, Child Safety, Physical Care, Education and Career Planning and Housing

Currently, there are three components of each skill topic including:

- Assessment - to measure the youth's current level of skill mastery.
- Skill Plan - to guide the adolescent, his/her foster parent, group care provider and social worker in defining an action plan to promote skill building in the topic areas identified as needing increased mastery. (The skill plan can be used to document the specific tasks and activities which are to be included in the service plan for adolescents in substitute care who are age 14 or older.)
- Activity Workbook - to provide exercises and related resource information to support the adolescent as he/she learns and practices newly learned skills.

The PAYA curriculum also includes a Training Guide to assist staff and foster parents in the implementation of the program services. The Guide also presents strategies for working with adolescents around readiness for community living and teaching specific life skills. Preparation for agency discharge and the after-care needs of youth are also addressed. This year the Adolescent Services Unit updated the PAYA Training Guide to provide a more comprehensive overview of the training protocol.

Module 2 (Personal Care, Health, Safety and Decision-Making) is under revision and should be completed in the fall of 2011.

PAYA Life Skill Groups

- A twelve week PAYA group was held at the Dimock DCF office between September and December 2010. Twelve to fifteen youth from the Boston offices participated weekly. Several PAYA Modules were used including:
 - ❖ Education and Job Seeking Skills: Youth learned how to write resumes, cover letters and thank you notes. They also practiced interviewing skills. In this section DCF college funding and Voluntary Placement Agreements post 18 services and options were discussed.
 - ❖ Money, Home and Food Management: The youth learned how to grocery comparison shop using an online shopping tool. The youth were given a small budget to follow and learned how to manage their money. Topics also covered were how to prepare small meals and eat healthy. The participants shared recipes with each other and the group shared a meal using some of these recipes.
 - ❖ Personal Health and Social Skills: Youth learned how to properly use over-the-counter medication. Safety and first aid were also covered and each youth was given a first aid kit. How to designate a medical proxy was discussed. Other topics included information about dating violence, cyber bullying and safe internet use.

- An eight week PAYA group was held in the New Bedford office between January and March of 2011. Fourteen youth participated in this group. This group covered the Education and Job Seeking Skills Module as described above. This group also covered topics around contraception and pregnancy prevention, STD/STI (prevention, symptoms and treatment), and implications of teen pregnancy. Time was also spent discussing understanding the law, and how choices around crime/drugs could impact their lives.
- A four week PAYA group was held in the Dimock office between March and April of 2011. Five youth participated. This group covered the Education and Job- Seeking Skills Module.

PAYA Incentive Program

Since the implementation of the PAYA Program more than 20 years ago, the Department has utilized incentives to reward adolescents for their successful completion of a skill module, encourage their development of self-esteem, and empower them to continue their efforts of enhancing their life skills. The youth also learn to set goals for themselves and work toward their achievement – as well as the tangible reward. In order to qualify for an incentive, a youth must master the skills addressed in the individual life skill module. Youth may request \$50 for a life skill related item or a one time payment of \$300 toward driver education training. From July 2010 to June 2011, 350 youth were awarded PAYA incentives for a total cost of \$51,100.

Training Provided

- The Adolescent Services Unit presented 15 PAYA Trainings this year including 13 in area offices from all four regions. Two of the trainings were for foster parents in the Taunton area and the Learning Center for the Deaf. Approximately 300 people were certified or re-certified in PAYA.
- Adolescent Support Services staff presented on adolescent services at the 9 CORE training provided as part of pre-service training to DCF Social Workers this year.
- The Adolescent Services Unit staff also continued to provide technical assistance to congregate care programs and contracted intensive foster care agencies to assist their staff with utilization of the PAYA (Preparing Adolescents for Young Adulthood) life skill curriculum and transition planning for foster youth.
- During the last four years, Outreach workers along with Adolescent Support Services staff have provided resource information and technical assistance to all

Mentoring/Internships Programs

DCF Internship Program

The Department has continued to partner with private businesses and community based organizations in providing internship opportunities for DCF youth with the goal of assisting youth gain valuable work experience and exposure to careers in which they have expressed an interest. Utilizing the support of the Outreach staff who provide on-going supervision of the internships, the program matches motivated and committed youth with employers in their communities in career orientated internship placements. Outreach workers who meet with youth on a weekly basis work to identify areas of interest and help seek out an internship opportunity to explore their field of choice. Outreach workers assess the youth's current employment skills and provide support around job readiness in areas such as appropriate dress, workplace ethics, time management and transportation. Outreach workers can also support the internship supervisors to address any needs or concerns that may arise during the placement. Outreach staff use the PAYA Life Skill Curriculum Module 3 to assist youth with employment readiness skills.

These internships give the youth a chance to explore potential career opportunities and encourage youth to set educational and vocational goals, form natural mentor connections with employers and employees in a field they are interested in and gain experience in a professional work setting.

DCF youth are paid a stipend by the Department for their participation in this program. The average youth initially works 40 hours with an opportunity for a 40 hour extension. The youth receives a \$7 an hour stipend. The stipend payment is managed by the Outreach Worker and given to the youth when the employer verifies that the hours have been completed. Some youth go on to be hired by the employer and/ or form long term mentoring relationships. The internship program has been a great way to expose youth to a vocational or professional work setting and motivate them to continue with their educational goals.

In 2010/2011 there were **90 internship referrals**. All were matched with internships. Of these, 57 youth have completed their internships and 33 youth have ongoing internships.

Of the 57 completed internships, 25 youth have reported continued mentor relationships with their employer (44%), 13 youth were hired by the employer (23%), and 11 continue to volunteer at their internship placement(19%).

Some of the internships this year included:

YMCA	St Francis Nursing Home	Cambridge Health Center
Century 21	Head Start	On the Road Again Preschool
Lynn Housing	Lawrence Public Schools	Noelle Salon
MSPCA	Charlton Hospital	Gray Dove Farm

DCF Mentoring Program

The DCF Adolescent Support Services Unit continues to support a small traditional mentoring program. Youth who participate in this program are in an out of home placement, over the age of 14, and are not likely to return home before the age of 18. Youth participation in this program is voluntary. The mentoring relationship is geared towards the needs of the youth. Mentors are volunteers from the community who are able to support participants in goal setting, building life skills, and providing a support system. The commitment to the program is at least one year. Mentors and youth meet at least once a month with additional contact such as email and phone calls between each visit. Matches are encouraged to meet more than once a month if both parties are agreeable.

Recruitment tools include our agency website, collaboration with the Adoption/Foster Care Recruitment Unit and outreach to community and business resources. We also partner with our area office family resource units to offer a mentoring alternative to those individuals who are just "thinking about" becoming foster parents to introduce them to the youth the agency serves.

In 2010-2011, 53 mentor applications were mailed to interested applicants. Of these, 13 inquirers returned applications to DCF and 10 were approved to be matched as mentors. Three individuals did not complete the entire application process. Seven mentor/youth matches have been made during the last year. Three applicants are in the matching process.

Employment Efforts

- Assisting our youth with the development of employment skills - including readiness, search and maintenance - is one of the fundamental goals of the Outreach

- In April 2010, DCF contracted with Reality Based Learning to provide computer training for 24 foster youth who received 2 and ½ days of instruction by a Microsoft certified educator. Upon completion of their training, the students received a computer, printer, and Microsoft Windows software. This is the 7th year DCF has contracted for this type of service. In addition to the computer skills, youth participants also had the opportunity to learn about DCF's educational supports for post-secondary education. The youth greatly enjoy this experience and encourage younger youth to plan on attending. The shared learning in a hotel setting with Outreach chaperones and skilled trainers is a combination that appears to work. The post test demonstrated measurable achievement. DCF expects to continue this resource for youth next year.
- The relationships that Adolescent Support Services/Outreach staff continue to develop with the local career centers is directly benefiting the youth they serve with improved access to job training programs, funding for vocational training programs. This access to WIA funding of vocational training programs is particularly beneficial to youth who attend a post-secondary school that is was not Title IV eligible, and, therefore, not covered by the federal Education and Training Voucher or the MA state Foster Child Grant Program. As of June 2011, 24% of the youth who were served by the Outreach Program in FY 11 were also receiving services or funding from the Career Center; this represents a 1% increase over last year. An additional 48 youth (13% of the current caseload) have applied for summer employment through WIA. As youth and the area office staff become more familiar with the Career Centers and the services they offer, we anticipate the numbers of youth served will continue to increase. The letter of verification that foster youth can use to verify their eligibility for WIA services – saving time with locating multiple documents may also have supported this increase. DCF and Commonwealth Corporation developed this letter to facilitate the verification of the eligibility process to access WIA funded services and/or the career center services. In the past, the paperwork requirement has delayed enrollment as the social workers and youth sought to secure the required documents. This new letter can also be use the staff at the Dept. of Youth Services (DYS) to facilitate their youths' enrollment.

Housing Support & Room and Board Assistance

- The Discharge Support Program is managed by the Adolescent Services Unit of DCF. The program supports start-up costs (i.e. first month's rent, security deposit, essential

- Efforts to inform youth, staff and providers of this transition benefit include training of staff in the area offices and at the pre-service/CORE training for all new staff; training of providers at PAYA trainings and technical assistance meetings; and Outreach workers' review of the agency's monthly report of youth in placement assists them in identifying youth ages 17 and older who may be discharging. Outreach workers regularly inform youth at Youth Advisory Board meetings of the resources and request that they share the information with other foster youth.
- The Safe Passage Program is funded via a combination of Chafee grant funds, 3 housing vouchers from the state Dept. of Housing and Community Development and funding support from the state Dept. of Transitional Assistance of \$20, 475. The target population is primarily former DCF youth. However, with the diversified funding, we are able to accept young men who discharged from the Dept. of Youth Services as well as well as homeless youth not connected to a state system. The program managed by Children's Services of Roxbury provides three residential Transitional Living Program beds and the support services that will assist the residents in becoming self sufficient. Again this year 4 residents have lived at Safe Passage. Three young men discharged from the program this year: one returned to the Western part of the state to share an apartment with a friend/roommate; another former resident moved into a shared apartment with a roommate; a third resident returned to family. There is currently one resident at Safe Passage as of this writing. Both the program staff and DCF are in the process of identifying possible residents.
- DCF has continued its partnership with the Sisters of Charity for more than 6 years to provide housing accommodations for female students age 18 and older who are currently or formerly in the care of DCF and are now pursuing post-secondary studies. The Bachand Residence for Girls is an ideal example of collaboration and the valuable support that caring members of the community can offer to young adults preparing to

- DCF and the MA Dept. of Housing and Community Development jointly applied to HUD for and received Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers in 2009; 18 of which were assigned for “aging out” youth. These vouchers are limited to an 18 month period, unlike the standard FUP vouchers. All 18 of the young adult vouchers were awarded. Outreach staff were assigned to work with each recipient to support them with educational pursuits, employment, housing and other needs that may arise Below is an overview of the details for the young adults with FUP vouchers as of June 2011:
 - ❖ 23 young adults have been served through the FUP program this year
 - ❖ 8 young adults have completed their time in the FUP program and have moved on to stable housing
 - ❖ 5 young adults have been referred and are in the process of securing housing

Demographics of young adults awarded FUP vouchers:

Employment: (total: 23)

12 youth: part time
 6 youth: full time
 5 youth: not working

Education: (total 23)

5 youth: part time
 12 youth: full time
 6 youth not in school

- DHCD and DCF jointly applied to HUD for additional FUP vouchers in 2010 and were recently notified of an award of 100 vouchers. Approximately 15% of the new FUP vouchers will be designated for young adults willing to work with an Outreach worker.

- The state Department of Housing and Community Development and DCF have been working collaboratively to develop a new program that will assist youth who have been successful with their FUP vouchers and wish to continue their education while working to save money. The “draft” program would be named the Youth Transitioning to Success Program (YTTPS Program) and include many of the features of the Moving to Work Program. This YTTPS Program would also include assigned Outreach workers to assist the young adults with the responsibilities of education, employment and housing.
- DCF Outreach Program representatives also served on the Southeast Homeless Coalition Committee to address homelessness that effects the young adult population and **The Compass Project** in Central MA. The Compass Project, building on the work of the *Worcester Task Force on Teen Housing*, represents a collaboration of more than 20 local and state agencies, as well as non-profit social service agencies committed to designing a strengthened social safety net for young people in the target population and to making systemic and sustainable change to prevent and impact homelessness among transition age youth in Worcester.
- Current programs and partnerships will continue into next year and DCF will continue its efforts to identify transitional living resources for our youth.

Youth Development and Participation in Agency Improvements

The Department’s Youth Advisory Board has been active for more than 11 years. Presently, there are 35 members of the Regional Youth Advisory Boards who are committed to promoting change for future foster youth through their voice, advocacy, and action. They want to improve services for youth served by DCF wherever needed and to ensure that foster youth are known for their strengths, achievements, goals and not labeled as likely failures. The Regional Youth Advisory Boards generally meet monthly, providing a medium for youth in out-of-home placement to voice their concerns and suggestions to the agency on issues facing youth in care. Delegates from each Regional Board sit on the Central Office Advisory Board; they are statewide representatives for their peers’ interests, concerns, and questions. The agenda topics for each meeting are developed by the Board members based upon their own ideas/concerns or those of the youth they represent. DCF staff offer agenda topics as well for the Board’s consideration.

The Department’s efforts toward furthering leadership and empowerment opportunities for agency served youth will be ongoing. Youth will continue to have available to them many youth leadership opportunities focusing on peer support, program development, service delivery evaluations, etc. Through such activities, youth enjoy opportunities to learn from one another, function as role models for their peers, and address issues related to their “in care” status. Youth report that involvement in leadership activities helps them recognize their own strengths, increase their self-esteem and provides them with a very satisfying sense of accomplishment. Board members also received training on public speaking and inter-personal communication this year.

The youth leadership achievements this year and future planned activities are described below:

1. Board members assisted in the planning for the Youth Leadership Institute this past June 2010. The event included presentations on leadership, strategic sharing, presentation skills and planning for regional Youth Board activities. The youth reported the event to be a success and recommended such an event be annual – at a minimum. This year’s Youth Leadership Institute is planned for June 12 with a larger Youth Summit to follow on June 13. The NY Mellon Bank has offered to sponsor the Leadership Summit.

A youth who attended the Conference last year wrote the following poem and shared it with the other youth leaders in attendance.....from Yvline, age 19.

*We, the tree that root out from love and care, from dignity and trust
We flower out to be stronger and honest
And branch out to be better.
You are the leaves and seeds for the future
We support and provide security to those that feel weak
The whistling sound in the wind was our voice you heard
The breeze that you felt was the touch of our strength
We as leaders stand as ONE.*

2. Members attended the New England Youth Collaborative – a regional youth group dedicated to improving the services/resources and outcomes for foster youth. A meeting with the New England Child Welfare Commissioners/Directors is planned for July and a strategic planning meeting with the assistance of the NRCYS is planned for August this year.
3. Board members again participated in the production of the DCF graduation video that was presented at the Jordan’s Furniture Youth Achievement Celebration this May.
4. Members of all the regional Boards continue to participate in MAPP trainings and regional recruitment events, sharing their experiences to help train and recruit Foster and Adoptive families.
5. Many DCF area offices have included youth voice on the Area Boards as well.
6. Members participated in the Commissioner’s regional DCF community forums to share their perspectives with the Commissioner and the statewide managers on service needs, effective resources and recommendations for improvements.
7. Members met with representatives of the Court to share their experience regarding Permanency Hearings.
8. Members participated in the Area Office Education Fairs to share their experiences with younger youth around post-secondary educational opportunities and lessons learned.
9. Five youth from the Southeast participated on a panel at Bridgewater State College to speak of their experience in foster care.

10. Youth continue to participate in trainings, including CORE training, for social workers and supervisors to talk about the needs of youth in DCF care/custody.
11. Again this year, Board members have given back to their communities by volunteering at a homeless shelter and spending time with younger youth in residential care.

Plans for 2012 include the continuation of the above activities with a strong emphasis on foster home recruitment and ensuring that all staff, providers, foster parents and youth in the care or custody are informed of the Foster Child Bill of Rights.

- The Department's teen newsletter, *The Wave*, has continued to provide a voice for youth in care and is an effective means of informing youth of the opportunities/services available to them both in the agency and the community. THE WAVE is now available on the DCF Intranet.
- The Teen Resource Line has a new phone number, 617-748-2445. This resource offers youth and the community, foster parents, providers and community service staff another option to ask questions regarding adolescent resources, Chafee funded services and programs, educational and financial aid programs, etc.

All of these youth development and leadership opportunities are planned to continue into 2012.

Support Services for Foster Youth 18-21

- **MEDICAID** Massachusetts implemented the Chafee Provision which allows the state to provide MassHealth coverage for youth who discharge from placement at or after age 18. This benefit will be provided up until their 21st birthday. This is the result of a collaborative effort in state government with DCF, the Department of Medical Assistance (DMA), the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and the state legislature working to improve health care access for these young adults. Youth who remain in DCF care under a Voluntary Placement Agreement after age 18 will continue to receive the same Mass Health coverage as before through DCF. An informational sheet which explains the benefit in English and in Spanish has been shared with youth, DCF staff and providers.
- **VOLUNTARY PLACEMENT AGREEMENT AND OPTIONS** - The agency allows youth who attain age 18 in custody or care to request continued care with the Department to pursue their educational and/vocational training. The Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA) that both the youth and the agency staff must sign specifies the conditions of continued care; the service plan details the goals that the youth and the agency have agreed upon as well as the tasks for all parties which will assist the youth achieve the identified goals. The Director of Areas or designee approval is required for continuation of care. (DCF has revised the VPA to include

nd year they will attain a Bachelor's Degree, then these young adults may remain in DCF care until age 23 with approval of the Director of Areas. This policy has been in effect for more than 12 years.

As of May 31, 2011, there were 1650 young adults age 18 and older in DCF placement. This number has remained fairly steady over the last few years as youth who are not returning home choose to sign a Voluntary Placement Agreement with the agency to continue their education. The supports available for post-secondary education and vocational training from both the federal government and the state are certainly an incentive for youth to pursue their educational goals. Youth are encouraged to stay in school to achieve their diplomas, GED certificates or to pursue post-secondary education or vocational training. This year DCF celebrated the 32 young adults who achieved their Bachelor's Degrees; 23 students with Associates Degrees and 37 young adults who were awarded post-secondary vocational training certificates. At this same time, the agency has been working to re-connect youth to their families when safe and appropriate to do so and to ensure that youth have identified enduring relationships with caring and responsible adults prior to their discharge.

The Department has placed increased focus on permanency planning efforts for the last few years and has stimulated the development of a culture within the agency that recognizes life skills training and permanency planning as essential for all youth in any out-of-home placement. Young adults who were in DCF care/custody at age 18, left DCF may return to request supportive services prior age 21.

In addition to foster care and group care placements for youth ages 18 and older, the Department provides Youth Support Payments directly to young adults that DCF staff believe are responsible and able to live in an approved placement (i.e. college dormitory, apartment with or without roommates). Via this provision, youth receive a stipend to fund their living costs and daily expenses. These youth are most often either attending an educational program or are training for a job/career. DCF social workers provide case management services. The area office Adolescent Outreach Worker may assist with supervision and support. As of May 2011, there were 673 youth statewide who were receiving Youth Support Payments. The majority of the youth were ages 19 and older.

Education

- Massachusetts awarded 502 Education and Training Vouchers in academic year 2010-2011. (A more detailed report on the ETV Program follows in a separate section.)
- Each year the Department hosts Statewide and Regional Youth Recognition Dinners to acknowledge the achievements of foster youth who graduated from high school, college, a vocational training program or received a GED. This June the academic/vocational achievements of 562 youth were recognized (423 graduating from high school, 47 youth achieving their GED, 37 youth receiving a post-secondary vocational certification, 32 youth graduating with a Bachelor's degree and 23 with an Associates Degree. The Jordan's Furniture Store is a primary sponsor providing the space for the largest recognition event – statewide - with gifts for all the youth and a free movie in the IMAX Theater. The TJX Corporation and private donors also donate gift certificates for the youth. This year's raffle prizes included an LCD TV and tickets to popular concerts.
- To date, the Department has issued 3356 State College Tuition and Fee Waivers to current and former DCF foster youth – 350 waivers in the last 12 months. In June 2008 the MA legislature expanded the waiver program to cover fees in addition to tuition. The eligibility for the waiver was also expanded in 2008 so that DCF foster youth who are or were in agency custody and were not able to return home by age 18 are eligible for this benefit at the MA public two and four year colleges and the University of Massachusetts. Youth who were adopted or placed in a guardianship home until age 18 through the Dept. of Children and Families are also eligible for the same waiver of tuition and fees. This year the budget for the waivers was sufficient to cover about 65% of the fall semester fees only.
- Adolescent Services Unit staff presented 29 Educational/Vocational Fairs in each area office for youth, foster parents, group care providers, and DCF staff. At these meetings Outreach staff presented information on financial aid – state and federal grant programs, assisted youth in completing their FAFSA applications and discussed the many options of college/vocational training opportunities available to foster youth. Foster youth who were currently attending college were also present to answer younger youths' questions. This resource has been provided for the last seven years.
- The Department issued 21 William Warren Scholarships this year to youth served by the agency (currently or formerly) who were attending two or four year colleges or vocational training programs. These scholarships were financed with dedicated state or donated funds for youth who did not qualify for the Foster Child Grant Program or Education and Training Voucher Program. These scholarships will continue into academic year 2011-2012.
- In academic year 2010-2011, DCF referred 517 youth to the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education for consideration of the Foster Child Grant Program to assist financially with their college and vocational training needs. The Board makes the final determination of eligibility and award – based on financial need

- The 2011 DCF Scholarship Guide was produced again this spring including information and applications for numerous scholarships most relevant to DCF youth. The Guide is revised annually to ensure current information, applications, and web sites. This guide is available to youth, agency staff, foster parents, program staff, and others interested in assisting youth identify financial support for post-secondary education and training.
- The DCF website, www.mass.gov/dcf , provides an online resource for students and foster parents to access up to date post secondary and higher education financial benefits and support programs. The information is found under the Adolescent Support Services tab. ETV staff maintain the education information provided via the website.

Education and Training Voucher Program

Accomplishments

- Massachusetts awarded 502 Education and Training Vouchers in academic year 2010-2011. This reflects a decrease of 6% (N=32) from the 534 recipients in FFY10. In FFY11 there is a total of 230 new vouchers and 272 ongoing vouchers; 54% of the vouchers awarded this year were for returning students. (A chart is presented on the next page with these same numbers.)
- There were 583 foster youth who applied to the ETV Program. Of these applicants, 502 received an Education and Training Voucher award. Eighty two (82) students were not eligible after review of the application or did not complete the application paperwork in order to receive an award (despite outreach from ETV staff). The students who received an ETV payment attended 116 different colleges, universities and vocational programs in 13 different states. Of the 502 recipients, 419 (83%) students attended full-time and 83 (17%) attended part-time.

The ETV Program funding is particularly helpful to the DCF foster youth who were in agency CHINS custody (as they are not presently eligible for the state funded Foster Child Grant) and to those youth adopted from foster care or guardianship with kin after attaining age 16. The Educational and Training Voucher Program has provided significant post-secondary assistance to eligible foster and adopted youth and has assisted them with making more manageable and safer transitions to adult living.

In academic year 2010-2011, the goals of the ETV program included:

- increasing the number of foster youth persisting in post-secondary education;

- providing academic and personal support to foster youth pursuing post-secondary education;
- maximizing all state and federal academic and financial resources available to students involved with DCF;
- incorporating initiatives to connect youth with adult and peer mentors at academic institutions and with support staff on campus and at DCF;
- educating DCF social workers and partners that serve adolescents on the importance of adequate college planning and preparation as well as the need for intensive support while youth are attending post-secondary educational programs;
- increasing education of college staff who work in student support services about the needs of foster youth; and
- engaging participants of the ETV Program to join the DCF Youth Advisory Board.

These goals will continue in 2011-2012 with a strong focus on supporting youth continue in post-secondary education to reach their goals.

Direct Service/Mentoring

- The University of Massachusetts at Lowell and ETV staff began working together to identify ways to connect students on the UMass campus who are from foster care. As a result, a new “Independent Students Club” is being formed and recognized by the University. This club will be supported both by the University and by the Department to assist youth with needs and connect them with peer mentors. ETV staff participated in training social work students at the University on ways to support youth from the child welfare system with post-secondary education.
- ETV staff also partnered with Residential Directors on campus to identify better ways to support foster youth with residential needs and academic success.
- Twenty College Advising events were held on 12 campuses this past academic year. Over 110 foster youth attended the events and were assisted with financial planning, housing, academic progress and mentoring needs. These events also provided an opportunity for interested students to meet peer mentors who are also in the DCF system and attending the same academic institutions.
- The Department hosted its 5th annual statewide College Fair on April 21, 2011. The event was attended by 255 foster youth accompanied by foster parents and group care program staff. Participating in the event were Massachusetts public 4 year and community colleges, the University of MA, the MA Educational Finance Authority (MEFA), and Department staff who assisted with answering questions related to DCF. New this year a select group of private colleges willing to participate in programming for foster also participated in the college fair. DCF plans to present another College Fair next year.

Collaboration

- Again this year ETV staff partnered with the Massachusetts Education Financing Authority to provide workshops for high school guidance counselors at six conferences across the Commonwealth on supporting foster care youth planning for post-secondary education.
- This year ETV staff joined the Massachusetts Department of Education's Financial Aid Advisory Board to make sure foster care youth are represented when financial aid policy and practice is developed at Massachusetts public colleges.
- ETV staff met with financial aid staff of ten Massachusetts public colleges for the purposes of programmatic planning for how to serve foster youth in a collaborative and efficient manner throughout the academic year.
- ETV staff partnered with the Learning Center for the Deaf, a residential program that serves hearing impaired foster youth. Efforts were made to train and support deaf staff and foster youth on post-secondary planning and attainment. ASL interpreters were included in functions serving graduating and post secondary youth.
- In November 2010 ETV staff joined the Massachusetts Team at the National Governor's Association Learning Lab on Post-Secondary Education. The team consisted of leadership from the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Higher Education, and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. As a result of the conference, the team formed an ongoing workgroup and set goals for improved data collection and interagency collaboration for out of home youth seeking post-secondary education.
- The ETV staff have developed partnerships with state community colleges to identify housing and educational support resources and have presented at numerous informational meetings for DCF staff and providers to share information on these resources. The ETV staff have also informed community service providers, high schools, GED programs, transitional living programs, and other state agencies which may be serving former foster youth of the resources available to them. The staff has strengthened relationships with the Department of Labor's Workforce Investment Programs for out-of-school youth, the WIA Career Centers, and other vocational training programs. This year the staff continued to maintain a college specific roommate matching program and a list of summer and holiday housing resources for youth who may need housing between semesters or on holiday breaks when dorms close.

Training/Technical Assistance

- ETV staff produced a video highlighting the accomplishments of youth graduating from high school and college. These youth gave advice to other youth on how to be successful in school. The video is utilized by Adolescent Outreach Workers as well as recruitment and training staff at the Department.
- DCF staff assisted in financial aid coordination for The Home for Little Wanderers ASCL (Academic Support for College and Life) program. This residential program is located at Bridgewater State University and serves youth with life skills training while earning limited college credits. ETV staff provided coordination with Bridgewater University Financial Aid staff. The Home for Little Wanderers also provides services to transition age youth through its YARN program (Young Adult Resource Network), which is a drop in center for transition age youth. ETV provided training to the YARN staff to equip the staff with resources to assist youth in planning for college entrance or continuing on a college plan. The ETV staff continues to be a resource for YARN and ASCL staff and the youth they serve.
- The ETV staff provided technical assistance this year to Holyoke High School in Holyoke, MA and Phoenix Charter Academy in Chelsea, MA to assist school social workers and guidance counselors with post-secondary planning for foster youth.
- On a regular basis, Adolescent Services staff provided 15 PAYA Life Skills trainings statewide. Post-secondary education planning is addressed in this training.

Chart follows on next page

2010-2011 ETV Program Information	
Total Applicants for 2010-2011	58 3
Total Recipients for 2010-2011	50 2

Incomplete or Ineligible	82
Breakdown of Total Recipients for 2010-2011	
Show New Recipients and Ongoing Recipients	50
	2
	23
2011 (New)	0
	12
2010, 2011	7
2009, 2011	15
2008, 2011	1
2009, 2010, 2011	60
2008, 2010, 2011	6
2008, 2009, 2011	7
2008, 2009, 2010, 2011	38
2007, 2009, 2010, 2011	1
2007, 2008, 2010, 2011	1
2007, 2008, 2009, 2011	1
2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011	13
2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011	1
2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011	1
	50
Total	2
Number of Universities/Colleges/Vocational attended	
by 502 ETV Recipients	11
	6
Number of States	13
Enrollment Status of 534 ETV Recipients	
	41
Full-Time	9
Part-Time	83
	12
4 Year Public	6
	24
2 Year Public	2
4 Year Private	85
2 Year Private	19
Vocational Training	30
	51
Massachusetts Foster Child Grant Applicants	7
	50
ETV Recipients	2
	31
Received ETV and Applied for FCG	3
Total Students	70

Determining and Maintaining Program Eligibility

All potentially eligible youth are asked to complete the Educational/Vocational Training Voucher (ETV) Program application and attach a copy of their financial aid award letter and statement of account so that DCF staff may determine the cost of attendance as well as the total amount of financial aid from all sources prior to ETV funding. Students are also asked to attach their most recent college transcript that includes course credits and grades. Students also supply information on housing and employment status as well as case status with the Department. In addition to this information students sign consents to release information for the school or the Department for the purposes of financial or academic planning.

Students must maintain satisfactory performance status in accordance with their school and the federal financial aid guidelines. Toward this goal, DCF makes every effort to connect our students to the academic and personal support resources on campus. The ETV and/or Outreach staff will try to maintain contact with the students to provide ongoing support. These services may range in intensity from weekly Outreach worker services to occasional assistance with the completion of the FASFA and review of the ETV application re-determining eligibility and identifying any additional support needs. This support is essential to a student's success. Each student receiving ETV funds will also receive a listing of the support resources at his/her college along with the name and contact information for the ETV worker.

Youth Served

MA follows the ETV Program guidelines under Section 477 (i) for identifying eligible young adults:

- 1) youth otherwise eligible for services under the Massachusetts CFCIP program;
- 2) youth adopted through DCF from foster care after attaining age 16;
- 3) youth placed with a kinship guardian through DCF after attaining age 16, and
- 4) youth participating in the voucher program on their 21st birthday, until they turn 23 years old, as long as they are enrolled in a post-secondary education or training program and making satisfactory progress toward completion of that program.

Youth otherwise eligible for CFCIP services are those youth eligible for services under the MA program.

Program Adjustments

Given the high number of eligible youth accessing vouchers and the rising cost of higher education, DCF will continue to hold the maximum award at \$4000 for 4-year Bachelor programs and at \$2000 for vocational training schools unless youth can demonstrate that they cannot afford their chosen educational path without full funding. We have found that youth who are able to take advantage of the MA Tuition and Fee Waiver for Foster Children, MA Foster Child Grant as well as ETV were able to attend school at the state and community college level with no loan nor cash balance, and four year Bachelor programs with a nominal loan balance and generally no cash balance. Youth who were able to take advantage of both the MA Foster Child Grant and ETV and attended vocational training schools generally carried no cash balances and nominal loan balances.

Massachusetts State Financial Aid Programs for Foster Youth

DCF coordinates the ETV Program with other Massachusetts state-funded education and training programs currently offering financial assistance to eligible foster and adopted youth including the State College Tuition and Fee Waiver Program, the Foster Child Grant Program and the William Warren Scholarship Program.

The ETV staff work with the MA Board of Higher Education – Office of Student Financial Assistance around the Foster Child Grant. ETV staff review all ETV applications, Foster Child Grant Applications, William Warren Scholarship applications and financial aid award statements in an effort to prevent duplication of benefits and determine that the amount of assistance from any Federal sources combined with ETV funds does not exceed the “cost of attendance” as outlined in 477 (b) (3) (J).

Foster Child Tuition and Fee Waiver Program

The Foster Child Tuition and Fee Waiver Program provides waivers for undergraduate tuition and fees for state-supported classes at the in-state rate to foster children at any one of Massachusetts' 29 state and community colleges and universities. Approved by the Board of Higher Education in June of 2000, this program was expanded to include fees in July of 2008. Youth eligible for the state college undergraduate or certificate tuition and fee waivers include:

- A current or former foster child who was placed in the custody of the Department of Children and Families and remained in custody through age 18 without

subsequently being returned home. The youth must have been in custody for at least six months immediately prior to age 18;

- Youth adopted through the Department of Children and Families; and
- Youth who have been in the custody of the Department of Children and Families and whose guardianship was sponsored by the Department of Children and Families through age 18

To date, the Department has issued 3356 State College Tuition and Fee Waivers to current and former and guardianed DCF youth, 350 waivers in the last 12 months. DCF also grants state college tuition and fee waivers to children and youth who were adopted through the agency.

MA Foster Child Grant Program

The Foster Child Grant Program was developed in January 2001 and provides up to \$6000 of financial aid for current and former DCF youth (in custody via a C&P) who have left care at age 18 or older without returning home. This aid may be used at any IV- E eligible public or private college. The MA Board of Higher Education manages these grants, determining the level of funding per student. This academic year (2010-2011) DCF referred 517 youth to the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education for consideration of the Foster Child Grant Program to assist financially with their college and vocational needs.

William Warren Scholarship Program

DCF awarded 21 William Warren Scholarships this past year to DCF youth who are attending public or private colleges/universities or vocational training programs. The scholarships are based on academic merit, demonstrated ability to overcome challenges, financial need, etc. The scholarships are supported primarily with private donations, and therefore, most often provide a means of financial support to youth who are not eligible for ETV and other financial aid programs. Some of the recipients have a high school certificate of attendance, but not a diploma because they could not pass the MCAS test nor the GED. Others are dealing with immigration issues or were adopted prior to age 16.

Consultation and Services – Aquinnah Wampanoag Tribe

A representative from the Adolescent Outreach Program has been in contact with Bonnie Chalifoux, Director of Human Services of the Aquinnah Wampanoag Tribe, throughout

the year. Outreach staff met with Ms. Chalifoux on Martha's Vineyard on April 27th this year. Services and funding available to Tribal youth through the Chafee and ETV Programs and the State of Massachusetts were reviewed and all applications were provided to the Director.

The Outreach Program continues to work with the female Tribal youth who will be entering her senior year at Northeastern University in the fall. Through phone calls and emails an Outreach Worker remained in contact with the youth throughout the school year and assisted her in applying for both State and Federal grants including ETV funds. The brother of this youth is in a DCF Guardianship. An Outreach Worker has met with the youth and explained funding and services available to him for his post-secondary education. He was enrolled as a student at Cape Cod Community College this year.

A representative of the Outreach Program met with Tribal members of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe on June 9th. Services and funding available through the Chafee and ETV Programs to Tribal youth in placement were reviewed and applications to access funds and services were provided. The Outreach Program will continue to work with Tribal officials to identify older Tribal youth in placement and will assist any youth in accessing any State and Federal funds available to them. Outreach staff currently works with a 17 year-old female Mashpee Tribal member who is enrolled at Cape Cod Community College for the fall semester.

On June 9th representatives of the Outreach Program also attended an ICWA training sponsored by both of the Wampanoag Tribes. The training, entitled Fostering Engagement & Collaboration: A Closer Look at the Indian Child Welfare Act, provided an overview of ICWA by Nadja Jones. There was also an opportunity for Tribal members and Department of Children & Families staff to exchange ideas regarding the placement of Tribal children and youth in foster care.

Implementation of the National Youth in Transition Database

The Department provided training to the area office staff to inform them of the NYTD requirements and the systems DCF has in place to support the attainment of the NYTD goals. Staff from our IT, adolescent services, legal and quality improvement units have worked together to design the systems and documents, identify barriers, strategize solutions and manage the day to day efforts to comply with the NYTD guidelines.

DCF staff have participated in the national and regional conference calls to understand more about the requirements/expectations and to learn planned approaches from other states.

Foster youth have played an important role in the planning and implementation – from testing the survey, advising on the “help” questions to the survey, designing the NYTD brochure for youth and strategizing with staff on the best ways to encourage youth to take the survey.

DCF expanded a contract with Judge Baker Children's Services for their assistance in managing the survey population (pending and completed surveys). Our IT unit produces a monthly report with the names of all youth in placement who will be turning 17 in the upcoming month. The youth are mailed a birthday card with a NYTD brochure and information about DCF services for older youth. The youth are also informed of the options for taking the survey – on the DCF website, on paper or via telephone. The youth are also informed that they will receive a \$25 gift certificate to Dunkin Donuts for completing the survey.

DCF IT Unit developed a new Family Net window for staff to use to document the delivery of independent living services to youth in the baseline population.

DCF has held 3 webinars for field staff on NYTD to provide guidance, respond to questions and support the exchange of staff strategies for reaching the NYTD goals.

