becoming adults

ONE-YEAR IMPACT FINDINGS FROM THE YOUTH VILLAGES TRANSITIONAL LIVING EVALUATION

Erin Jacobs Valentine
Melanie Skemer
Mark E. Courtney

May 2015

mdrc
BUILDING KNOWLEDGE TO IMPROVE SOCIAL POLICY

Becoming Adults

One-Year Impact Findings from the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Erin Jacobs Valentine
Melanie Skemer
(MDRC)

Mark E. Courtney
(University of Chicago)

May 2015

mdrc
BUILDING KNOWLEDGE
TO IMPROVE SOCIAL POLICY

MDRC's evaluation of the Transitional Living program operated by Youth Villages is being funded through grants from The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Dissemination of MDRC publications is supported by the following funders that help finance MDRC's public policy outreach and expanding efforts to communicate the results and implications of our work to policymakers, practitioners, and others: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Ford Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, Daniel and Corinne Goldman, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Inc., The JBP Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, Laura and John Arnold Foundation, Sandler Foundation, and The Starr Foundation.

In addition, earnings from the MDRC Endowment help sustain our dissemination efforts. Contributors to the MDRC Endowment include Alcoa Foundation, The Ambrose Monell Foundation, Anheuser-Busch Foundation, Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Ford Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, The Grable Foundation, The Lizabeth and Frank Newman Charitable Foundation, The New York Times Company Foundation, Jan Nicholson, Paul H. O'Neill Charitable Foundation, John S. Reed, Sandler Foundation, and The Stupski Family Fund, as well as other individual contributors.

The findings and conclusions in this report do not necessarily represent the official positions or policies of the funders.

The photographs on the cover of this report were furnished by the Youth Villages Communication Department.

For information about MDRC and copies of our publications, see our website: www.mdrc.org.

Overview

Young adults with histories of foster care or juvenile justice custody experience poor outcomes across a number of domains, on average, relative to their peers. While government funding for services targeting these groups of young people has increased in recent years, research on the effectiveness of such services is limited, and few of the programs that have been rigorously tested have been found to improve outcomes.

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation is testing whether the Transitional Living program, operated by the social service organization Youth Villages, makes a difference in the lives of young people with histories of foster care or juvenile justice custody. The program, which was renamed "YVLifeSet" in April 2015, is intended to help these young people make a successful transition to adulthood by providing intensive, individualized, and clinically focused case management, support, and counseling.

The evaluation uses a rigorous random assignment design and is set in Tennessee, where Youth Villages operates its largest Transitional Living program. From October 2010 to October 2012, more than 1,300 young people were assigned, at random, to either a program group, which was offered the Transitional Living program's services, or to a control group, which was not offered those services. Using survey and administrative data, the evaluation team is measuring outcomes for both groups over time to assess whether Transitional Living services led to better outcomes for program group youth compared with the control group's outcomes.

This is the second major report in the evaluation. An earlier report provides a detailed description of the Transitional Living program model and assesses its implementation. This second report assesses whether the program affected key outcomes during the first year after young people enrolled in the study. It shows that *the Transitional Living program improved outcomes in three of the six domains that it was designed to affect.* The program boosted earnings, increased housing stability and economic well-being, and improved some outcomes related to health and safety. However, it did not improve outcomes in the areas of education, social support, or criminal involvement.

These results indicate that the Transitional Living program can improve multiple outcomes for young adults with histories of foster care or juvenile justice custody, a notable finding given the paucity of documented positive effects for programs that serve these populations. While the individual effects of the program were modest, their breadth across several domains is consistent with the highly individualized nature of the program model, which is designed to address the wide variety of needs and circumstances of the young people it serves. These findings set the stage for additional analysis using a second year of follow-up data and an assessment of the program's benefits relative to its costs. Those results will be available in 2016.

Contents

List of Exhibits

Table

Figure

Box

Preface

Young people who have spent time in foster care or juvenile justice custody often encounter a number of difficulties as they enter adulthood. While others their age frequently get help from their parents well into their twenties, youth who are leaving the custody of the state tend to have relatively little financial or social support. Moreover, many of them suffer from the lingering effects of childhood trauma and the inadequacies of the foster care or juvenile justice system. Given such circumstances, it is not surprising that these young people face troubling outcomes as adults in several areas.

The evaluation that is described in this report shows that the Transitional Living program — now known as "YVLifeSet" — that is run by Youth Villages can make positive differences in the lives of young adults who were in foster care or juvenile justice custody as teenagers. Although the program did not improve all of the outcomes that were measured, the young people who were offered its services were more likely to work and had higher earnings, experienced less homelessness and material hardship, and had fewer mental health problems compared with those who were not offered the program's services. While the improvements are modest, they are very meaningful.

These findings stand out because few other programs for this population have been shown to be effective. The research evidence on programs designed to improve outcomes for these youth shows that it is extremely difficult to make a positive impact on their lives. While some programs have been shown to affect one area, it is rare when a program improves young people's well-being across a wide range of outcomes.

The national policy landscape in this area is shifting. In particular, the federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 changed foster care policy by offering funding to states to extend foster care through age 21 and to expand independent living services, which are intended to help these individuals get on their feet when they leave foster care. In contrast, young people who are leaving juvenile justice custody have less access to comparable programs, but an increasing interest in "reentry" services for former inmates of prisons and jails has led to some funding for services designed to help such youth.

It is imperative that researchers continue to study the Transitional Living program and other services for young people who lack strong family supports and life skills. Additional follow-up on the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation sample will be important for understanding whether the program leads to lasting improvements in the lives of these young men and women. Further, because foster care policies and contextual factors vary from state to state, extending this research beyond Tennessee is critical.

Gordon L. Berlin
President, MDRC

Acknowledgments

This report would not have been possible without the support of many individuals and organizations. In particular, the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation and the production of this report were funded by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

We are tremendously grateful to several individuals on the staff at Youth Villages, including Sarah Hurley, Melanie Manns, Tim Goldsmith, Kristin Landers, and Pat Lawler, with whom we enjoyed a productive collaboration throughout this project. Sarah Hurley, Tim Goldsmith, and Kristin Landers carefully reviewed earlier drafts of the report and provided insightful feedback. Sarah Hurley also worked closely with MDRC to conceptualize and launch the evaluation, facilitate our communication with staff at Youth Villages and partner agencies, provide program participation data, and provide feedback at every stage of the research, among many other efforts that made this evaluation possible. Kristin Landers met with MDRC staff to help us understand the Transitional Living model and interpret program data and procedures. Melanie Manns monitored study enrollment, tracked participant samples, organized study paperwork for MDRC, and generally kept track of research activities onsite.

Staff at NORC at the University of Chicago made the fielding of the one-year follow-up survey a great success. Their hard work and dedication to this project resulted in an unusually high response rate, which can be difficult to accomplish when surveying young people who may be changing residences frequently. At NORC, Sarah Hughes and Shannon Nelson oversaw and managed the survey effort. Angela Banner, whose unparalleled hard work and dedication to this project were crucial to making it a success, was the field manager. The survey interviewers included Joan Chaplin, Juanita Fancher, Mary McKinney, and Mary Runions. Taifoor Beg, Mike Buha, Chad Kiewiet de Jonge, Moazzam Lokhandwala, and Lili Perez provided additional project support. Without the hard work of these individuals, we would not have had follow-up data to analyze.

We could not have learned about the implementation of the Transitional Living program without the help of many other staff at Youth Villages, including Transitional Living specialists, clinical consultants, clinical supervisors, regional managers, regional supervisors, regional directors, and educational/vocational coordinators. We are also grateful to the family service workers and independent living specialists from the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) and representatives from other entities working with the young people who were in foster care and juvenile justice custody in Tennessee, who took the time to meet with us. We would also like to thank Dave Aguzzi and Dhivya Ben of DCS, who provided us with data on youths' state custody histories and receipt of extended foster care/post-custody services.

At MDRC, John Martinez developed this project from the beginning and was the project director throughout. Sara Muller-Ravett and Joseph Broadus made sure random assignment and onsite operations went smoothly. John Martinez, Dan Bloom, Christopher Boland, Virginia Knox, Michelle Manno, Chuck Michalopoulos, and Alice Tufel provided thoughtful comments on several drafts of this report. Michelle Manno and Julianna Alson put a lot of time into this project and conducted the implementation research. Brit Henderson processed the program participation and postsecondary education data used in the report. Ron Bass and JoAnna Hunter helped us to work with NORC staff on the fielding of the survey. Janae Bonsu, Arielle Sherman, and Nicole Alexander coordinated the production of the report. Alice Tufel edited the report, and Stephanie Cowell prepared it for publication.

We are especially grateful to the young people who participated in the study. They enthusiastically participated in surveys, interviews, and focus groups, and allowed us to learn from their experiences. Many of the study participants were excited to help provide knowledge that could lead to better services for other young people in similar situations. We hope that this report will fulfill that wish.

The Authors

Executive Summary

Young adults with histories of foster care and juvenile justice custody often face difficulties making a successful transition to independent adulthood. Their outcomes across a number of domains are poor, on average, relative to their peers.[1] While government funding for services targeting these groups of young people has increased, the existing body of research on the effectiveness of those services is thin. Further, few of the programs that have been rigorously tested have been found to improve outcomes.

In order to advance knowledge in this area, MDRC launched an evaluation of the Transitional Living program — now known as "YVLifeset" — which is operated by the social service organization Youth Villages.[2] The Transitional Living program, which is one example of an "independent living" program for young adults in need, is intended to help youth make the transition to adulthood by providing intensive, individualized, and clinically focused case management, support, and counseling. The evaluation is using a rigorous random assignment design, in which study sample members were assigned at random to either a program group that was offered the Transitional Living program services or to a control group that was not offered those services. The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation are funding the evaluation, which is being led by MDRC along with Mark Courtney of the University of Chicago.

This is the second major report in the evaluation. An earlier report provides a detailed description of the Transitional Living program model and assesses its implementation.[3] This second report assesses the differences in the receipt of services by program group members and control group members, and presents the estimated, one-year impacts of the Transitional Living program on youths' outcomes in six key domains: education, employment and earnings, housing stability and economic well-being, social support, health and safety, and criminal involvement.

As discussed further below, *the Transitional Living program led to statistically significant impacts on a range of outcomes in three of six domains that the program was designed to*

[1]Mark E. Courtney, Amy Dworsky, Gretchen Ruth Cusick, Judy Havlicek, Alfred Perez, and Tom Keller, *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 21* (Chicago: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, 2007).

[2]As of April 2015, the Transitional Living program was renamed "YVLifeSet." Because the name did not change until after the study period had ended, this report refers to the program as "Transitional Living."

[3]Michelle Manno, Erin Jacobs, Julianna Alson, and Melanie Skemer, *Moving Into Adulthood: Implementation Findings from the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation* (New York: MDRC, 2014).

affect.[4] The program boosted earnings, increased housing stability and economic well-being, and improved some of the primary outcomes related to health and safety for these young people. However, it did not significantly improve outcomes in the areas of education, social support, or criminal involvement.

Background

About 70,000 young people between 14 and 20 years of age leave the foster care system in the United States each year.[5] Roughly one-third of those individuals exit foster care because they age out of the system upon reaching adulthood, often at the age of 18. The juvenile justice system also extends a broad reach; nearly 100,000 youths leave juvenile justice facilities each year.[6] For young people who are leaving these systems, the transition to adulthood can be particularly difficult, as they may have few resources and little or no state or family support. Not surprisingly, youth who have been in foster care or juvenile justice custody have, on average, poor outcomes in adulthood across a number of domains, relative to their peers.[7]

Recent federal legislation has dramatically increased the availability of services for youth who are aging out of foster care or leaving juvenile justice custody. The John Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 gave states more funding to support independent living services, room and board, and Medicaid for foster youth as they make the transition to adulthood. The subsequent Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 provided funding for states to extend foster care through age 21 for most youth and to further expand independent living services. To date, about one-third of the 50 states have used this funding to extend foster care past age 18.[8]

Services for youth who are leaving juvenile justice placements are not as consistently supported, though some of these youth are eligible for services supported by the Chafee and Fostering Connections acts. In addition, a general focus on "reentry" services for adults leaving

[4]Statistically significant impacts are effects that can be attributed with a high degree of confidence to the program rather than to chance alone.

[5]This number refers to fiscal year 2013 (October 1, 2012, through September 30, 2013). See U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *The AFCARS Report: Preliminary FY 2013 Estimates as of July 2014* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau, 2014).

[6]Howard N. Snyder, "An Empirical Portrait of the Youth Reentry Population," *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 2, 1: 39-55 (2004).

[7]Courtney et al. (2007).

[8]National Resource Center for Youth Development, "State by State Facts," online publication (2015), at www.nrcyd.ou.edu/state-pages.

prison and jail has led to federal funding to serve youth with a juvenile justice history. For example, the Second Chance Act provides funds to government agencies and nonprofit organizations to offer employment assistance, substance abuse treatment, housing assistance, and other services to reduce criminal recidivism. Additionally, many states, cities, and counties offer "aftercare" and reentry services for youth who are exiting juvenile facilities.

Despite the growth of independent living services, the research evidence on the effectiveness of these programs is limited. Only four large random assignment evaluations have tested independent living programs for youth with a history of foster care, and among those, three did not find any statistically significant impacts.[9] Rigorous evaluations of programs for juvenile justice youth have been more common. Cognitive behavioral therapy programs in particular are supported by a fairly strong research base, which has found these programs to be effective in reducing problem behaviors like criminal recidivism and substance abuse.[10] However, previous studies have placed little emphasis on measuring impacts on other important outcomes, such as employment, education, and housing.

The Transitional Living Program

The Transitional Living program is operated by Youth Villages, a nonprofit social service organization based in Memphis, Tennessee, which has served emotionally and behaviorally troubled boys and girls of all ages since 1986. The organization operates a variety of residential and community-based programs serving more than 20,000 young people each year in 12 states and the District of Columbia. Within each program, staff members follow a common set of core principles and use a common treatment manual, which contains all the practices that the organization considers to be acceptable and informed by evidence.

In the Transitional Living program, services are expected to last nine months for most youth who successfully complete the program. Transitional Living starts with assessments and the development of an individualized treatment plan that takes into account the particular needs and goals of each young person. Then, the bulk of the services are provided during hour-long Transitional Living sessions with a case manager, called a "TL Specialist," and are scheduled once a week. Each TL Specialist typically serves only eight youth at a time.

[9]Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, "Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs (Chafee Independent Living Evaluation Project), 2001-2010" (Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.).

[10]See, for example, Mark W. Lipsey, Nana A. Landenberger, and Sandra J. Wilson, "Effects of Cognitive-Behavioral Programs for Criminal Offenders," *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 6 (2007): 27; Gilbert J. Botvin, Eli Baker, Anne D. Filazzola, and Elizabeth M. Botvin, "A Cognitive Behavioral Approach to Substance Abuse Prevention: One Year Follow-Up," *Addictive Behaviors* 15, 1 (1990): 47-63.

The topics covered and the activities that take place during Transitional Living sessions vary depending on the needs and goals of each youth, but TL Specialists are expected to use methods that are included in the treatment manual. These methods fall into three categories: evidence-informed tools, counseling, and action-oriented activities. Evidence-informed tools include specific curricula, such as "Preparing Adolescents for Young Adulthood," which cover topics like money management and job-seeking skills, as well as practices such as the "Adolescent Community Reinforcement Approach," which is a behavioral treatment for alcohol and other substance abuse. A second strategy involves counseling, in which the participant and TL Specialist talk about particular issues in the participant's life from both the past and the present. Finally, TL Specialists use action-oriented activities, such as taking a participant to a bank to open an account or to a community college to gather information about classes.

Aside from direct support that the TL Specialist provides during the regular sessions with youth, Transitional Living offers other resources to participating youth. Youth who are identified as having a history of trauma can undergo trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy, a 12- to 20-week course of therapy provided by specially trained Youth Villages staff. TL Specialists may also refer youth to other services in the community, such as General Educational Development (GED) classes or housing services. In addition, TL Specialists have access to some flexible funds to support youth who need money for expenses such as purchasing appropriate clothing for interviews or an apartment application fee. Youth are also encouraged to participate in monthly group social and learning activities with other youth in the Transitional Living program. These group activities are required by a contract that Youth Villages has with the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS). Finally, educational/vocational coordinators are available to work with youth who require additional support when seeking postsecondary education, vocational training, or employment opportunities.

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation is assessing the impacts of the Transitional Living program. Although the program operates in six states, the evaluation is only testing the program that is operating across the state of Tennessee. During the evaluation period, the Tennessee program was funded partly by Youth Villages' contract with DCS and partly by philanthropic support. The study sample includes youth ages 18 to 24 who were living across the state of Tennessee and had left foster care or juvenile justice custody as teenagers or were aging out at 18. The evaluation employs a rigorous random assignment design. Between October 2010 and October 2012, 1,322 young people were assigned at random to one of two groups:

- **The program group**, whose members were offered Transitional Living program services, including intensive case management, support, and counseling

- **The control group**, whose members were not offered Transitional Living program services, but were provided with a list of other social service resources that were available in the community[11]

By measuring outcomes for both the program and control groups over time, the research team can assess whether Transitional Living services led to better outcomes for program group youth than those experienced by the control group. Owing to the random assignment design, the research groups were comparable on both measured and unmeasured characteristics when the study began. Therefore, statistically significant differences in outcomes that emerge between the two groups can be attributed with some confidence to the offer of Transitional Living services to the program group. These differences in outcomes are considered "impacts" or "effects" of the Transitional Living program.

The primary source of outcome data is a survey that was fielded to all sample members by NORC at the University of Chicago. The survey was fielded one year after study entry for each youth, with a response rate of 84.3 percent. Outcomes in six key domains were covered: education, employment and earnings, housing stability and economic well-being, social support, health and safety, and criminal involvement. In addition, the evaluation team collected administrative data on postsecondary enrollment from the National Student Clearinghouse.

Similar to other youth with histories of foster care or juvenile justice custody, the youth who enrolled in the study averaged relatively low levels of educational attainment, employment, and social support at study entry, while experiencing relatively high rates of involvement with the criminal justice system and housing instability. Youth in the study are diverse in terms of gender and race, with over 50 percent of the sample being white/non-Hispanic, while a substantial minority are black/non-Hispanic (37 percent). Study sample members come from varied custody backgrounds, and their first custody placement — often of many — tended to occur in their teens. Sixty-one percent of the sample reported having been in custody because they had been neglected or abused (foster care), while 52 percent indicated that they had been in custody for delinquency (juvenile justice). Some youth had experienced both types of custody.

[11]While the program group could access other services in the community if they wished, they were not provided with the list of resources that was given to the control group.

Program Implementation and Service Receipt Differences Between the Two Research Groups

In order to help interpret results regarding the impacts of the Transitional Living program, the research team studied the strength of the program's implementation and the dosage (level and intensity) of program services that program group members received.

- **The Transitional Living program was implemented largely in accordance with the program model, and a substantial portion of program group members received services at the expected dosage of program services.**

Though the Transitional Living program had considerable structure, the TL Specialists had a great deal of flexibility to adapt services based on the individual needs of the youth on their caseloads. Youth received support across any number of issues, including employment, housing, education, life skills, and mental health. TL Specialists chose the strategies used in the Transitional Living sessions to capitalize on the strengths of each participant. In general, strategies fell within the three broad categories, discussed above, that TL Specialists were expected to use: evidence-informed tools, counseling, and action-oriented activities.

A substantial portion of the program group received services at the expected dosage of the Transitional Living program model. About two-thirds participated in program services for at least five months, and about half participated for at least nine months, the expected average length of services for youth who successfully complete the program. Nearly all program group members participated in at least one program activity, and 95 percent participated in at least one Transitional Living session. While they were involved in the program, youth participated in nearly one session per week, averaging over an hour per session. In total, program group members averaged about 26 sessions with their TL Specialists during the 12 months after random assignment. During these sessions, TL Specialists and participants covered a wide range of issues, with education, employment, and housing discussed most often.

While control group members could not access Transitional Living services, they were able to access other services that were available in the community, including extended foster care services provided by the state to those who were eligible. Therefore, the research team assessed the extent to which the offer of the Transitional Living program increased the services received by the program group over and above what the control group received.

- **There were large, statistically significant differences between the program and control groups in the dosage of the services they received.**

The program group was more likely than the control group to have had a case manager or social worker (75 percent compared with 44 percent), who could be a TL Specialist, and to

have met with that person at least once per week (60 percent compared with 20 percent). They were also more likely to have received help, from any source, with issues related to education, employment, finances, housing, and daily living. These differences ranged from 13 to 22 percentage points, depending on the category. However, while there was a clear difference in the level of services received, it is also notable that many control group members accessed case management and other services.

Impacts of the Transitional Living Program

Before conducting the impact analysis, the research team specified primary outcomes, discussed below, within each of the six domains, as well as secondary outcomes. Conclusions about the effectiveness of the Transitional Living program in each domain hinge on the impact estimates for these primary outcomes. Table ES.1 shows the results for the three domains in which the program had statistically significant impacts on primary outcomes: employment and earnings, housing stability and economic well-being, and health and safety.

- **Transitional Living boosted earnings, increased housing stability and economic well-being, and improved some of the primary outcomes related to health and safety.**

As the first panel of Table ES.1 shows, the program led to a statistically significant increase of over $600 in earnings in the year before the survey interview, the primary outcome in the employment and earnings domain. This difference was driven, at least in part, by an increase in the percentage of youth who were employed, particularly in part-time work, during the one-year follow-up period (not shown in table).

Transitional Living also led to statistically significant reductions in housing instability and economic hardship. Housing instability was measured using a scale that is calculated as the number of indicators of housing instability that a youth experienced in the year before the survey interview out of four that the survey mentioned. Program group members experienced significantly fewer types of housing instability, driven by reductions in homelessness and "couch surfing," or staying temporarily in the homes of others (not shown in table). The second primary outcome in this domain was the economic hardship scale, which is calculated as the number of indicators of economic hardship that a youth experienced in the year before the survey interview out of five that the survey specified. Transitional Living also significantly reduced economic hardship, driven by decreases in the percentage of youth who did not have necessary clothing or shoes and the percentage of youth who had delayed paying a bill in order to buy food (not shown in table).

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Table ES.1

One-Year Impacts on Employment and Earnings, Housing Stability and Economic Well-Being, and Health and Safety

Primary Outcome, by Domain	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value
Employment and earnings ($)					
Earnings from formal work[a]	4,099	3,488	611 **	0.12	0.043
Housing stability and economic well-being					
Score on housing instability scale[b]	1.0	1.2	-0.2 ***	-0.16	0.005
Score on economic hardship scale[c]	1.3	1.5	-0.2 **	-0.13	0.022
Health and safety					
Score on mental health problems scale[d]	9.8	11.2	-1.4 **	-0.13	0.025
Substance use					
Days of binge drinking in the past month	0.7	0.9	-0.2	-0.07	0.197
Used illegal drugs[e] (%)	31.4	32.8	-1.4	-0.03	0.622
Used a condom during last sexual encounter (%)					0.360
Yes	49.5	47.7	1.8	0.04	
No	36.6	40.3	-3.7	-0.08	
Not sexually active	13.9	12.0	1.9	0.06	
Was robbed or assaulted[f] (%)	24.4	24.2	0.2	0.01	0.929
Partner violence (%)			**		0.021
In a violent relationship[g]	15.1	21.5	-6.4	-0.16	
In a nonviolent relationship	38.6	36.3	2.3	0.05	
Not in a relationship	46.3	42.2	4.1	0.08	
Sample size (total = 1,114)	659	455			

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.

The effect size is calculated by dividing the impact of the program (difference between program and control groups) by the observed variation for that outcome within the control group (the control group standard deviation).

(continued)

Table ES.1 (continued)

Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

[a]This self-reported measure includes only earnings from formal employment and does not include overtime pay, tips, commissions, bonuses, or other types of pay, nor does it include earnings from informal work. For the purposes of this measure, formal employment is defined as ongoing employment with a particular employer, such as working at a restaurant or supermarket. Informal work is defined as independent work for several people, with no specific supervisor, such as babysitting and mowing lawns.

[b]The housing instability scale is the sum of responses to four survey questions that ask whether a sample member experienced homelessness, couch-surfed, was unable to pay rent, or lost housing due to inability to pay rent. The scale ranges from 0 to 4.

[c]The economic hardship scale is the sum of responses to five survey questions that ask whether a sample member was unable to afford clothing or shoes, unable to pay a utility bill, had gas or electricity shut off due to inability to pay, had phone service shut off due to inability to pay, or put off paying a bill in order to have money for food. The scale ranges from 0 to 5.

[d]The mental health problems scale is based on responses to the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales, known as "DASS 21." The scale is calculated using 21 questions that ask how often a person has felt a particular way, ranging from "none of the time" (coded as 0) to "most of the time" (coded as 3). The scale is a sum, ranging from 0 to 63, of the values from those 21 questions.

[e]This measure is based on sample members' response to three questions that ask about their use of marijuana, "other illegal drugs," or prescription drugs without the permission of a doctor.

[f]"Assaulted" is defined as attacked, beaten, or sexually victimized.

[g]A "violent relationship" is defined as one in which either partner has ever hit, kicked, shoved, or thrown something potentially harmful at the other, or forced the other to have unwanted sexual relations.

The health and safety results were mixed, as Transitional Living significantly improved two of the five primary outcomes in this domain. It improved mental health, as measured by the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales, a measure of the levels of depression, anxiety, and stress that youth were experiencing at the time of the survey interview. It also reduced the percentage of youth who were in violent relationships. Specifically, close to 22 percent of control group youth were in violent relationships at the time of the survey, compared with 15 percent of program group youth. However, Transitional Living did not significantly reduce substance use, increase condom use (a measure of safe sexual behavior), or lower rates of being robbed or assaulted.

- **Transitional Living did not lead to statistically significant improvements in education, social support, or criminal involvement.**

Table ES.2 shows the results in the three remaining domains: education, social support, and criminal involvement. As the top panel of the table shows, there were no statistically significant impacts on primary outcomes in the education domain. These outcomes focused on secondary educational attainment, including earning a high school diploma or GED certificate, and participation in vocational training.

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Table ES.2

One-Year Impacts on Education, Social Support, and Criminal Involvement

Primary Outcome, by Domain	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value
Education (%)					
Has high school diploma	55.7	52.5	3.2	0.06	0.233
Has GED certificate	15.9	17.2	-1.3	-0.03	0.571
Participated in vocational training	11.8	8.9	2.8	0.10	0.139
Social support					
Score on social support scale[a]	4.4	4.2	0.2	0.05	0.421
Very close to an adult[b] (%)	92.0	91.2	0.8	0.03	0.639
Criminal involvement					
Score on criminal behavior scale[c]	0.6	0.6	0.0	0.03	0.664
Spent at least one night in jail or prison (%)	23.1	25.2	-2.1	-0.05	0.405
Sample size (total = 1,114)	659	455			

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.

The effect size is calculated by dividing the impact of the program (difference between program and control groups) by the observed variation for that outcome within the control group (the control group standard deviation).

Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

GED = General Educational Development.

[a]The social support scale is a mean of responses to seven survey questions that ask about the number of people a sample member can count on for various types of support, including invitations to go out and do things, help with budgeting or money problems, advice about important subjects, help with transportation, listening to problems, granting small favors, and providing monetary loans in the event of an emergency.

[b]The "very close to an adult" measure indicates whether sample members reported being very close to a biological mother, a biological father, a stepmother, a stepfather, a grandparent, an adult sibling, or a caring adult outside of the family.

[c]The criminal behavior scale is a sum of responses to 10 survey questions that ask whether a sample member was involved in a gang fight, carried a handgun, purposely damaged or destroyed property, stole something worth less than $50, stole something worth $50 or more, committed other property crimes, attacked someone, sold or helped sell illegal drugs, received cash for having sexual relations, or received any service or material good in trade for having sexual relations. The scale ranges from 0 to 10.

The program also did not lead to statistically significant improvements in the primary outcomes in the social support domain. The first primary outcome, measured using a social support scale, is calculated as the mean number of people to whom a youth could turn (as reported by the survey respondent) for seven types of help that were specified on the survey (for example, "How many different people can you go to when you need someone to listen to your problems when you're feeling low?"). The program did not have a statistically significant impact on this outcome. In addition, a very high percentage of youth in both the program and control groups indicated that they were very close to at least one adult, and there was not a significant difference between groups for that outcome.

Finally, Transitional Living did not significantly reduce criminal involvement. There was not a significant difference between research groups in the number of behaviors (out of 10 types) that youth exhibited (for example, carrying a gun or stealing) or in the percentage of youth who had spent at least one night in jail in the year before the survey interview.

- **The impacts of Transitional Living were consistent across different subgroups of youth.**

There were almost no statistically significant differences in impacts by history of juvenile justice custody, by urban versus nonurban setting, by whether youth had been receiving extended foster care services at baseline, or by subgroups of youth created based on a combination of key baseline characteristics. That is, the program appears to be equally effective across all of the subgroups studied.

Discussion and Policy Implications

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation is one of the largest and most rigorous evaluations of services for young people who were formerly in the foster care or juvenile justice system. The findings presented in this report have important implications for future policymaking and research.

The Transitional Living program improved outcomes in three of six domains, including employment and earnings, housing stability and economic well-being, and health and safety. While the individual statistically significant impacts were not large, the breadth of those impacts across several domains is promising. The youth in the study had a wide variety of experiences, needs, and circumstances at baseline, and the program was highly individualized. This meant that the program services had to cover various domains, and that no particular domain applied to all youth in the program. For example, some youth already had stable housing and did not need or receive extensive assistance in that area. Transitional Living would not be expected to improve housing stability for those youth. The individualized, wide-ranging nature of the

program services may explain why the impacts were not large yet were present across a variety of domains and for youth with either foster care or juvenile justice experience (or both). These impact findings are notable given how few other programs have been shown to improve outcomes among young adults with histories of foster care and juvenile justice custody.

Services for young adults with a history of foster care are becoming more widespread, though they are often not as intensive as those provided by the Transitional Living program. For youth with a history of juvenile justice custody, services like Transitional Living are less common, yet the evaluation findings presented here suggest that the benefits for these youth are no less than for their peers who are leaving foster care. However, the program did not reduce criminal involvement, which is a key outcome for juvenile justice youth. This finding suggests that, to be more attractive to juvenile justice authorities, Transitional Living services may need to focus more on criminal involvement or better incorporate other services, such as certain cognitive behavioral therapies, that are designed to affect such behavior.

The results also indicate that the Transitional Living program was equally effective for urban youth compared with rural youth, despite differences in contextual factors, such as the availability of resources, services, and transportation. This finding provides some evidence that the impact findings presented in this report may be applicable to other contexts. At the same time, it is possible that the impacts of Transitional Living would be different in another state that provides more extensive or more widely accessed foster care services.

In addition, it is likely that the individuals who were recruited into the study were relatively stable, motivated, or higher-functioning compared with youth who were not part of the study. While Youth Villages staff attempted to enroll into the study all potential participants who had been identified on a list (provided by DCS) of youth with histories of state custody, many of these young people could not be reached or did not show an interest in the services. In addition, because the program is not intended for individuals with a history of serious violence, intense emotional problems, or other "rule-out" criteria, youth who fell into those categories were not eligible for either the program or the evaluation. These selection mechanisms likely shaped the pool of youth who enrolled in the study, suggesting that the impact findings presented in this report may not be generalizable to all young adults with histories of foster care or juvenile justice custody.

In the end, the study findings indicate that the Transitional Living program was successful in improving some key outcomes for young adults with histories of foster care or juvenile justice custody. Young people with such histories, including those who receive Transitional Living services, continue to face many challenges and to experience poor outcomes relative to their peers. Still, the results of this study are encouraging and provide evidence that interventions exist to effectively diminish some of the difficulties that many of these young people face.

Next Steps

The positive results that are presented in this report set the stage for additional analysis and evaluation of the Transitional Living program. MDRC will conduct a benefit-cost analysis that will provide additional information about the monetary benefits, to both society and program participants, of these impacts, relative to the costs of the program. In addition, the research team will assess longer-term impacts of the Transitional Living program based on additional data covering two years after study enrollment for each individual. The results of both the benefit-cost analysis and the two-year impact analysis will be published in 2016. MDRC is also exploring the possibility of conducting additional research on the Transitional Living program in other contexts.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Nearly 70,000 young people between 14 and 20 years of age left the foster care system in the United States in 2013.[1] Roughly one-third of those individuals exit foster care because they age out of the system upon reaching adulthood, often at the age of 18. The juvenile justice system also extends a broad reach; the most recent data show that nearly 100,000 youths leave juvenile justice facilities each year.[2] Crossover between the foster care and juvenile justice systems is commonplace, as children who experience unstable or abusive family environments, poverty, and other harmful situations are at increased risk of entering both systems.[3] For young people who are leaving these systems, the transition to adulthood can be particularly difficult, as they may have few resources and little or no state or family support, and they have, on average, poor outcomes in adulthood across a number of domains, relative to their peers.

The Transitional Living program — now known as "YVLifeset" — is intended to help youth who were formerly in foster care or juvenile justice custody to make the transition to adulthood.[4] The program, operated by the social service organization Youth Villages, provides youth with intensive, individualized, and clinically focused case management, support, and counseling. This report presents one-year findings from the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation, which is studying the program's "impacts," or the difference the program makes in the lives of the youth it serves. Youth who enrolled in the evaluation included those across the state of Tennessee who were 18 to 24 years of age and had left foster care or juvenile justice custody as teenagers or were aging out of the system.[5] The evaluation, which is using a rigorous random assignment design, is being funded by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. MDRC is conducting the evaluation, along with Mark Courtney of the University of Chicago.

---

[1]This number refers to fiscal year 2013 (October 1, 2012, through September 30, 2013). See U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2014).

[2]Snyder (2004).

[3]Chung, Little, and Steinberg (2005); Barbell and Freundlich (2001).

[4]As of April 2015, the name of the Transitional Living program was changed to "YVLifeSet." Because the name of the program was "Transitional Living" during the study period, this report refers to the program as Transitional Living.

While this evaluation focuses on Transitional Living services provided to former foster care and juvenile justice youth, the program also serves youth who have not been in state custody but who could potentially benefit from services.

[5]The Transitional Living program also operates in five states other than Tennessee.

This publication is the second major report in the study. An earlier report provides a detailed description of the Transitional Living program model and assessed its implementation.[6] That report also provides information about the context in which the program operated during the study period, describes the recruitment and enrollment process for the evaluation, and presents preliminary findings on the participation of program group members in Transitional Living services. This second report focuses on assessing the differences in the receipt of services by program group members and control group members, and presenting the estimated, one-year impacts of the Transitional Living program on youths' outcomes in six key domains: education, employment and earnings, housing stability and economic well-being, social support, health and safety, and criminal involvement.

Background and Policy Context

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a critical and often trying time for young people of any background as they attempt to complete their education, form their own families and households, and achieve financial independence. For youth who have spent time in state custody through the foster care or juvenile justice system, or both, this transition is often particularly challenging. Such youth often contend with low levels of educational attainment, minimal formal work experience, mental health and substance use problems, weak social support, extreme poverty, and housing instability.[7] Yet, those exiting foster care or juvenile justice placements often make the transition to adulthood between 18 and 21 years of age with relatively little support, while their peers in the general population often remain dependent on parental care and support well into their twenties, and sometimes even into their thirties.[8]

Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that youth who have spent time in state custody face troubling outcomes as adults across a wide range of areas. For example, young adults with histories of foster care or juvenile justice custody are less likely to obtain a high school credential or to be employed, compared with their peers.[9] Additionally, they experience high rates of homelessness and they fare worse than the general population in terms of criminal justice involvement, mental health, substance use, and social support, and they are far more likely than their peers to become parents at a very young age.[10]

---

[6]Manno, Jacobs, Alson, and Skemer (2014).

[7]Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, and Nesmith (1998); Courtney (2009); Reilly (2003); Nellis and Wayman (2009); Sedlak and McPherson (2010).

[8]Schoeni and Ross (2005); Settersten, Furstenberg, and Rumbaut (2005).

[9]Bullis, Yovanoff, Mueller, and Havel (2002); Courtney et al. (2011).

[10]Chapin Hall Center for Children (2012); Courtney et al. (2007).

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on services for youth who are aging out of foster care or leaving juvenile justice custody. The John Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 gives states more funding for independent living services for youth as they enter adulthood. The act also allows states to use the funding to pay for room and board and to extend Medicaid eligibility to former foster youth up to age 21. Federal support increased in 2008 with the passage of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, which provides funding to extend foster care through age 21 for most youth and to expand independent living services. To date, about one-third of the 50 states have used this funding to extend foster care past age 18.[11]

Services for youth who are leaving juvenile justice placements are not as consistently supported, though some of these youth are eligible for services supported by the Chafee and Fostering Connections acts. In addition, a general focus on "reentry" services for adults leaving prison and jail has led to federal funding to serve youth with a juvenile justice history. For example, the Second Chance Act provides funds to government agencies and nonprofit organizations to offer employment assistance, substance use treatment, housing assistance, and other services to reduce criminal recidivism. Additionally, many states, cities, and counties offer "aftercare" and reentry services for youth who are exiting juvenile facilities.

Evidence on the Effectiveness of Independent Living Programs

A number of different independent living programs — programs that help young people make the transition to adulthood — target youth who were formerly in the foster care or juvenile justice system. However, the research evidence on most of those programs includes few rigorous evaluations, most of which do not find positive results. This section describes existing research on the effectiveness of common independent living service models, focusing specifically on those that are designed to affect the key outcomes targeted by the Transitional Living program.

A common component of independent living programs, particularly those that target former foster youth, is life skills training.[12] Such training is designed to help youth acquire the skills needed to live on their own as adults, such as knowledge of money management, nutrition, or effective apartment-search techniques.[13] Life-skills training is often one component of programs that provide other services, such as housing assistance, case management, or mentoring. However, a 2006 review found that there were no experimental evaluations of independent

[11]National Resource Center for Youth Development (2015).
[12]Courtney and Terao (2002).
[13]Courtney, Lee, and Perez (2011).

living programs offering life-skills training to youth who were leaving state care.[14] More recently, as part of the Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs, a random assignment evaluation tested the impacts of a classroom-based life skills training program targeting 17-year-old foster youth.[15] The study found little evidence of positive impacts on educational and economic outcomes for youth.

As noted above, housing is one of the primary needs facing young adults who are leaving foster care and juvenile justice custody. Accordingly, some programs for these youth focus primarily on housing assistance, either by directly offering subsidized housing units or by providing vouchers or stipends that young people may use toward rent.[16] These programs often couple housing assistance with other services, such as case management or life skills training. A 2012 review identified 58 housing programs across the United States that serve former foster youth and, in some cases, youth who were exiting juvenile justice custody.[17] However, research on the effectiveness of those housing programs is lacking, as the review found no experimental or quasi-experimental evaluations of any of them.[18]

Independent living programs that serve former foster care or juvenile justice youth may also include mentoring as a core component.[19] These programs pair each young person with an adult from the community and encourage the youth and adult to form a strong, trusting connection, through which the adult can provide guidance and practical support. The research literature on mentoring programs that target disadvantaged youth in general is fairly strong, suggesting that they can improve a range of outcomes.[20] For example, a random assignment evaluation of Big Brothers Big Sisters found that the program decreased drug use and improved some academic outcomes and the quality of family relationships.[21] However, experimental evaluations of mentoring programs that specifically target former foster care or juvenile justice youth have not found positive results.[22] For example, an experimental evaluation of the South Oxnard Challenge Project, which incorporated community-based mentoring and other services into juvenile probation supervision, found that the program did not improve relationships with parents or reduce delinquency.[23] Similarly, one site in the Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth

[14]Montgomery, Donkoh, and Underhill (2006).

[15]Courtney, Zinn, Johnson, and Malm (2011).

[16]Dworsky et al. (2012).

[17]Dworsky et al. (2012).

[18]Experimental evaluations, in which study enrollees are randomly assigned to a program or control group, are considered the most rigorous method of evaluating large-scale social service programs.

[19]Clayton (2009); Courtney and Terao (2002); DuBois et al. (2011).

[20]DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, and Cooper (2002); DuBois et al. (2011).

[21]Tierney and Grossman (2000).

[22]Montgomery, Donkoh, and Underhill (2006).

[23]Brank et al. (2008); Lane, Turner, Fain, and Sehgal (2005, 2007).

Programs tested a tutoring and mentoring program, and found that the mentoring relationships were short-lived and the program did not produce impacts on educational outcomes.[24]

Programs for young adults, particularly those who are involved in the juvenile justice system, may also make use of cognitive behavioral therapies.[25] These interventions focus on changing thinking and behaviors that are associated with violence, delinquency, substance use, and other self-destructive behaviors, as well as increasing cognitive skills, such as strategies for problem solving or for dealing with conflict.[26] In addition, some specialized therapies, such as trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy, are designed to help individuals who have experienced trauma, such as exposure to violence or abuse, by helping them to develop strategies for coping and managing stress.[27] Research on the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapies is relatively strong, with rigorous studies showing that these programs can reduce criminal recidivism,[28] reduce substance use,[29] and improve mental health outcomes among youth with histories of juvenile justice involvement or trauma.[30]

Finally, some independent living programs pair each youth with a social worker or case manager who provides individualized services ranging from life-skills training and cognitive behavioral therapy to financial supports and other practical support and guidance. Each social worker or case manager has a small caseload, ranging from about 8 to 15 youth, and is encouraged to develop a mentor-like relationship with each one. A random assignment evaluation of one such program for foster youth, the Massachusetts Adolescent Outreach Program, found that the program increased college enrollment.[31] However, these impacts appeared to be driven primarily by the program's impact on whether youth extended their receipt of foster care services, and the program did not improve outcomes in employment, economic well-being, housing, or delinquency.

In summary, the research evidence on the effectiveness of independent living programs is thin, particularly for programs serving former foster youth. Few random assignment evaluations have tested these programs, and among those, only one found a positive impact. A stronger research base exists for programs that target youth who are leaving juvenile justice custody, especially with respect to cognitive behavioral therapies designed to affect problem

[24]Courtney et al. (2008b).
[25]Greenwood and Turner (2011).
[26]Andrews and Bonta (2010); Lipsey, Landenberger, and Wilson (2007).
[27]Black, Woodworth, Tremblay, and Carpenter (2012).
[28]Lipsey, Landenberger, and Wilson (2007).
[29]Botvin, Baker, Filazzola, and Botvin (1990).
[30]Silverman, Pina, and Viswesvaran (2008).
[31]Courtney, Zinn, Johnson, and Malm (2011).

behaviors like criminal recidivism and substance abuse. However, little is known about the effectiveness of these or other program models in improving other outcomes for juvenile justice youth, such as educational attainment or economic stability. The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation is designed to help fill this gap in knowledge.

Youth Villages and the Transitional Living Program

Youth Villages, a nonprofit social service organization based in Memphis, Tennessee, has served emotionally and behaviorally troubled boys and girls of all ages since 1986. The organization operates a variety of residential and community-based programs serving more than 20,000 young people each year in 12 states and the District of Columbia. Among its programs other than Transitional Living, Youth Villages arranges foster care placements, adoptions, and mentoring; operates a Tennessee statewide crisis intervention hotline and response team; runs residential facilities for adolescent boys and girls with serious emotional and behavioral problems; and provides an alternative to foster care in the form of in-home treatment for children and their families through its Intercept program. Youth Villages promotes consistency in clinical practices through its treatment manual, which contains all of the practices that the organization considers to be acceptable and informed by evidence.

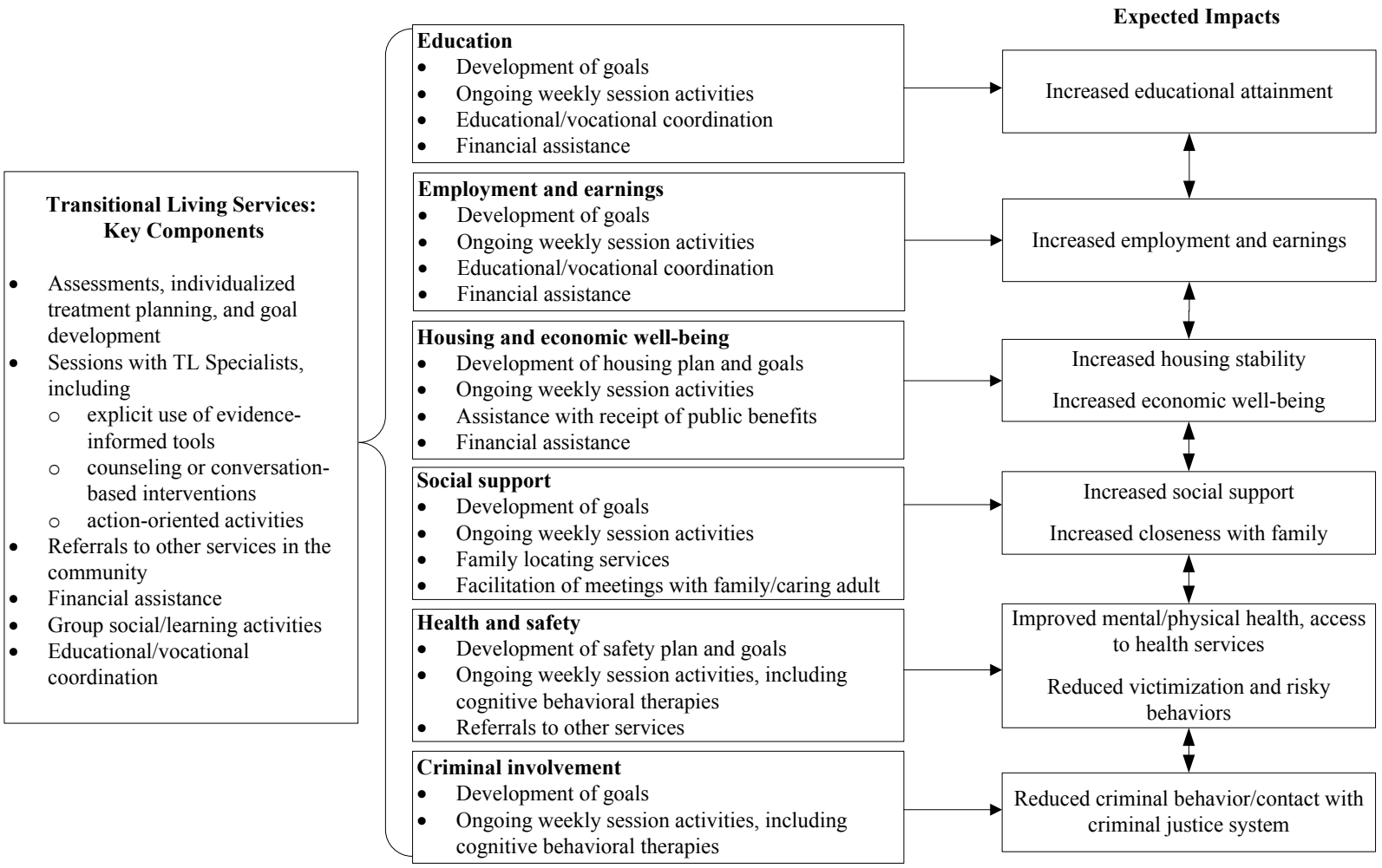
The Transitional Living program provides intensive, individualized, clinically focused, and community-based case management, support, and counseling for young adults who were formerly in foster care or juvenile justice custody, or who otherwise find themselves unprepared for adult life. Each young person in the Transitional Living program works with a case manager — known as a "TL Specialist" — who typically serves only eight youths at a time. Although the program operates in six states, its largest location and the subject of this evaluation is the statewide Tennessee Transitional Living program. During the evaluation period, about one-third of the funding for the Tennessee program came through a contract with the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS), while philanthropic support, including a grant from the Day Foundation, funded the remaining two-thirds of program expenses.

Figure 1.1 provides more detail about Transitional Living program services. The box on the left shows the key service components of the Transitional Living model. The program starts with assessments and the development of an individualized treatment plan that takes into account the particular risk factors and goals of each youth. Then, the bulk of the services are provided during hour-long, Transitional Living sessions, which are scheduled weekly with a TL Specialist. The activities that take place during the sessions also vary depending on the needs and goals of each youth. These activities may involve the use of evidence-informed tools, such as life skills modules from an approved curriculum; counseling; and action-oriented activities, such as touring potential apartments to rent or opening a bank account.

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Figure 1.1

Logic Model for the Transitional Living Program



Aside from the direct support that the TL Specialist provides during sessions, Transitional Living offers other resources to participating youth. TL Specialists may refer youth to other services in the community, such as General Educational Development (GED) classes or housing services. In addition, TL Specialists have access to flexible funds to support youth who need money for expenses such as appropriate clothing for interviews or an apartment application fee. Youth are also encouraged to participate in monthly group social and learning activities with other youth in the Transitional Living program. These group activities are required by Youth Villages' contract with DCS. Finally, educational/vocational coordinators are also available to work with youth who require additional support when seeking postsecondary education, vocational training, or employment opportunities.

The set of boxes in the center of Figure 1.1 shows the domains that are most commonly addressed — education, employment and earnings, housing stability and economic well-being, social support, health and safety, and criminal involvement — during the sessions with the TL Specialist and through other program services. For all domains, services include key program components such as goal planning and Transitional Living sessions. Other services, such as the assistance of the educational/vocational coordinator, focus on particular domains. Consistent with the individualized nature of the Transitional Living program, the extent to which each youth receives services related to each domain is dependent on the needs and goals of that youth. The boxes at the far right of Figure 1.1 show the expected effects, or impacts, of Transitional Living services in each of these domains.

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

This evaluation is testing the impacts of the Transitional Living program operating across the state of Tennessee. The evaluation targeted individuals between 18 and 24 years of age who had been in DCS custody (foster care or juvenile justice custody) in the state of Tennessee for at least 365 days (not necessarily continuously) after age 14 or for at least one day after age 17. Additional assessments were conducted to determine whether youth who met these basic eligibility criteria were also interested in program services, were appropriate for the program (that is, did not have histories of severe violence, mental health problems, drug use, or developmental delays), and had the capacity to live independently with appropriate supports.

The evaluation employs a random assignment design, which is generally considered the most rigorous method of evaluating large-scale social service programs. This research design involves a lottery-like process that places individuals into either a program group, which is offered the services being tested, or into a control group, which is not offered those services. Random assignment ensures that the demographic characteristics, foster care and juvenile justice histories, motivation levels, and other characteristics of sample members in the program and control groups are the same at the start of the study. One justification for using a random

assignment design is to apply it to a program that is oversubscribed — that is, a program that does not have the capacity to serve all eligible individuals who are interested in its services. In such instances, the creation of a control group is warranted. That was the case for the Transitional Living Evaluation, as Youth Villages lacked sufficient funding to serve all eligible and interested youth.[32]

Between October 2010 and October 2012, 1,322 young people enrolled in the evaluation. Sixty percent of the sample members were assigned at random to the program group and 40 percent were assigned at random to the control group:

- **The program group.** The 788 individuals who were randomly assigned to this group were offered Transitional Living program services, including intensive case management, support, and counseling.
- **The control group.** The 534 individuals who were randomly assigned to this group were not offered Transitional Living program services, but were provided with a list of other social service resources that were available in the community.[33]

By measuring outcomes for both the program and control groups over time, the evaluation team can assess whether Transitional Living services led to better outcomes for program group youth than those experienced by the control group. Owing to the random assignment design, the research groups were comparable on both measured and unmeasured characteristics when the study began. Therefore, statistically significant differences in outcomes that emerge between the two groups can be attributed with a high level of confidence to the offer of Transitional Living services to the program group but not to the control group. (A statistically significant difference, with this research design, is unlikely to have occurred by chance.) These differences in outcomes are considered "impacts" or "effects" of the Transitional Living program.

Key Outcomes and Data Sources

In order to evaluate whether the Transitional Living program improves outcomes for youth who are leaving the foster care or juvenile justice system, the research team estimated impacts on the key outcomes that the program is expected to affect. These key outcomes are

[32]Beginning on July 1, 2013, Youth Villages received additional funding from DCS that allowed it to offer Transitional Living services to all young adults aging out of state custody in Tennessee. While this funding excluded those leaving secure detention, funding from other services continued to be available to serve young people who were not eligible under DCS criteria.

[33]While program group members could access other services in the community if they wished, they were not provided with the list of resources that was given to the control group.

consistent with the service domains that are described above and shown in Figure 1.1. The impacts may be direct, through the provision of domain-specific services and activities that are applicable to the needs and goals of each youth, or indirect, through improvements in other outcomes. For example, services designed to improve employment and earnings or social support may also indirectly improve housing stability by increasing a youth's ability to pay for housing or by increasing the likelihood that the youth has access to stable housing through a family member.

In each of the six outcome domains, the research team pre-specified a small number of primary outcomes. Conclusions about the effectiveness of the Transitional Living program in a particular domain hinge on the impact estimates for these primary outcomes. In many cases, the primary outcomes are scales or combination measures that incorporate key outcomes into a single estimate. For example, the primary outcomes in the housing stability and economic well-being domain include two scales, one a combined measure of multiple types of housing instability and one a combined measure of multiple types of economic hardship. To provide additional detail about what drove impacts on the primary outcomes or to estimate impacts on other outcomes that are important, but not primary, the team also pre-specified secondary outcomes in each domain.

Data measuring outcomes in the key domains were collected for one year after random assignment for each study sample member. The primary source of these data was a survey fielded by MDRC's subcontractor, NORC at the University of Chicago. This survey was conducted approximately 12 months after study entry. In addition, the evaluation team collected administrative data on enrollment in college for exactly 12 months after study entry. Because study enrollment occurred from October 2010 until October 2012, the follow-up period for this study ranges from October 2011 until December 2013.[34]

The following data sources are used to describe the characteristics of the full sample at the point of study enrollment, present information about program implementation, detail service receipt among the program group, and measure key outcomes:

- **Baseline data:** Background data on all sample members were collected at the time of study enrollment. These data include information about age, gender, race and ethnicity, current place of residence, employment background, educational background, relationships with biological parents and other rela-

[34]Youth were interviewed between 12 and 14 months after they enrolled in the evaluation. Therefore, youth who were randomly assigned in October 2012 were interviewed between October 2013 and December 2013.

tives, arrest history, receipt of mental health counseling or alcohol and drug use treatment, and state custody history.

- **Program implementation data:** Data on the implementation of the Transitional Living program were obtained using interviews with Youth Villages leadership, Transitional Living management, and TL Specialists; evaluators' observations of program services; a staff survey, to which 79 percent of TL Specialists responded; a survey of selected staff asking them to document how they spent their time over a given week; and interviews with study sample members.

- **Program participation data:** Youth Villages provided data from its management information system on receipt of specific Transitional Living services, such as the regularly scheduled sessions and financial supports, and enrollment and discharge information.

- **Survey data:** As described above, a survey was administered to study sample members 12 to 14 months after each individual entered the study. The survey was completed by 1,114 of the 1,322 sample members (659 program group members; 455 control group members), representing a response rate of 84.3 percent (83.6 percent of the program group; 85.2 percent of the control group). (See Appendix A for more information about the survey sample and an analysis of the extent to which results may be biased by survey nonresponse.) The survey contained questions about service receipt, school enrollment and educational attainment, employment and earnings, housing stability, economic well-being, social support, health and safety, and criminal involvement.

- **Postsecondary school enrollment data:** Data were collected from the National Student Clearinghouse database, which includes information on enrollments in most two- and four-year postsecondary institutions in the United States, covering one year following each individual's enrollment in the study.

Study Recruitment and Enrollment

Youth Villages staff identified potential study sample members, assessed their suitability for and interest in the Transitional Living program, and enrolled into the study youth who were

found to be eligible, suitable, and interested.[35] They identified potential sample members primarily from a list that DCS provided each month, which included all youth in state custody who were 17 or older and therefore soon to be at least 18 years of age. Youth Villages also conducted some additional recruitment beyond the DCS list via targeted outreach to organizations serving the study's target population, broadly disseminated marketing materials, and word of mouth. Additional youth were identified through their participation in other Youth Villages services.

Once potential study sample members were identified, Youth Villages used a multistep process to assess their eligibility for and interest in the Transitional Living program and study. Figure 1.2 illustrates this process. Assessment for the evaluation began with an initial review of a youth's eligibility based on data available from DCS. Assessment staff then gathered additional information on whether youths met the eligibility criteria by contacting them directly and by speaking to foster parents, biological parents, service providers, and others involved with them. During this stage, youths were removed from the pool of potential sample members if they did not meet the state custody history criteria, had moved out of state, did not wish to participate, were not available or could not be contacted, stopped responding to attempted contacts, or had a close connection to another youth already in the study.[36] In addition, because the Transitional Living program was not intended to serve youth with a history of serious violence, a severe mental health problem, or other issue deemed a "rule-out" criterion, youth who presented with such issues, based on an assessment by Youth Villages staff, were also not enrolled in the study. Finally, Youth Villages supervisors reviewed the collected information for the youth who remained in the pool and provided final approval before those individuals could be enrolled in the study.

Eligible and interested youths met with a TL Specialist individually, usually on or shortly after their eighteenth birthday, to begin study enrollment. During the study enrollment meeting, the youth completed a consent form, contact sheet, and short survey form for the purposes of the study. The Transitional Living staff contacted MDRC's office to carry out random assignment over the phone or, less frequently, through MDRC's online system. Results were available immediately.

Ultimately, based on the eligibility criteria and other factors noted above, 25 of every 100 youth who were included on the monthly lists or who were otherwise identified by Youth

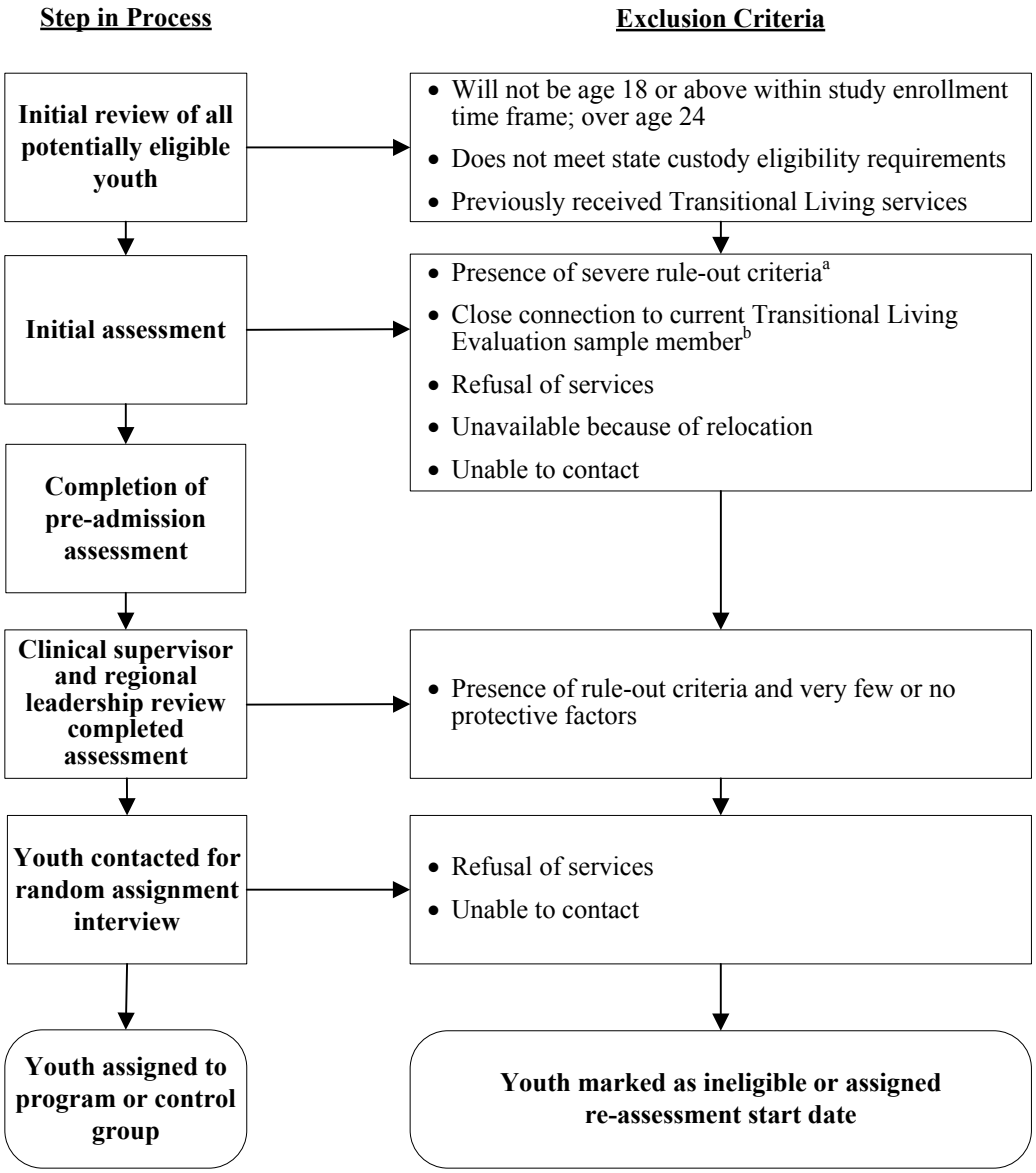
[35]A more detailed discussion of the recruitment and enrollment process is available in Manno, Jacobs, Alson, and Skemer (2014).

[36]A youth was considered to have a close connection to a study sample member if he or she were a sample member's sibling, significant other, or roommate.

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Figure 1.2

Assessment Process for the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation



NOTES: Youth could drop out of the assessment process for a variety of reasons; the figure reflects the stages where particular reasons occurred most frequently.

[a]Severe rule-out criteria include a history of serious violence or criminal involvement, severe substance abuse issues, ongoing mental health problems, intense emotional problems, and/or developmental delays.

[b]Youth with a close connection to a study sample member are excluded from the study because their participation could bias results.

Villages as potentially eligible were enrolled in the study. No data are available to compare the characteristics of youth who were enrolled with the characteristics of youth in the target population who did not enroll. However, based on the "rule-out" criteria, the fact that youth were not required to exhibit any level of need to be eligible, the requirement that youth show motivation to engage in services, and the possibility that youth who could not be reached may have been more transient and unstable than those who could, it is likely that the study sample included a somewhat higher-functioning group, with stronger social connections, than is representative of the general population of foster care or juvenile justice youth. Nevertheless, the characteristics of the youth who did participate in the evaluation suggest that the Transitional Living program is serving a population with significant need for intensive support during the transition to adulthood.

Characteristics of the Study Sample Members

This section provides an overview of the background characteristics and state custody histories of the study sample members. Table 1.1 presents selected, self-reported background characteristics of the study sample. As expected in a random assignment design, there are very few significant differences in background characteristics between the two research groups. Where differences do exist, they are minor and likely occurred by chance.

In line with the study eligibility requirements, all sample members were at least 18 years of age at the time of random assignment, with about 90 percent being 18 or 19 years old. There were slightly more males than females in the sample (52 percent versus 48 percent). The sample is racially diverse, with a majority being white/non-Hispanic (51 percent), while a significant minority is black/non-Hispanic (37 percent).

As anticipated based on existing research pertaining to youth who have spent time in state custody, sample members struggled with employment. Fifty-four percent of the sample indicated that they had been employed at some point in their lives, but only 19 percent held jobs at baseline. This figure is about half that of the general population of 18- and 19-year-olds in the United States.[37]

In terms of educational attainment and engagement, 17 percent of sample members had not received a high school diploma or GED certificate and were not enrolled in school at baseline, while an additional 40 percent had not yet completed high school or received a GED

[37]See U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014).

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Table 1.1
Characteristics of Sample Members at Baseline

Characteristic (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Full Sample	Sig.
Age categories				
18 years old	71.8	70.8	71.4	
19 years old	18.4	20.8	19.4	
20-24 years old	9.8	8.4	9.2	
Gender				
Male	52.4	51.5	52.0	
Female	47.6	48.5	48.0	
Race/ethnicity				
Hispanic	5.0	7.1	5.8	
White, non-Hispanic	51.6	50.4	51.1	
Black, non-Hispanic	38.0	35.7	37.1	
Other, non-Hispanic	5.5	6.8	6.0	
Ever employed	52.5	56.4	54.1	
Employed at baseline	18.8	19.9	19.2	
Educational attainment and school enrollment				
No high school diploma or GED certificate, not enrolled in school	16.5	18.5	17.3	
No high school diploma or GED certificate, enrolled in school	38.8	41.7	40.0	
High school diploma or GED certificate, not enrolled in postsecondary school	29.8	27.9	29.1	
High school diploma or GED certificate, enrolled in postsecondary school	14.9	11.9	13.7	
Ever repeated a grade or been held back a grade	43.3	43.3	43.3	
Ever been suspended from school	79.9	81.5	80.5	
Ever been in special education	26.3	24.6	25.6	
Contact with biological mother				*
Every day	41.9	44.9	43.1	
At least once a week but not every day	15.9	17.2	16.4	
At least once a month but not every week	7.0	8.8	7.7	
Less than once a month	9.5	6.0	8.1	
Never	25.8	23.0	24.7	
Contact with biological father				
Every day	14.8	18.7	16.4	
At least once a week but not every day	13.4	12.7	13.1	
At least once a month but not every week	8.0	7.3	7.7	
Less than once a month	11.5	8.6	10.3	
Never	52.4	52.6	52.5	

(continued)

Table 1.1 (continued)

Characteristic (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Full Sample	Sig.
Had contact with any other relatives at least once per month	90.2	85.8	88.4	**
Ever arrested	64.1	65.0	64.4	
Received psychological or emotional counseling in past year	55.3	56.3	55.7	
Attended substance abuse treatment program in past year	31.0	31.3	31.1	
Sample size	788	534	1,322	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation Baseline Information Form.

NOTES: In order to assess differences in characteristics across research groups, chi-square tests were used for categorical variables, and two-tailed t-tests were used for continuous variables. Statistical significance levels (Sig.) are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.
GED = General Educational Development.

certificate but were still attending school. Twenty-nine percent had earned a high school diploma or GED certificate but were not pursuing postsecondary education at baseline, whereas the remaining 14 percent had received a high school diploma or GED certificate and were enrolled in postsecondary schooling.[38] Among the general population of young people in the United States ages 18 to 24, 44 percent were enrolled in postsecondary education in 2010.[39] The vast majority of study youth were only 18 years of age at baseline and so may complete high school and enter postsecondary education as they complete their teenage years and move into their twenties; however, these data indicate that sample members were not well positioned at baseline to reach the postsecondary enrollment numbers of their peers who had not been in state custody. Moreover, 43 percent of study youth had repeated a grade (been held back), 81 percent had been suspended, and over 25 percent had been in special education at some point.

Contact with biological parents among sample members was fairly polarized for both maternal and paternal contact, though regular contact was much more common with mothers. Sixty percent of the sample reported having contact with their biological mothers once a week or more, but 25 percent had no contact at all with their mothers; relatively few fell in the

[38]A very small number of youth held a technical certificate or associate's degree at the time of random assignment.

[39]National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.). This figure includes enrollment in both degree-granting and non-degree-granting institutions.

intermediate range between those two extremes. Meanwhile, 30 percent reported having contact with their biological fathers once a week or more, but 53 percent reported no contact. Again, relatively few fell in the middle range. Nearly 90 percent had contact with other relatives at least once per month.

Sixty-four percent had ever been arrested — more than double the rate found among the general population of those who are age 23 or younger, 30 percent of whom have ever been arrested.[40]

Table 1.2 provides self-reported information on the state custody history of sample members.[41] Sixty-one percent of the sample reported having been in custody because they had been neglected, abused, or adjudicated as unruly (which indicates placement in foster care), while 52 percent reported having been in custody for delinquency (which indicates a placement for juvenile justice reasons). These figures sum to over 100 percent because a portion of the sample had experienced custody for both foster care and juvenile justice reasons. Most of the youth in the study, 64 percent, had first entered state custody when they were 15 or older. At the time of custody exit, just 5 percent of the sample were 16 years of age or younger. Twenty-eight percent were 17, 39 percent were 18 or older, and the remaining 28 percent of sample youth were still in custody at baseline.[42]

Youth in state custody are often moved among placements, meaning they spend time in several different foster homes, group homes, or other facilities. Thirty-five percent of the sample reported just one placement, while half reported experiencing anywhere from two to five placements, 10 percent reported from six to ten placements, and 6 percent had been moved among placements more than ten times. Research has found that the instability of multiple placements is associated with various negative outcomes, including increased occurrence of mental health problems, emotional and behavioral problems, poor academic performance, and dropping out of school.[43]

---

[40]See Goode (2011).

[41]Reliable administrative data on the state custody histories of sample members, particularly those who entered custody at young ages, were not available.

[42]There are a few potential reasons that some sample youth remained in custody at baseline: (1) some juvenile offenders remain in custody until age 19; (2) youth who turned 18 toward the end of the study enrollment period may have been affected by the changes in legislation, discussed earlier, that gave states the option to keep youth in foster care through age 21; and (3) even before the new legislation was passed, youth who had not yet graduated from high school but were on track to do so could remain in a supported foster care placement until the age of 19.

[43]See Pecora et al. (2006); Rubin et al. (2004); Ryan and Testa (2005).

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Table 1.2

State Custody History of Sample Members at Baseline

Characteristic (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Full Sample	Sig.
Ever in state custody because of				
Neglect, abuse, or unruly adjudication[a] (foster care)	61.4	61.1	61.3	
Delinquency (juvenile justice)	52.1	51.6	51.9	
Age in years at first custody entry				**
0-5	7.4	5.1	6.5	
6-10	6.8	5.7	6.3	
11-14	25.5	19.8	23.2	
15-16	30.7	34.5	32.3	
17-18	29.6	34.9	31.7	
Age in years at final custody exit				
16 or under	4.4	5.4	4.8	
17	27.0	28.4	27.6	
18 or over	38.5	40.7	39.4	
Still in custody at baseline	30.2	25.5	28.3	
Number of different custody placements				
1 placement	33.1	37.3	34.8	
2-5 placements	50.9	48.2	49.8	
6-10 placements	10.1	9.4	9.8	
More than 10 placements	5.9	5.2	5.6	
Sample size	788	534	1,322	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation Baseline Information Form.

NOTES: In order to assess differences in characteristics across research groups, chi-square tests were used for categorical variables, and two-tailed t-tests were used for continuous variables. Statistical significance levels (Sig.) are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

[a]An unruly adjudication occurs because children are determined to have behavioral problems serious enough that their health and safety are at risk or because they have committed an offense, such as truancy, that is applicable only to minors.

Roadmap to the Report

The remainder of this report is divided into the following chapters: Chapter 2 describes the key components of the Transitional Living program as it was implemented in Tennessee during the study period as well as the other services that were available in the community. Chapter 3 reports on the program group's participation in Transitional Living services. Chapter 4 presents findings, based on an analysis of the 12-month follow-up survey, on the differences in services

received by program group members compared with control group members. The subsequent four chapters cover the one-year impacts of the Transitional Living program on education and employment and earnings (Chapter 5); housing stability and economic well-being (Chapter 6); social support (Chapter 7); and health, safety, and criminal involvement (Chapter 8). Chapter 9 presents findings from an analysis comparing the impacts of the Transitional Living program among different subgroups of study sample members. Finally, Chapter 10 discusses the implications of the impact findings.

Chapter 2

The Transitional Living Program and Other Services Available in the Community

In order to interpret the results of the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation, it is important to understand both the services that were provided by the Transitional Living program and the services that were available to the evaluation control group, or the "counterfactual." This chapter begins with a description of how the Transitional Living program in Tennessee was implemented during the study period. These findings are informed by interviews with Youth Villages leadership, Transitional Living management, and case managers (or "TL Specialists"); evaluators' observations of program services; a staff survey to which 79 percent of TL Specialists responded; a survey of selected key staff asking them to document how they spent their time over a given week; and interviews with study participants. The chapter then provides an overview of the alternative services and programs that were available in the community and that members of both the program group and the control group could access. A more detailed discussion of the findings presented in this chapter is available in the earlier report from this evaluation.[1]

The Transitional Living Program During the Evaluation

The youth who were assigned to the program group as part of the Transitional Living Evaluation first met with their TL Specialists very soon after random assignment, sometimes immediately afterward. Generally, in the first session (the enrollment session) with a new participant, the TL Specialist explained the program in detail, discussed what was expected of the participant, and completed program enrollment paperwork. Soon after enrolling in the program, participants began meeting with their TL Specialists for Transitional Living sessions.

Early sessions were typically devoted to goal planning, with TL Specialists helping youth to identify goals they wished to achieve and to establish a timeline for achieving them. The goal-planning process was largely driven by the participants, who were typically able to articulate their goals. When youth were not able to articulate their goals, the TL Specialist made suggestions based on information gleaned from discussions with the youth, the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment, or other assessments. Box 2.1 contains a description of the Ansell-Casey assessment, as well as other practices approved by Youth Villages.

[1]Manno, Jacobs, Alson, and Skemer (2014).

Box 2.1

Evidence-Informed Practices Approved by Youth Villages and Used in the Transitional Living Program

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): CBT focuses on examining the relationships among thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. The treatment is problem-focused and goal-directed and often requires homework or practice (or both) outside of the weekly Transitional Living sessions. One type of CBT is psychoeducation, which is the process of teaching about the nature of mental illness, including its causes, progression, consequences, and treatment.

Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT): TF-CBT is a conjoint child and parent psychotherapy approach for children and adolescents who are experiencing significant emotional and behavioral difficulties related to traumatic life events. It is a treatment model that uses various approaches, each of which is sensitive to the client's experience of trauma, and combines them with cognitive behavioral, family, and humanistic principles and techniques.

Motivational Interviewing (MI): MI is a goal-directed and client-centered counseling style that is often used to help a youth become motivated to change behavior.

Adolescent Community Reinforcement Approach (A-CRA): A-CRA is a behavioral treatment for alcohol and other substance use. Therapists assist adolescents with learning how to lead an enjoyable and healthy life without using alcohol or drugs while also working with families to reduce use of alcohol and drugs or reinforce a substance-free lifestyle.

Preparing Adolescents for Young Adulthood (PAYA): PAYA is a module-based curriculum developed by the Massachusetts Department of Social Services. Module topics include money, home, and food management; personal care, health, social skills, and safety; and education, job-seeking skills, and job maintenance.

Skill-Building: Skill-building materials include a compilation of resources from a variety of sources, including PracticeWise, which compiles clinical protocols based on evidence-based practices. Topics covered in Skill-Building include safety skills, anger management, communication skills, various social skills, job-seeking skills, assertiveness training, personal hygiene, and others.

Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA): This assessment is used to gauge a youth's independent living skills needed for daily living activities, self-care, relationships and communication, housing and money management, work and study life, career and education planning, and future goals.

Goal planning fed into the initial treatment plan, in which the TL Specialist developed a strategy for addressing goals based on the interventions provided in the Youth Villages Treatment Manual. The initial month of program enrollment also resulted in the development of a psychosocial assessment, which presents a comprehensive picture of the youth's life, including problem history, previous treatment history, substance use history, current and former legal issues associated with the youth or the youth's family members, a physical and mental health profile, and many other characteristics. In order to address participants' changing needs, TL Specialists conducted ongoing assessment and goal planning, and adapted services as needed over time.

After goals and treatment plans were established, youth continued to meet with their TL Specialists during Transitional Living sessions, which formed the bulk of the program services. The sessions were scheduled weekly and typically lasted about an hour. Staff had flexibility to individualize their sessions with youth, though they were required to adhere to recommendations from supervisory clinical staff and draw on evidence-informed practices that Youth Villages had approved. Those practices included three types of strategies: use of evidence-informed tools, counseling, and action-oriented activities. Evidence-informed tools included specific curricula, such as Preparing Adolescents for Young Adulthood (PAYA) materials, as well as practices such as trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy. A second strategy involved counseling, in which the participant and TL Specialist talked about particular issues that existed in the participant's life or as they arose. Finally, TL Specialists used action-oriented activities, such as taking a participant to a bank to open an account or to a community college to gather information about classes.

Aside from direct support by the TL Specialist during Transitional Living sessions, the program offered other resources to participating youth. Outside of sessions, the TL Specialists were required to have at least one other contact with each of their cases every week, often in the form of a text message or phone call. As noted earlier, TL Specialists also had access to some flexible funds to support youth who needed money for expenses such as appropriate clothing for interviews or an apartment application fee. Youth were also encouraged to participate in monthly "Peer 2 Peer" meetings that provided them with opportunities to interact with other youth in the Transitional Living program. The meetings, which are required by Youth Villages' contract with the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS), also provided Transitional Living staff with additional opportunities to emphasize information about employment-readiness skills, postsecondary education plans, or other topics by way of guided, small-group activities. Youth who required additional support for finding vocational training or employment opportunities could also work with an educational/vocational coordinator.

Transitional Living was typically available to youth for nine months, though the length of the program could be shorter or longer depending on the circumstances of each youth. The

TL Specialist, clinical consultant, and clinical supervisor typically discussed the appropriateness of discharge approximately eight months after a youth was enrolled in Transitional Living. Youth who were meeting their goals and were stable (meaning that they had reliable housing and the necessary resources and supports were in place) were likely to be discharged in their ninth program month, if not before, while youth who continued to experience instability or who needed additional support could stay in Transitional Living longer, until they were more prepared for independence. Some youth voluntarily stopped participating partway through regardless of the goals they achieved.

Common Goals and Issues Addressed

The Transitional Living sessions were individualized to each youth, in accordance with the goals and issues encountered by that youth. TL Specialists and youth worked on any number of goals and sometimes multiple goals in a session. The most frequently discussed topics at the Transitional Living sessions were related to employment, housing, and education. TL Specialists also discussed life skills and mental health.

Employment

TL Specialists addressed a range of employment-related issues with their participants, from introducing them to the working world to techniques needed to keep their jobs. Some youth had no work experience and needed basic work-readiness skills, such as how to dress appropriately or how to fill out an application or develop a résumé. Other participants were more prepared for the workforce but needed assistance identifying prospective employers, coaching and mock interviewing to learn better interview techniques, transportation to the job interview, or help acquiring appropriate clothing for the workplace. Other youth had jobs, but needed support to resolve conflicts with supervisors or coworkers, or to get guidance on job maintenance skills, how to move into a different position, or how to ask for more hours. TL Specialists could also use flexible funds to buy interview-appropriate attire or workplace uniforms for youth in need.

The TL Specialist sometimes involved the regional educational/vocational coordinator (EVC) to help youth with employment-related issues. EVCs often ran mock interviews, since participants were not as familiar with this person and such exercises could more closely mimic a real job interview. The EVCs also took youth shopping for appropriate clothing or linked them to other organizations in the community that could provide additional supports. In addition, the EVCs provided TL Specialists with information about job announcements and job fairs or linked youth up directly with an employment opportunity by working their contacts in the community.

Housing

Unlike some other independent living programs, the Transitional Living program does not provide housing to its participants. Rather, TL Specialists help youth to identify housing needs and solutions. Some youth had stable living situations when they entered the program, such as with family or friends. In those cases, the TL Specialists helped youths to develop a "living agreement" with their housemates, including family members, which outlined expectations from both parties. In other cases, TL Specialists helped their participants to identify new housing options if needed. For example, they might tour apartments with their participants to find the best location as far as type of area, safety, and price.

The TL Specialists also worked on budgeting related to housing so program participants could understand the financial requirements of any living situation, including costs for utilities, food, and rent. In addition, with flexible funds, the TL Specialist could pay for housing needs, including utilities, a rental deposit, rent for a month, or furnishing and home goods for those youth considered responsible and in short-term need. Youth who were receiving Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care (EFC) Services (formerly Post-Custody Services) — the state's implementation, beginning in 2012, of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 — could also receive housing supports from DCS.[2] In such cases, TL Specialists coordinated with DCS case workers to maximize the benefit to youth and avoid duplication of efforts.

Education

TL Specialists worked with participants who were still in high school to help them meet the requirements for graduation. This help included providing direct tutoring support or referring their participants to tutors, helping participants to work with teachers to complete assignments, or working with school staff to address other issues with which youth might be struggling. For participants looking to earn a GED certificate, TL Specialists helped them get study materials, tutored them, and helped them to sign up for classes or to take the required series of

[2]Post-Custody Services were established by the state of Tennessee in 2002 for youth who emancipated from foster care at age 18 and who were engaged in an education or job-training program and met other criteria. Youth who were leaving juvenile justice custody, excluding those who were housed in a secure facility at 18 or 19 years of age, were also eligible. Post-Custody Services offered continued financial and case management support for eligible youth through age 21. Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care Services, which was launched under the Fostering Connections Act and replaced Post-Custody Services in 2012, offers the same services, with the added option of remaining in a supported foster care placement until age 21.

GED tests. Educational/vocational coordinators also helped youth with their efforts to meet high school graduation requirements or to pass the GED test through tutoring or other support.

TL Specialists also worked with participants to help them pursue postsecondary education opportunities either in two- or four-year colleges or in vocational training programs, though they focused more on high school equivalency and employment. For participants who were questioning their next step after high school, TL Specialists provided help identifying interests and researching possible education or training programs. They, along with the educational/vocational coordinators, also helped youth to identify and learn about potential colleges to which they could apply; helped them to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form; tutored them for SAT, ACT, or college entrance exams; toured colleges of interest with them; reviewed school assignments; and discussed how to approach professors and ask for assistance if necessary. Flexible funding was also available for youth who were pursuing postsecondary education opportunities, and TL Specialists could purchase books or other educational necessities for their participants. Finally, youth who successfully completed one semester of college were eligible to apply for one of a small number of slots in the Youth Villages Scholars program, which provides significant financial and other supports, such as connections with a formal mentor and extended eligibility for Transitional Living services.

Life Skills

Some participants or TL Specialists identified needs in the areas of general life skills, parenting, management of safe and healthy relationships, or substance use to address during treatment. General life skills that youth and TL Specialists worked on together included cooking and shopping for groceries; money management, including learning to review expenses to determine where money was going and learning strategies for spending wisely; or opening a bank account. If a youth was interested in buying a car, the TL Specialist would provide information about interest rates, taxes, registration fees, gas expenses, and budgeting for monthly payments. Along the same lines, TL Specialists worked with youth to make connections to community supports, particularly government supports, such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (formerly food stamps), that would be available after their discharge from the Transitional Living program. If a youth ran short on food, the TL Specialist worked with the young person to identify community resources, such as food pantries. TL Specialists could also use flexible funds to purchase food for youth in need.

Given that about one-sixth of the study sample members were young parents, TL Specialists also addressed parenting issues with them. For example, a TL Specialist might teach a young woman about the developmental stages of childhood and how to investigate child care options. The topic of safety precautions as it relates to children was addressed monthly with

young parents. If needed, TL Specialists could use flexible funds to buy diapers, food, or other necessities for the child.

The TL Specialists also addressed managing safe and healthy relationships with peers or family members. These discussions were formalized with monthly safety plans, which reminded youth to take safety precautions, such as not walking outside at night or alone, keeping house and car doors locked, and having functioning smoke detectors. The safety plans might also include people the youth should avoid — for example, staying away from a cousin who is a known drug dealer. In addition, the TL Specialists were required to address sexual behavior each month, including discussions about safe sex strategies and pregnancy prevention, sexually transmitted diseases and other medical issues related to sexual health, sexual orientation, and awareness of sexual violence and prevention techniques.

Finally, substance use was covered frequently. Often it is an underlying cause of difficulties related to employment, school, and relationships with others, or a symptom of problems in other parts of a youth's life. TL Specialists assessed youth for eligibility for the Adolescent Community Reinforcement Approach (described in Box 2.1), which select Youth Villages staff were trained to administer. TL Specialists could also connect youth with other substance use treatment options in the community.

Mental Health

Mental health was an underlying issue for many Transitional Living participants in the study sample, and it made employment, school, and relationships with others extra challenging. Although Youth Villages does not diagnose mental health conditions, TL Specialists referred program group members to therapists in the community for evaluation, helped to identify mental health care providers who accepted youths' insurance, assisted with medication management, and drove youth to appointments with mental health providers. TL Specialists, with permission from the program participants, also communicated with the therapists to actively monitor progress. More often, however, TL Specialists helped youth to understand their mental illness and manage their symptoms and triggers. For example, if a youth had a history of self-harm, then the TL Specialist helped her understand her emotional "thermometer" in order to monitor her mood and potential for harmful behavior, talked about triggers for depressive symptoms, and explained techniques that could prevent her from becoming overly despondent. In cases where youth were identified as having a history of trauma, a trained Youth Villages staff member assessed them to determine whether trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (described in Box 2.1) would be appropriate. When appropriate, youth underwent a 12- to 20-week course of therapy to address the trauma in addition to their weekly Transitional Living sessions.

Other Services Available in the Community

Across the state of Tennessee, a number of services other than Transitional Living were available throughout the one-year study follow-up period to young adults with histories of state custody. Some of these resources were available through DCS, which provided financial support and case management services. Until July 2012, these services were provided under the Post-Custody Services program.[3] The primary Post-Custody Services included financial assistance for transportation, housing costs, education, and job-training programs; access to education and training vouchers for postsecondary school or vocational training; and twice-quarterly meetings with a case manager. Additionally, those youth who had not yet graduated from high school but were on track to do so had the option of remaining in a supported foster care placement until the age of 19.

Sample enrollment for the Transitional Living Evaluation spanned the shift, in July 2012, from the Post-Custody Services program to EFC Services. Services and eligibility criteria under EFC are similar to those under Post-Custody, with a few notable differences: The instatement of EFC altered independent living services by offering the option for youth to remain in a foster care placement until the age of 21. It also doubled the frequency of face-to-face meetings with a case manager. Eligibility criteria for these services were broadened to include youth who cannot enroll in a college or vocational training program because of a medical condition (including a mental health or developmental condition). Still, only a small portion of the study sample, about 20 percent, were receiving either Post-Custody or EFC services at baseline.

Other services were also available. In addition to its own programs, DCS contracts with organizations, including Youth Villages, to provide services for youth who are exiting state custody, whether foster care or juvenile justice. Some of these agencies offer residential services to young people who are making the transition out of state custody. In addition, resource centers managed by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative (outside the auspices of DCS) are scattered across the state and seem to play a similar function to a school's career center.[4] Transitional Living staff also noted a handful of housing crisis centers, community shelters and food pantries, and mental health care providers that offer services to at-risk youth.

Despite the existence of other services in the community, interviewees (including Youth Villages staff, other service providers, DCS staff, and the Transitional Living participants

[3]Tennessee Department of Children's Services (2002).

[4]The Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative is a national foundation that works on the national, state, and local levels to improve policies and services for youth ages 14 to 25 who are making the transition out of foster care.

themselves) noted that youth face considerable barriers to accessing those services. Youth who are no longer served by a public institution have few formal avenues to connect with service providers. Furthermore, once a resource is identified, youth often endure a lengthy waiting period before space is available. In addition to space limitations, eligibility requirements for entering these programs appeared to exclude or discourage a large portion of the population that comprises the Transitional Living Evaluation participants, not least of which is an oft-cited exclusion of youth over the age of 18. Some agencies restrict participants to only those with severe needs, such as serious mental health or substance use issues, while others serve only youth who have less troubled backgrounds, excluding those with a history of juvenile justice involvement or school disciplinary action.

Conclusion

Though the Transitional Living program has significant structure, the TL Specialists have a lot of flexibility to personalize their ongoing sessions and relationships with the youth on their caseloads. TL Specialists adapted the strategies used in the sessions in a highly individualized manner to capitalize on the strengths of each youth. In general, strategies fell within three broad categories: evidence-informed tools, counseling, and action-oriented activities. Youth got support across any number of issues, the most common of which were employment, housing, and education.

Youth in the study could access a number of other services, besides Transitional Living, in Tennessee. Those services include the Post-Custody Services and EFC Services provided by the state, programs provided by other organizations that were also contracted by the Tennessee Department of Children's Services, and other programs and services provided by community organizations. In general, however, the alternative services were less intensive than those provided by the Transitional Living program and, because of eligibility criteria, were available to only a portion of the study sample.

Chapter 3

Participation in Transitional Living Program Services

The Transitional Living Evaluation included an assessment of the rates, timing, and duration of participation in program services. The findings, presented in this chapter, are based on data from Youth Villages' management information system (MIS), in which Youth Villages staff recorded information about program participants' receipt of specific Transitional Living services, such as participation in the Transitional Living sessions, receipt of financial support, and enrollment and discharge information. This analysis focuses on core areas of participation in the Transitional Living program and updates the analysis that is presented in the earlier report from this evaluation.[1] That report contains a more detailed discussion about program group members' participation in Transitional Living.

The findings presented below provide information only about program services that are captured in the Youth Villages MIS in a way that can be quantified. Therefore, some services that were offered to program group members are not covered here, because they could not be measured with existing data. These services include the types of interventions and counseling strategies employed by the case managers, or "TL Specialists," such as cognitive behavioral therapy or Preparing Adolescents for Young Adulthood modules. The results discussed in this chapter should therefore be understood not as a complete measure of all services that program group members received, but rather as an assessment of only measurable services.

Length of Participation in the Transitional Living Program

A substantial portion of the program group received services at the expected frequency, intensity, and duration — or "dosage" — of the Transitional Living program model. About two-thirds participated in Transitional Living services for at least five months, and about half participated for at least the expected average program length of nine months. These results are illustrated in Figure 3.1, which presents program group members' monthly rates of participation in Transitional Living services in the year after random assignment.

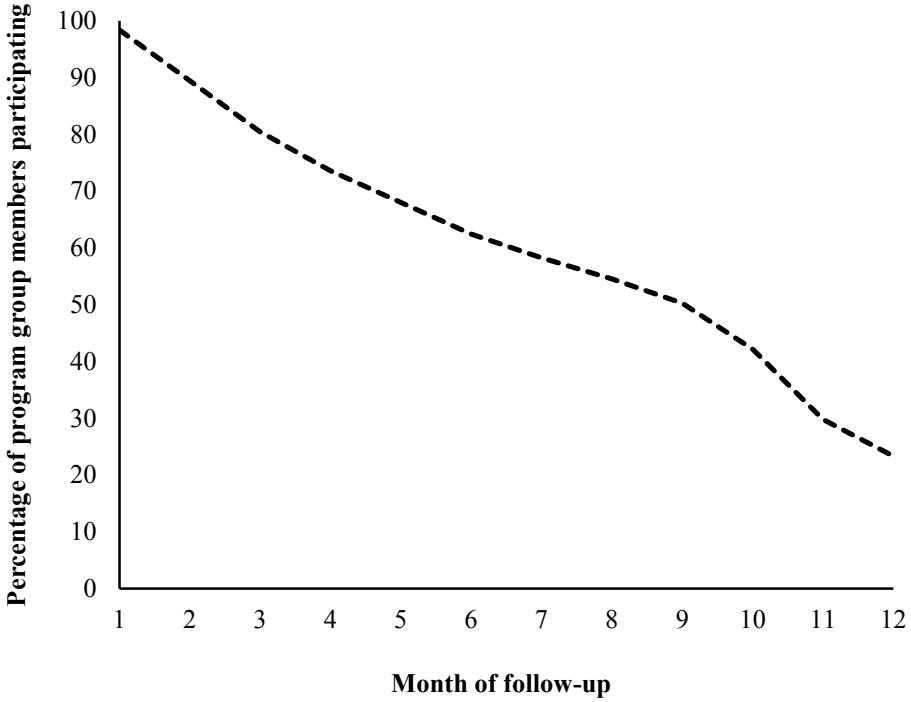
As the figure shows, nearly all program group members participated in Transitional Living services during the first month after random assignment, but the rate of participation dropped relatively steeply in the early months, falling to about 81 percent in Month 3. This

[1] Manno, Jacobs, Alson, and Skemer (2014).

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Figure 3.1

Monthly Participation in Transitional Living Services



SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on data from the Youth Villages management information system.

NOTES: Individuals were considered to have participated in Transitional Living (TL) services in a given month if they participated in at least one of the following: an enrollment session, a weekly TL session, a psychosocial assessment, an initial treatment plan, or a Peer 2 Peer meeting.

Month 1 is the first month after random assignment.

decline suggests that some individuals who were enrolled in the program or who participated in an initial treatment plan or an initial Transitional Living session stopped participating fairly quickly. However, the number who left the program in the first two months represented only about 18 percent of those who participated in the first month.

After Month 3, program participation rates declined more gradually through Month 9, when about 50 percent of program group members were still participating in the Transitional

Living program. This time frame matches the expected length of program services for most youth who successfully complete the program. In addition, some individuals who left the program before nine months had passed were also successful "completers": youth who were doing especially well and were no longer in need of services after a few months were successfully discharged. Finally, some individuals remained in the program past Month 9, with about 23 percent of program group members still participating in Month 12 after random assignment.

Participation in Key Transitional Living Program Services

The overall rate of participation in the Transitional Living program was high. As shown in Table 3.1, 99 percent of program group members participated in at least one face-to-face Transitional Living service. This high rate of participation may have resulted from the efforts of program staff to begin services immediately after random assignment, thereby enrolling youth and engaging them in Transitional Living sessions as soon as possible. This effort is reflected in the short time period, about 1.5 days on average, between random assignment and receipt of the first program service (not shown in table).

For many Transitional Living participants, the first service consisted of a program enrollment session. As the second row of Table 3.1 indicates, 84 percent of program group members participated in such a meeting. This number is lower than the total percentage of program group members who participated in the Transitional Living program because some TL Specialists recorded enrollment sessions as regular Transitional Living sessions in the MIS. The initial treatment planning came very quickly after random assignment. The 98 percent of program group members who completed an initial treatment plan did so within one week after random assignment, on average (not shown in table).

Not surprisingly, given that the bulk of program services are provided by TL Specialists during the regularly scheduled Transitional Living sessions, nearly all program group members (95 percent) participated in at least one session. During the 12 months following random assignment, program group members averaged about 26 Transitional Living sessions. As Table 3.1 shows, youth who participated in at least one session averaged 27 sessions and spent a total of about 34 hours in those sessions over the 12 months.

The average rate of participation in Transitional Living sessions is consistent with the expectations of the program model. During the time in which program group members were actively participating in the Transitional Living program, the average rate of participation was 3.7 sessions per month. This rate is a little lower than the expected rate of one session per week (or about 4.3 sessions per month). This finding may indicate that some program group members

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Table 3.1

Participation in Transitional Living Services, Year 1

Outcome	Program Group
Participated in any Transitional Living (TL) service[a] (%)	98.6
Participated in an enrollment session (%)	84.3
Completed initial treatment plan (%)	98.0
Completed psychosocial assessment (%)	83.9
Ever received support payment (%)	37.9
TL sessions	
Participated in at least one session (%)	95.2
Average number of sessions	26.1
Among those who participated in at least one TL session[b]	
Number of sessions	27.4
Total hours spent in sessions	34.0
Length of a single session (minutes)	74.8
Number of sessions per month between first and last service	3.7
Other contacts with TL Specialist[c]	
Any contact between TL Specialist and client outside of TL sessions (%)	90.0
Average number of short contacts	8.8
Average number of long contacts	1.0
Average number of contacts of unknown duration	1.4
Peer 2 Peer meetings	
Participated in a meeting (%)	49.9
Average number of meetings attended	1.6
Program progress, among those who ever participated (%)	
Successfully completed and discharged	41.1
Discharged without completing	28.4
Discharged, completion status unknown	3.4
Not yet discharged	27.2
Sample size	788

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on data from the Youth Villages management information system.

NOTES:
[a]Individuals are considered to have participated in at least one service if they participated in at least one of the following: an enrollment session, a TL session, a psychosocial assessment, an initial treatment plan, or a Peer 2 Peer meeting.

(continued)

Table 3.1 (continued)

[b]The duration for 2.0 percent of TL sessions was missing. Therefore, the estimate of total time spent in sessions is likely to be slightly lower than the true amount. The average length of a single session was calculated using only those sessions for which a duration was available.

[c]Short contacts are those that lasted 15 minutes or less and include communications via e-mail, text message, and phone, including those in which the TL Specialist was only able to leave a message for the youth. Long contacts are those that lasted more than 15 minutes and include in-person meetings that were not official TL sessions, in-person activities (such as a TL Specialist driving a participant to an appointment), and phone calls. The data do not distinguish between contact attempts in which the staff person spoke with the contact target and contact attempts that resulted only in messages left. Therefore, these calculations include instances in which direct contact was not made.

participated less consistently in the program than expected, perhaps because staff and participants did not successfully reschedule every missed session, or because some individuals had gaps in their participation because of events like jail stays. Still, this rate is close to the frequency of sessions expected, based on the Transitional Living program model.

While contact between TL Specialists and participants occurred mainly during their regular sessions, they also communicated at other times. As Table 3.1 shows, 90 percent of program group members had at least one such additional contact with a TL Specialist. Most of these contacts were short communications, lasting 15 minutes or less, to provide reminders to meet for scheduled sessions or to monitor the youth's progress on assignments between sessions, for example. These contacts took place over the phone (including by voice mail message), by e-mail, or by text message. Less frequently, participants and TL Specialists communicated during more substantial phone conversations or in person, during other activities. For example, a TL Specialist might drive a participant to an appointment. Overall, these findings suggest that TL Specialists checked in often with their cases, but that lengthier interactions with youth outside of the regularly scheduled sessions were fairly rare. Besides direct interactions with youth, TL Specialists frequently made additional contacts with others, such as family members or school personnel, on behalf of the youth. More information about those contacts is discussed in the earlier report from this evaluation.[2]

Transitional Living participants were encouraged to participate in monthly "Peer 2 Peer" meetings, where they could interact with other youth from the program; however, the MIS data indicate that many participants did not attend any of these activities. While nearly all program group members participated in Transitional Living services, only about half participated in at least one Peer 2 Peer meeting. In addition, those who did attend Peer 2 Peer activities do

[2]See Manno, Jacobs, Alson, and Skemer (2014).

not appear to have been attending on a monthly basis. Program group members participated in 1.6 Peer 2 Peer meetings, on average, with those who attended at least one time participating in 3.2 Peer 2 Peer meetings (not shown in table).

The final panel of Table 3.1 provides information about the discharge status of youth, among those who participated in the program, at the end of the year following random assignment. About three-fourths of participants were officially discharged within one year. More than half (56 percent) of those who were discharged (41 percent of all participants) completed the program successfully, while 39 percent of discharges (28 percent of all participants) represented youth who left the program without completing it. In some cases, these youth stopped showing up for meetings or refused further services. In others, the youth's status changed, making participation no longer possible; for example, some youth moved out of Tennessee. Finally, 27 percent of participants were not yet officially discharged after one year.

Topics Discussed During Transitional Living Sessions

During the Transitional Living sessions, participants and TL Specialists discussed a wide range of topics related to participants' needs, including education, employment, housing and economic stability, criminal justice issues, and health. Table 3.2 shows the percentage of participants in Transitional Living sessions who discussed various topics with their TL Specialists during the nine months after random assignment, and provides information about the frequency with which those topics were discussed. Discussion topics were determined based on a search, using statistical software, of words included in the case notes that the TL Specialist wrote.[3] Some topics, such as social supports and relationships with family members, were difficult to measure in this way and are therefore not included. As a result, the topics presented here do not make up a comprehensive list of the topics discussed during the sessions.

Consistent with the reports of TL Specialists, discussion of education and employment issues was especially common and frequent. Among those who participated in at least one Transitional Living session, nearly all discussed education issues (about 95 percent) or employment issues (about 96 percent) with their TL Specialists at least once. These issues were also discussed with some frequency, as education issues were discussed in about 55 percent of the sessions and employment issues were discussed in about 58 percent of the sessions.

[3]For example, following are some of the terms used to flag a Transitional Living session as including employment-related discussions: employment, job, Job Corps, résumé, mock interview, job interview, employer, job-seeking, career, wise staffing, workplace, coworker, temp agency, job tracker.

Table 3.2

Topics Covered in Transitional Living (TL) Sessions, Year 1, Among Those Who Participated in At Least One TL Session

Topic	Topic Ever Discussed (%)	Average Proportion of Sessions in Which Topic Was Discussed (%)
Education	95.3	55.2
Employment	96.3	57.7
Housing	92.0	37.0
Financial literacy	77.3	18.2
Government support	78.3	19.3
Criminal justice issues	70.8	15.6
Physical or mental health	84.5	25.3
Alcohol or drug issues	65.3	12.1
Sexual health	80.4	12.6
Sample size		750

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on data from the Youth Villages management information system.

NOTE: Discussion topics were determined based on a search, using statistical software, of words included in the case notes written by the TL Specialist.

As expected, given that many youth were making the transition out of state custody placements or were in otherwise unstable housing situations, housing and economic stability were also common topics of discussion during the sessions. About 92 percent of participants in Transitional Living sessions discussed housing with their TL Specialists at least once. However, the topic came up in less than two-fifths (37 percent) of the sessions, suggesting that housing may not have been a lasting issue for some participants. TL Specialists also provided guidance related to economic stability and resources. More than three-fourths of session participants discussed financial literacy issues (77 percent), such as budgeting or maintaining a savings account. In addition, 78 percent discussed government support programs, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families cash benefits; Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (formerly food stamps); and Women, Infants, and Children assistance. As with housing, the frequency of discussions about financial issues was low relative to discussions about education and employment, suggesting that concerns about economic stability were present, but perhaps not persistent, for many participants.

Compared with other topics, criminal justice issues, such as arrests, court appearances, and meetings with lawyers, were discussed by a smaller proportion of participants. This finding is not surprising, given that not all participants had criminal justice issues. Still, 71 percent of participants in the Transitional Living sessions discussed criminal justice issues at least once, with those discussions occurring in about 16 percent of the sessions.

Finally, another very common category for discussion in Transitional Living sessions was health. About 85 percent of session participants discussed physical or mental health issues (or both), such as going to the doctor for a physical or dealing with issues of depression, in at least one session. Altogether, these topics came up in about 25 percent of the sessions. In addition, about 65 percent of session participants discussed alcohol or drug use issues with their TL Specialists. This does not necessarily mean that 65 percent had problems with alcohol or drugs, as in many instances the TL Specialists were merely assessing whether substance use was a problem and finding that it was not. This may be the reason that substance use issues came up in only 12 percent of the sessions, as the topic may have been discussed only once with many of the youths. Finally, while 80 percent of the youths discussed sexual health with their TL Specialists, this topic came up only about 13 percent of the time.

Receipt of Financial Supports

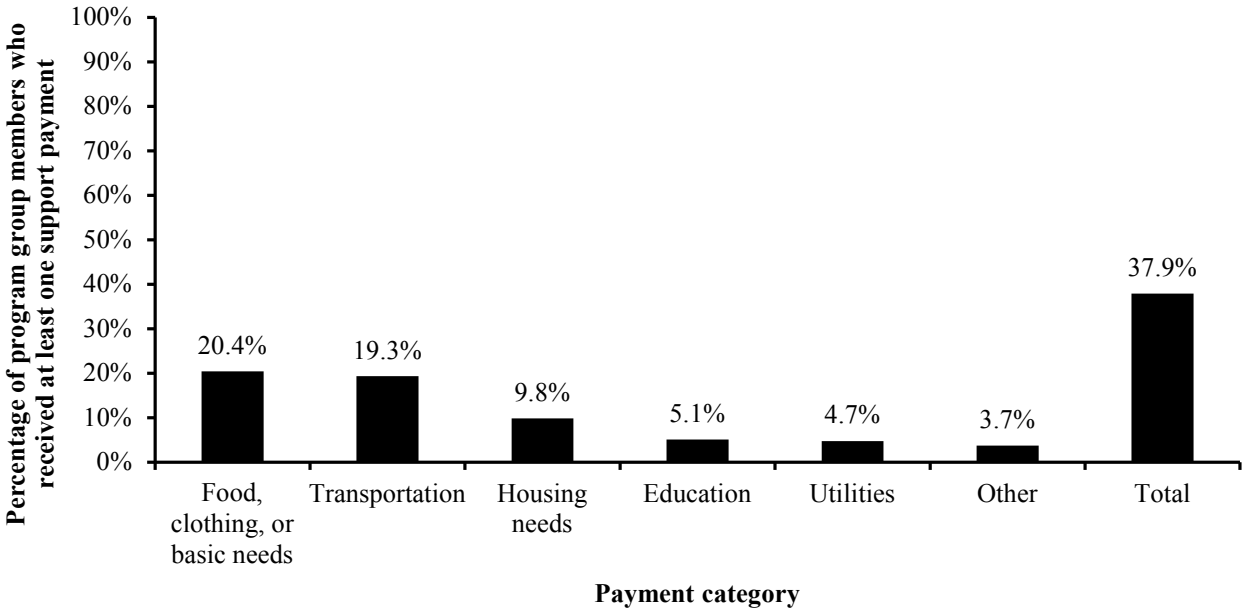
In addition to the other services already described, the Transitional Living program provided financial support to participants on an as-needed basis using the program's flexible funds. These support payments went toward basic needs and living expenses, such as clothing, food, tickets for public transit, housing, and utility bills. Figure 3.2 shows the frequency, amounts, and purposes of these payments. Most participants did not receive financial support; about 38 percent of program group members received at least one support payment. However, those who received at least one payment received about three payments, on average, for a total of about $384 (not shown), suggesting that some participants did receive a moderate amount of financial support.

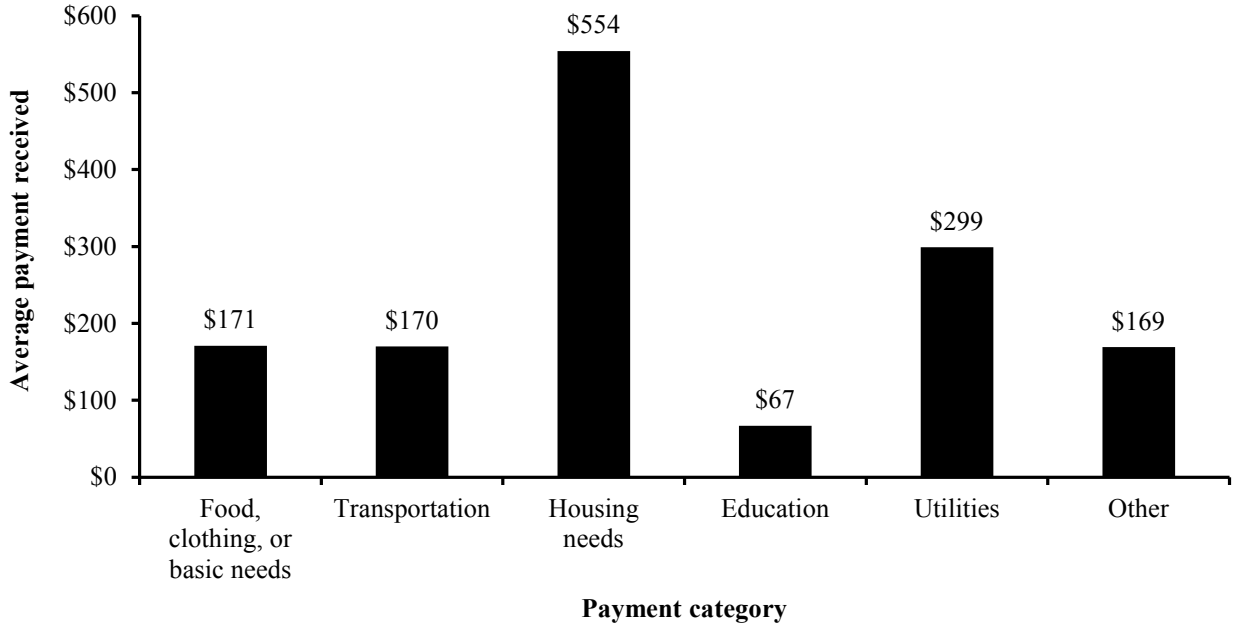
The most common purpose of the support payments was to provide participants with funds for food, clothing, and other basic needs; about 20 percent of the program group received a payment for this reason. In total, those receiving support for food, clothing, and basic needs were provided with $171 on average during the 12 months following study enrollment. Funds given for transportation needs, such as tickets for public transit or funds for driver's license fees, were also relatively common. About 19 percent of the program group received at least one such payment, and those receiving transportation support were provided with about $170, on average, in such support.

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Figure 3.2

Receipt of Support Payments from the Transitional Living Program, Year 1





Unlike some other independent living programs, the Transitional Living program does not provide housing directly to participants. However, for participants who were in need of financial support in order to obtain their own housing, Youth Villages provided funds for security deposits and rent. About 10 percent of the program group received financial support for a housing need. Not surprisingly, given the high costs of housing, those who received such support were provided with sizable amounts, averaging $554 in total.

Other reasons for financial support payments were less common. Some individuals, about 5 percent of the program group, received support for education. Those payments were made for expenses like college application fees, vocational training fees, and test fees. On average, those receiving such support received $67 in total. About 5 percent of the program group received a payment to go toward utility bills, such as bills for electricity or gas. These individuals received $299 in such support, on average. Finally, 4 percent of the program group received support payments for other, rarer reasons, such as fees for obtaining identification cards and child care assistance. Those payments totaled $169, on average.

Conclusion

A substantial portion of the program group in the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation received services at the expected dosage of the Transitional Living program model. About two-thirds participated in Transitional Living services for at least five months, and about half were still participating nine months after random assignment. In addition, the program group members participated in the Transitional Living program at a high rate. Nearly all program group members participated in at least one program activity, and 95 percent participated in at least one Transitional Living session. While they were involved in the program, youth participated in nearly one session per week, averaging over an hour per session. In total, program group members averaged about 26 Transitional Living sessions during the 12 months after random assignment. During those sessions, TL Specialists and participants covered a wide range of issues, with education, employment, and housing discussed most often.

Chapter 4

Transitional Living Evaluation Program and Control Groups: Differences in Service Receipt

Both the program and control groups in the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation received services of varying types from a number of sources, but only those in the program group were eligible to receive Transitional Living program services. Information about the services received from all sources allows for a direct comparison of service receipt between the two research groups. Reflecting several of the primary areas of focus of the Transitional Living program, the discussion in this chapter concentrates on service receipt in the areas of case management and counseling, education, employment, finances, housing, and other life skills. Any differences in service receipt between the two research groups represents the treatment differential, or the increase in services over and above what the control group received, that is associated with access to the Transitional Living program. Without a meaningful treatment differential, significant impacts on youth outcomes are very unlikely. One-year differences in service receipt are based chiefly on data from the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey. These data capture study participants' self-reports of help they received since random assignment.

Additionally, this chapter presents an assessment of program versus control group differences in the receipt of Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care (EFC) Services, formerly known as Post-Custody Services. This assessment is based on administrative data provided by the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS).

Case Management and Counseling

Table 4.1 shows one-year differences in service receipt for the full study sample. (Though the differences presented in Table 4.1 are not identified as "impacts," they should be interpreted similarly. For a detailed explanation of how to read this table, see Box 5.1 in Chapter 5.) As discussed in Chapter 2, the core of the Transitional Living model is intensive, individualized case management, support, and counseling delivered via direct service staff, known as "TL Specialists." In order to assess differences between the program and control groups in receipt of such services, youth were asked whether they had received help from a case manager, social worker, case worker, or TL Specialist, regardless of where they accessed this help, at any time since random assignment. (For simplicity, the discussion in this section uses "case manager" to denote any of these job titles, except where specific information applicable only to TL Specialists is presented.)

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Table 4.1

One-Year Differences in Service Receipt Between the Program and Control Groups

Outcome (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Difference		Effect Size	P-Value
Received help from a case manager[a]	74.5	44.2	30.2	***	0.61	0.000
Frequency of contact with case manager[b]				***		0.000
More than once per week	21.9	8.2	13.7		0.50	
Once per week	38.5	12.1	26.4		0.81	
More than once per month	4.6	6.2	-1.6		-0.07	
About once per month	6.7	10.4	-3.7		-0.12	
Less than once per month	2.5	6.5	-4.0		-0.16	
Did not have a case manager	25.7	56.5	-30.8		-0.62	
Received help preparing for future education	49.9	36.6	13.3	***	0.28	0.000
GED exam preparation	16.3	12.7	3.6	*	0.11	0.096
ACT or SAT preparation	13.9	8.7	5.1	***	0.18	0.008
Assistance with college applications	33.7	22.2	11.5	***	0.28	0.000
Vocational or career counseling	16.1	9.0	7.2	***	0.25	0.001
Received help obtaining employment	62.5	40.7	21.8	***	0.44	0.000
Résumé writing	33.8	17.7	16.1	***	0.43	0.000
Identifying potential employers	34.6	16.4	18.2	***	0.50	0.000
Completing job applications	47.2	28.1	19.1	***	0.43	0.000
Job-interviewing skills	48.3	26.1	22.1	***	0.51	0.000
Received help handling finances	60.4	38.6	21.8	***	0.45	0.000
Budgeting/money management	46.8	26.1	20.6	***	0.47	0.000
Opening a checking or savings account	33.7	20.7	13.1	***	0.32	0.000
Securing state cash assistance or food stamps	30.0	18.4	11.7	***	0.30	0.000
Received help obtaining housing	33.8	19.6	14.3	***	0.36	0.000
Finding an apartment	29.1	15.7	13.4	***	0.37	0.000
Completing an apartment application	22.4	11.7	10.6	***	0.33	0.000
Putting a down payment or security deposit on an apartment	13.1	8.0	5.1	***	0.19	0.009
Received help developing life skills	51.0	36.6	14.4	***	0.30	0.000
Grocery shopping, cooking, or nutrition	29.9	20.2	9.7	***	0.24	0.000
Maintaining personal hygiene	23.9	16.6	7.2	***	0.19	0.004
Obtaining personal health records	26.8	15.6	11.2	***	0.31	0.000
Services related to birth control or sexually transmitted diseases	36.4	21.9	14.6	***	0.35	0.000
Received EFC Services[c]	26.4	26.2	0.2		0.00	0.884
Sample size (total = 1,114)	659	455				

(continued)

Table 4.1 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on responses to the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey and data from the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS).

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.

The effect size is calculated by dividing the impact of the program (difference between program and control groups) by the observed variation for that outcome within the control group (the control group standard deviation).

Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

GED = General Educational Development.

ACT = American College Testing college-readiness assessment.

SAT = College Board standardized test for college admission.

EFC = Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care.

[a]"Case manager" includes social worker, case manager, caseworker, and TL Specialist.

[b]"Frequency of contact with case manager" refers to the social worker or case manager with whom each youth had the most contact.

[c]Prior to July 2012, EFC Services was referred to as "Post-Custody Services" in Tennessee. The EFC Services measure is based on data from DCS. Data were available for the full study sample for these measures (program group = 788; control group = 534; total = 1,322).

- **Program group youth were significantly more likely than their peers in the control group to receive help from a case manager.**

Program group members were 30 percentage points more likely than control group members to have received help from a case manager, with nearly three-fourths of program group youth reporting that they had received such help compared with 44 percent of control group youth.[1] This difference is statistically significant and likely the result of program group members working with a TL Specialist. The 75 percent of program group youth who reported receiving help from a case manager is 20 percentage points lower than the 95 percent who participated in TL sessions according to the program participation data (which are discussed in Chapter 3). One possible explanation for this discrepancy is that some program group members may not have recalled working with a TL Specialist because they did so for only a short time; approximately 18 percent of program group members participated in Transitional Living services for less than three months.

[1]Four control group members were inadvertently enrolled into the Transitional Living program. These individuals are included in calculations for the control group for all service receipt and impact measures presented in this report.

- **Program group youth received case management or counseling services at a significantly higher level of intensity than did control group youth.**

In addition to being more likely than the control group members to have received case management or counseling services, program group members also met with their case managers more frequently.[2] Including both face-to-face visits and telephone conversations, 22 percent of program group members were in touch with their case managers more than once per week, compared with 8 percent of control group members. Another 39 percent of program group members met or spoke with their case managers about once per week, while the same was true for 12 percent of the control group. On the other end of the spectrum, about 9 percent of program group members met with their case managers once a month or less, compared with about 17 percent of control group members. This difference in intensity suggests that program group youth were receiving more consistent and focused attention from their primary case managers, a level of support that is arguably more conducive to effecting positive change.

Case management and counseling services undergird all other service areas discussed in this chapter for two central reasons: (1) help in various areas is often delivered directly via a case manager, and (2) a key dimension of the case manager role is to connect clients with other sources of help, both personal (for example, a family friend whom a young person would not have thought to ask for assistance) and in the community (for example, a food bank), through guidance, support, and direct referrals. In the Transitional Living program, case management and counseling services are meant to help direct youth toward achieving specific goals established as part of their individualized treatment plans.

This chapter continues with a discussion of the help that youth received in particular areas reflecting their goals. The help discussed includes any help youth may have received, whether from a case manager or some other source. During their survey interviews, sample members were asked about help they may have received with specific items within each service area; overall measures of help received in a particular service area are based on responses to those more specific items. If sample members received help with any of the more specific items, they were counted as having received help in the broader service area. Some youth may have received help with other items in those service areas that the survey did not capture. As a result, the overall measures of help received in particular service areas that are presented in Table 4.1 are likely underestimates of the proportion of youth who received assistance.

[2]Youth who reported receiving help from more than one case manager in the time since random assignment were asked to report frequency of contact for the case manager with whom they were in contact most often.

Preparing for Future Education

Pursuing an education was a major goal for many Transitional Living Evaluation participants. Transitional Living staff provided a variety of supports to youth in this service area, including helping those who were still in high school to meet graduation requirements, supporting youth in their efforts to obtain a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, and guiding interested participants toward postsecondary education opportunities, whether in two- or four-year colleges or vocational training programs.

- **Access to Transitional Living services significantly increased the proportion of youth who received help preparing for their future education.**

As shown in the third panel of Table 4.1, 50 percent of program group youth reported that they received help preparing for their future education, compared with 37 percent of control group youth. Underlying the treatment differential in this broader area are statistically significant differences between the program and control groups in more specific types of educational preparation, including preparation for the GED exam (16 percent versus 13 percent), preparation for the American College Testing college-readiness assessment (ACT) and the College Board standardized test for college admission (SAT) (14 percent versus 9 percent), assistance with college applications (34 percent versus 22 percent), and vocational or career counseling (16 percent versus 9 percent).

Overall, it was expected that preparing for future education would be an area with a particularly large service differential because it is heavily emphasized by TL Specialists. However, while significant, the 13 percentage point difference in this area is smaller than that found in some of the other service areas. Given that 40 percent of sample members were still enrolled in high school at the time of random assignment, one possible explanation for the smaller service receipt difference in this area is that the survey did not include questions about a key type of educational support that many Transitional Living participants received: help earning their high school diplomas.

An additional factor to consider in assessing the service differential in this and all other service areas is the source of help. As discussed above, the measures of help received in the particular content areas that are presented in Table 4.1 could have come from any source, including but not limited to biological parents, foster parents, a caseworker, an independent living program, teachers, mentors, TL Specialists, the Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS), friends, significant others, and the Tennessee DCS. Arguably, formal help from a trained individual, such as a caseworker, may be more beneficial than informal help, such as from a friend. For youth in the program group who reported receiving help preparing for their future education, 89 percent received formal help, while the same was true for 80 percent of control group youth (not shown in table). In sum, not only were program group members

significantly more likely to receive help preparing for their future education, but when they did so, they were also slightly more likely to receive it from at least one formal source.

Obtaining Employment

Obtaining employment is another area that the Transitional Living program strongly emphasizes. TL Specialists helped youth with a number of different employment-related matters, including developing a résumé, identifying potential employers, and filling out job applications. Additionally, for participants who needed assistance with interviewing techniques, Transitional Living staff provided coaching and mock interviewing.

- **Program group youth were significantly more likely than control group youth to receive help obtaining employment.**

Program group members were about 22 percentage points more likely than control group members to have received help obtaining employment (63 percent versus 41 percent), a statistically significant difference, as shown in Table 4.1. Substantial, significant service receipt differences between the program and control groups in four more specific types of employment make up the overall treatment differential in this service area. These differences include a 16 percentage point difference in résumé-writing help (34 percent versus 18 percent), an 18 percentage point difference in help identifying potential employers (35 percent versus 16 percent), a 19 percentage point difference in help completing job applications (47 percent versus 28 percent), and a 22 percentage point difference in help practicing interviewing skills (48 percent versus 26 percent).[3] While all of these differences are considerable, they still may not reflect the full treatment differential in employment services; the measures in this area capture help that youth received with obtaining employment, but do not include support provided to help youth maintain existing positions. Helping youth to thrive in their current jobs was another key area of employment on which Transitional Living services focused.

In terms of sources of help, 87 percent of program group youth who received help with employment were assisted, at least in part, by a formal source, while the same was true for 53 percent of control group youth who received employment help (not shown in table).

[3] As a result of rounding, the difference between the program and control group means for help identifying potential employers appears to calculate to 19 percentage points. However, the difference between unrounded means results in a differential of 18.2 percentage points.

Handling Finances

As noted in Chapter 3, TL Specialists helped many program participants learn to handle their finances. As part of their efforts, TL Specialists focused primarily on budgeting, money management, and opening bank accounts. Government support programs, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families cash benefits and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (formerly food stamps), were also discussed frequently during Transitional Living sessions.

- **The Transitional Living program significantly increased the proportion of youth who received help handling their finances.**

As presented in the bottom half of Table 4.1, there was a significant difference in service receipt between the program and control groups in the area of handling finances: program group members were 22 percentage points more likely to report receiving this type of help than were control group members (60 percent versus 39 percent).[4] A significant difference in service receipt between the program and control groups was also observed for each of the more specific types of financial help measured, including assistance with budgeting and money management (47 percent versus 26 percent), opening a checking or savings account (34 percent versus 21 percent), and securing state cash assistance or SNAP benefits (30 percent versus 18 percent).

Additionally, 77 percent of youth in the program group who received help with handling their finances obtained this help from a formal source, compared with 49 percent among control group youth who had received help with their finances (not shown in table).

Obtaining Housing

Housing instability is a common problem faced by youth who have spent time in the foster care or juvenile justice system. [5] It is a serious issue for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it prevents youth from making progress in other areas — without a stable, safe place to live, it is difficult to focus on goals like obtaining schooling or initiating a job search.

- **Access to Transitional Living services significantly increased the proportion of youth who received help obtaining housing.**

[4]As a result of rounding, the difference between the program and control group means for help with handling finances appears to calculate to 21 percentage points. However, the difference between unrounded means results in a differential of 21.8 percentage points.

[5]Courtney et al. (2011); Toro, Dworsky, and Fowler (2007).

TL Specialists provided assistance with obtaining housing to Transitional Living participants who needed such support. This fact is reflected in the survey data: program group members were significantly more likely to have received help obtaining housing than were control group members, with a 14 percentage point treatment differential (34 percent versus 20 percent). Statistically significant differences between the two research groups were also found for each of the specific types of housing help measured, including assistance with finding an apartment (29 percent versus 16 percent), completing an application for an apartment (22 percent versus 12 percent), and placing a down payment or security deposit on an apartment (13 percent versus 8 percent).

Treatment differential aside, the means for both research groups are relatively small compared with those found in other service areas. Despite having spent time in state custody, many sample members were living with family members at baseline and were therefore less likely to require help obtaining housing. The idea that housing was not a major issue for many youth is supported by the program participation data analysis discussion in Chapter 3 — TL Specialists explored housing with most youth at some point, but only discussed the topic in about 37 percent of their sessions. Still, the overall measure of help received in obtaining housing may not reflect the full treatment difference in this service area, since youth were not asked about assistance they received with finding stable housing in the homes of friends or family members rather than by renting their own apartments. Additionally, TL Specialists helped some youth to resolve problems that arose in their current living situations in order to allow them to maintain housing through rocky periods. This type of support is also not captured in the housing measures presented in Table 4.1.

Turning to the source of help received in obtaining housing (not shown in table), among the portion of program group youth who received this help, 72 percent received help from at least one formal source, compared with 28 percent among control group youth who received help obtaining housing.

Developing Other Life Skills

The last of the five areas in which service receipt was measured for both the program and control groups is development of other life skills.

- **Youth with access to the Transitional Living program were significantly more likely than their peers in the control group to receive help with developing other life skills.**

As in the four other service areas discussed in this chapter, there was a statistically significant treatment differential in the area of other life skills development (shown in Table 4.1).

The program group was about 14 percentage points more likely to have received this type of help than was the control group (51 percent versus 37 percent). Statistically significant differences between the two research groups were also found for each of the specific types of life skills help measured. A somewhat varied service area, these more specific types of help include the following: help with grocery shopping, cooking, or nutrition (30 percent versus 20 percent); help with personal hygiene (24 percent versus 17 percent); help obtaining personal health records (27 percent versus 16 percent); and help obtaining services related to birth control or sexually transmitted diseases (36 percent versus 22 percent).

Additionally, as in all other service areas discussed in this chapter, more program group youths (76 percent) who received help developing other life skills received this help from at least one formal, trained source than did members of the control group (56 percent) who received help developing other life skills (not shown in table).

Post-Custody Services and Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care Services

DCS provides Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care (EFC) Services (formerly Post-Custody Services, as described in detail in Chapter 2), which primarily include financial support and case management, to youth exiting state custody who meet certain eligibility criteria. Additionally, following the transition from Post-Custody Services to EFC Services in July 2012, eligible youth gained the option of remaining in a foster care placement until the age of 21. As shown at the bottom of Table 4.1, 26 percent of both research groups received Post-Custody Services or EFC Services in the 12 months following random assignment. Given that there was no significant difference in the receipt of these services between the two groups, any significant impacts of the Transitional Living program on improved outcomes for youth were unrelated to the receipt of Post-Custody or EFC services.

Conclusion

An analysis of help that sample members received in the time since random assignment reveals a significant service differential wherein the program group was more likely than the control group to have received help across a number of service areas. Furthermore, a pattern emerged within each of the various service areas where, among those who received assistance, a larger proportion of program group members received formal help from a trained individual relative to control group members. Program group youth also received services at a higher degree of intensity than did control group youth. Still, the control group was not without resources. Substantial numbers of control group members received help across the various areas in which service receipt was measured. Taken together, these findings indicate that while a clear treat-

ment differential exists, those without access to the Transitional Living program did not encounter a "no services" environment.

By design, Transitional Living services are individualized to meet the particular needs of each youth. Not every young person required help in each of the service areas discussed in this chapter, and so services were often focused on just one or two areas. Yet, a significant service difference was found across the wide range of areas measured, including case management and counseling, education, employment, finances, housing, and other life skills. This finding of a treatment differential across a breadth of service areas is important in that it provides a necessary base from which to understand the impact findings that are discussed in the coming chapters.

Chapter 5

Impacts on Education, Employment, and Earnings

Educational attainment is of great importance for young people as they attempt to make a successful transition to adulthood.[1] Increasingly, those with low levels of education struggle to gain a foothold in the U.S. labor market and are far more likely than their peers with higher levels of education to live below the poverty line.[2] For youth who have spent time in the foster care or juvenile justice system, educational attainment is no less important. However, on average, young people with custody histories face a more difficult path forward, as many have fallen well behind their peers on key educational indicators.[3] In an effort to bridge this gap, the Transitional Living program strongly emphasizes education. Frontline staff — called "TL Specialists" — work with participants to develop treatment plans in which they establish educational goals; they then actively support youth in the various steps toward achieving those goals. Common goals among program participants in the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation research sample were to earn a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, to graduate from high school, and to pursue a postsecondary education, including vocational schooling.

Employment is another key area in which youth with histories of foster care or juvenile justice custody lag behind their peers — young people with this background experience comparatively high rates of unemployment and low earnings.[4] As discussed in Chapter 1, the young people in the study sample were not well-positioned at baseline to disrupt these trends; just 19 percent of study youth reported holding a job at the time of random assignment, about half the rate of young people of a similar age in the general population.[5] Additionally, study youth were faced with a fairly weak job market during the follow-up period, which spanned the early 2010s. The Transitional Living program attempted to increase labor force participation among participants by providing them with employment supports tailored to their individual needs and goals. Commonly, youth were either unemployed and looking to secure a job, or were already employed but needed help to maintain their current position.

---

[1]Child Trends (2014).

[2]Caspi, Wright, Moffitt, and Silva (1998); U.S. Department of Education (2012); Aud, KewalRamani, and Frohlich (2011).

[3]Courtney, Dworsky, Lee, and Raap (2010); Leone and Weinberg (2010).

[4]Courtney et al. (2011); U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2008); Sampson and Laub (1990); Ramchand, Morral, and Becker (2009).

[5]See U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014).

Based on the array of services that were available to Transitional Living participants in the areas of education and employment, the research team hypothesized that youth in the program group would report higher levels of educational attainment and engagement, increased employment, and increased earnings compared with control group youth. This chapter addresses that hypothesis, presenting one-year impacts of the Transitional Living program on education, employment, and earnings. The analysis uses data from both the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey and data measuring postsecondary enrollment that were obtained from the National Student Clearinghouse.

Education

Table 5.1 presents one-year impacts on education. (For a detailed explanation of how to read the impact tables in this report, see Box 5.1.) There are three primary education outcomes in this area: high school diploma receipt, GED certificate receipt, and vocational training participation. These measures were chosen as primary because, as discussed in Chapter 2, TL Specialists more often focused on a high school diploma or its equivalent compared with postsecondary enrollment, the lone secondary outcome in education. Additionally, these primary outcomes are, generally speaking, precursors to postsecondary enrollment. (For an overall explanation of the differences between primary and secondary outcomes, along with guidance on how to correctly interpret findings for these two groupings, see Box 5.2.)

- **The Transitional Living program had no statistically significant impacts on key educational outcomes.**

The first primary outcome measure in the area of education examines the proportion of youth who had earned a high school diploma by the time of their 12-month survey interview. The Transitional Living program did not have a significant impact on this outcome: 56 percent of the program group and 53 percent of the control group had high school diplomas, a difference that does not reach statistical significance.[6] At least two different factors may explain this finding. First, less than 40 percent of the program group was still enrolled in high school at the time of random assignment, leaving a smaller pool of youth for whom this outcome could have been affected. Second, given that all sample members were 18 years of age or older at baseline, it may be the case that most youth who were still enrolled in high school were already on track

[6]For this outcome and all other education outcomes, the impact estimates were adjusted based on characteristics at study entry, including whether individuals had already earned a high school diploma or GED certificate. Without adjusting for this baseline measure, the estimated impact of the Transitional Living program on high school diploma receipt was statistically significant at the 10 percent level.

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Table 5.1

One-Year Impacts on Education

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value
Primary outcomes (%)					
Has high school diploma	55.7	52.5	3.2	0.06	0.233
Has GED certificate	15.9	17.2	-1.3	-0.03	0.571
Participated in vocational training	11.8	8.9	2.8	0.10	0.139
Secondary outcomes (%)					
Enrolled in a postsecondary institution[a]	18.9	18.4	0.4	0.01	0.821
Enrolled in 4-year college	7.1	7.5	-0.4	-0.02	0.771
Enrolled in 2-year college	13.0	11.3	1.6	0.05	0.341
Sample size (total = 1,114)	659	455			

SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on responses to the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey and postsecondary education data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC).

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.

The effect size is calculated by dividing the impact of the program (difference between program and control groups) by the observed variation for that outcome within the control group (the control group standard deviation).

Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

GED = General Educational Development.

[a]Measures of postsecondary enrollment are based on data from the NSC. Data were available for the full study sample for these measures (program group = 788; control group = 534; total = 1,322).

to graduate soon after random assignment, leaving little room for the Transitional Living program to have a statistically significant impact on this outcome.

Similarly, the Transitional Living program did not have a significant impact on another measure of educational attainment, GED completion; about 16 percent of the program group and 17 percent of the control group had earned their GED certificates at the time of the survey interview. As presented in Chapter 4, however, the service receipt difference between the program and control groups in terms of help received with GED exam preparation was fairly minor (3.6 percentage points). The small service differential for this type of help may explain, at

Box 5.1

How to Read the Impact Tables in This Report

Most tables in this report use a similar format, illustrated below. In this case, employment outcomes are shown for the program group and the control group. For example, the table shows that the program group earned approximately $4,099 over the 12-month follow-up period, while the control group earned about $3,488.

The "Difference" column in the table excerpt below shows the differences between the two research groups' earnings — that is, the program's estimated effect, or impact, on earnings. For example, the estimated impact on earnings in Year 1 can be calculated by subtracting $3,488 from $4,099, yielding a $611 difference.

Differences marked with asterisks are "statistically significant," meaning that it is quite unlikely that the differences arose by chance; that is, they are likely attributable to the offer of the program services. The number of asterisks indicates whether the estimated impact is statistically significant at the 10 percent (one asterisk), 5 percent (two asterisks), or 1 percent (three asterisks) level — and the lower the level (or the more asterisks), the less likely that the impact is a result of chance. For example, as shown in the first row of data, the Transitional Living program had a statistically significant impact of $611 on earnings during Year 1; that is, recipients of Transitional Living services earned $611 more, on average, than did youth who were not offered Transitional Living services. This impact is statistically significant at the 5 percent level — meaning that there is less than a 5 percent possibility that it occurred by chance rather than as a result of the program. The p-value shows the exact level of significance.

The "Effect Size" column indicates the effect size, or magnitude, of the difference between the program and control group outcomes. The effect size is calculated by dividing the estimate of the difference by the standard deviation for the outcome among the control group members. Because the effect size is in uniform, standard deviation units, it is possible to compare the sizes of impact estimates for different outcomes in this evaluation and to compare the Transitional Living program impacts with the impacts of other programs that have been evaluated.

One-Year Impacts on Employment and Earnings

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)		Effect Size	P-Value
Primary outcomes ($)						
Earnings from formal work	4,099	3,488	611	**	0.12	0.043
Secondary outcomes (%)						
Ever employed	70.1	65.3	4.8	*	0.10	0.084
Full-time employment	47.0	46.5	0.5		0.01	0.880
Part-time employment	23.0	18.4	4.6	*	0.12	0.068

SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on responses to the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey.

Box 5.2

Approach to the Impact Analysis in This Report

The Transitional Living program provides individualized services to youth who have a wide variety of experiences, needs, and circumstances. As a result, the program aims to improve outcomes across multiple domains rather than focusing on one or two outcomes, as some programs do. Therefore, the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation research team estimated the impacts of the Transitional Living program on outcomes in six distinct domains: education, employment and earnings, housing stability and economic well-being, social support, health and safety, and criminal involvement.

While this approach makes sense theoretically, examining a large number of outcomes increases the chance of observing a significant impact even if the program had no true effect — that is, an impact that arises by chance alone. A statistically significant impact estimate is one that is unlikely to have occurred unless the program was truly effective. When an impact estimate is statistically significant at the 10 percent level, for example, it means that there is less than a 10 percent chance that it is not truly the effect of the program being tested. Increasing the number of impact estimates examined further increases the chance that a significant impact will be found for an ineffective program. For example, if 10 independent outcomes are examined, there is a 65 percent chance that one of them will be statistically significant at the 10 percent level purely by chance, even if the program is truly ineffective for that outcome.

To guard against the possibility of drawing wrong conclusions about the effectiveness of the Transitional Living program, the research team pre-specified a small number of primary outcomes within each of the six outcome domains. Conclusions about the effectiveness of the Transitional Living program in a particular domain hinge on the impact estimates for these primary outcomes. In many cases, the primary outcomes are scales or combination measures that incorporate key outcomes into a single estimate. For example, the primary outcomes in the domain of housing stability and economic well-being include two scales, one a combined measure of multiple types of housing instability and one a combined measure of multiple types of economic hardship. In total, there are 16 primary outcomes.

To provide additional detail about where impacts on primary outcomes were concentrated or to estimate impacts on other outcomes that are important, but not primary, the team also pre-specified secondary outcomes in each domain. These estimates do not shape conclusions about the effectiveness of the Transitional Living program in particular domains, but rather flesh out the story where there are impacts. The discussions of impact results in Chapters 5 through 8 concentrate on primary outcomes.

least in part, why the Transitional Living program did not have a significant impact on increasing GED certificate receipt.

For the final primary outcome in the area of education, participation in vocational training, there was also no significant impact of the Transitional Living program. Twelve percent of program group members and 9 percent of control group members engaged in this type of training in the 12 months before their survey interview, a difference that is not statistically significant.[7]

As noted above, the sole secondary outcome in the area of education is college enrollment, calculated based on data from the National Student Clearinghouse. Transitional Living did not significantly increase postsecondary enrollment. Nineteen percent of the program group and 18 percent of the control group had enrolled in a postsecondary institution in the year following random assignment, a difference that is not statistically significant. One possible explanation for this finding is that a relatively large portion of the study sample was still working toward graduating from high school at baseline. Additionally, some youth who aspired to college may have faced competing priorities as they worked toward stabilizing their lives (for example, by securing stable housing, handling a mental health or substance use problem, or finding a job to support themselves or pay for college); these competing priorities may have delayed their entry into postsecondary schooling. For both of these reasons, follow-up past one year may be necessary to accurately capture any significant postsecondary enrollment differences between the program and control groups resulting from the Transitional Living program.

Employment and Earnings

Table 5.2 includes one primary employment-related outcome: earnings from formal work in the 12 months before the survey interview.[8]

- **Transitional Living services significantly increased youths' earnings from formal employment.**

[7]Without adjusting for whether individuals had already earned a high school diploma or GED certificate at baseline, the estimated impact of the Transitional Living program on participation in vocational training was statistically significant at the 10 percent level.

[8]This self-reported measure includes only earnings from formal employment and does not include overtime pay, tips, commissions, bonuses, or other types of pay, nor does it include earnings from informal work. For the purposes of this measure, formal employment is defined as ongoing employment with a particular employer, such as working at a restaurant or supermarket. Informal work is defined as independent work for several people, with no specific supervisor, such as babysitting and mowing lawns.

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Table 5.2

One-Year Impacts on Employment and Earnings

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value
Primary outcome ($)					
Earnings from formal work[a]	4,099	3,488	611 **	0.12	0.043
Secondary outcomes (%)					
Ever employed[b]	70.1	65.3	4.8 *	0.10	0.084
Full-time employment	47.0	46.5	0.5	0.01	0.880
Part-time employment	23.0	18.4	4.6 *	0.12	0.068
Sample size (total = 1,114)	659	455			

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.

The effect size is calculated by dividing the impact of the program (difference between program and control groups) by the observed variation for that outcome within the control group (the control group standard deviation).

Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

[a]This self-reported measure includes only earnings from formal employment and does not include overtime pay, tips, commissions, bonuses, or other types of pay, nor does it include earnings from informal work. For the purposes of this measure, formal employment is defined as ongoing employment with a particular employer, such as working at a restaurant or supermarket. Informal work is defined as independent work for several people, with no specific supervisor, such as babysitting and mowing lawns.

[b]A cutoff of 30 hours or more per week was used to distinguish full-time employment from part-time employment. Due to missing data, the full-time and part-time employment measures may not sum to the percentage employed.

This sole primary employment outcome was chosen because it incorporates several important aspects of employment, including whether a young person had worked at all in the prior 12 months, the amount of time the young person was employed during those months, how many hours the individual worked per week, and the wage paid. The Transitional Living program had a statistically significant impact on earnings: on average, program group mem-

bers earned $611 more from formal employment than did control group members ($4,099 versus $3,488).[9]

As might be expected given the significant impact on earnings, Transitional Living also had a significant impact on the secondary outcome of employment. The program group was about 5 percentage points more likely than the control group to have been employed in the prior 12 months, with 70 percent of program group members reporting employment compared with 65 percent of control group members.[10] These employment rates are similar to those found among comparably aged young people in the Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth, another major study of former foster youth; at age 19, 67 percent of youth in the Midwest Evaluation reported employment in the prior year.[11] The 5 percentage point difference between the program and control groups of the Transitional Living Evaluation sample appears to have been driven by an increase in part-time employment among the program group members, 23 percent of whom worked part time compared with 18 percent among the control group members.

Conclusion

Positive educational and employment outcomes are important to ensuring the well-being of youth who have spent time in the foster care or juvenile justice system as they make the transition to adulthood. Overall, the hypothesis that youth in the Transitional Living Evaluation program group would exhibit higher levels of educational attainment and engagement than would youth in the control group was not supported by the impact findings. However, the Transitional Living program succeeded in increasing formal earnings. Moreover, this rise in earnings did not come at the cost of a corresponding decline in educational pursuits, as evidenced by the lack of significant differences between the research groups on educational outcomes. The impact of the Transitional Living program on increasing formal earnings is an important and beneficial outcome for this struggling population.

[9]Before impacts on this measure were analyzed, outliers were excluded from the final analysis variable. Any observation with a value that was over 3 standard deviations above the mean for those with any earnings was set to "missing." Based on this criterion, 10 observations were deemed outliers and were treated as such. As a sensitivity check, impacts were run on a version of the earnings variable with outliers included. As a result of the inflated standard error caused by the outliers, this version of the earnings variable did not show a significant impact.

[10]This self-reported measure includes only formal employment.

[11]Courtney et al. (2005).

Chapter 6

Impacts on Housing Stability and Economic Well-Being

Prior research on the transition from state custody to independent adulthood has found that youths who were in the foster care or juvenile justice system fare poorly economically. For example, compared with the general population, former foster youth have a higher rate of dependency on public assistance; are much more likely to report economic hardships such as being evicted, having their utilities cut off, and not having enough to eat; and experience high levels of housing instability and homelessness.[1] While studies of young people who are making the transition to adulthood from the juvenile justice system have generally focused on whether they have avoided crime and involvement in the adult corrections system, these young people have also been found to be economically vulnerable, particularly with respect to homelessness.[2]

In the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation, frontline staff, or "TL Specialists," worked with youth in the program group in a number of ways to help them avoid these difficulties. For example, they worked to help youth establish and maintain connections with adults who could provide housing and material assistance. They also tried to connect youth to housing services and need-based public aid. In some cases they provided youth with funds for rental deposits, such as first and last month's rent, or small amounts of money for other purposes. In addition, the program attempted to help youth increase their own earnings by helping them to obtain and keep employment. As the results presented in Chapter 5 show, this goal was met, as program group members were more likely to be employed and to earn more, on average, than were control group members. The Transitional Living Evaluation team therefore hypothesized that program group youth would report lower levels of housing instability and economic hardship. Transitional Living staff also believed that the youth they served would be more likely to receive need-based public aid, such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (formerly food stamps), as a result of the TL Specialists' efforts to help them access the aid for which they were eligible.

This chapter presents the Transitional Living program's one-year impacts on housing stability and economic well-being for the full sample involved in the evaluation. The analysis uses data from the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey. This domain includes two primary outcomes, a measure of housing instability and a measure of economic hardship.

---

[1] Courtney and Hughes-Huering (2005).

[2] Toro, Dworsky, and Fowler (2007).

Housing Stability and Economic Well-Being

The youth served by the Transitional Living program are clearly in need of assistance in order to avoid economic marginality as they make the transition to adulthood. Findings from the survey interviews with members of the control group, shown in the second column of Table 6.1, provide a good sense of the magnitude of the youths' needs during the study follow-up period. For example, in the year preceding the 12-month survey interview, more than two-fifths had "couch-surfed" (staying in someone else's home temporarily when one does not have a permanent place to live) and more than one-fourth had been homeless at some point. About one-third had been unable to afford clothing or shoes they needed, and over one-fourth had delayed paying a bill in order to buy food. Their average savings of $318 was dwarfed by their average debt of $1,492. About one-half had received SNAP benefits.

- **The Transitional Living program significantly improved housing stability.**

Table 6.1 also presents the impacts of the Transitional Living program on housing stability and economic well-being. The first primary outcome that was assessed in this domain is the housing instability scale, which is calculated as the number of indicators of housing instability that a youth experienced in the year before the survey interview out of four indicators that the survey asked about, including experiencing homelessness, couch surfing, the inability to pay rent, and loss of housing because of the inability to pay rent. The program group experienced significantly less housing instability than did the control group. Specifically, the program group experienced approximately 0.2 fewer examples of housing instability than did the control group (an average of 1.0 form of housing instability for the program group compared with an average of 1.2 forms of housing instability for the control group), representing an effect size of –0.16.[3]

An examination of the program's impacts on secondary outcomes in this domain, shown in the second panel of Table 6.1, helps to put into context the overall impacts on housing stability. Secondary outcomes of interest include the individual items that make up the housing

[3]The effect size makes it possible to compare the impacts in this study with those from other studies, yielding a uniform measure of the magnitude of the impacts. Technically, the effect size is calculated by dividing the impact estimate by the standard deviation of the outcome among the control group. Therefore, the effect size represents the size of the impact expressed in terms of standard deviations — that is, the size of the impact estimate relative to the amount of variation in the outcome.

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Table 6.1

One-Year Impacts on Housing Stability and Economic Well-Being

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)		Effect Size	P-Value
Primary outcomes						
Score on housing instability scale[a]	1.0	1.2	-0.2	***	-0.16	0.005
Score on economic hardship scale[a]	1.3	1.5	-0.2	**	-0.13	0.022
Secondary outcomes						
Housing instability experienced (%)						
Homelessness	21.1	27.2	-6.1	**	-0.14	0.017
Couch-surfed[b]	35.7	44.1	-8.4	***	-0.17	0.005
Unable to pay rent	26.0	30.0	-4.0		-0.09	0.146
Lost housing because unable to pay rent	15.6	18.3	-2.8		-0.07	0.224
Economic hardships experienced (%)						
Did not have necessary clothing or shoes	27.1	33.4	-6.3	**	-0.13	0.024
Unable to pay utility bill	21.7	24.0	-2.3		-0.05	0.381
Gas or electricity shut off because unable to pay bill	12.8	15.1	-2.3		-0.07	0.272
Phone service shut off because unable to pay bill	44.5	48.1	-3.6		-0.07	0.231
Delayed paying a bill in order to buy food	21.6	27.8	-6.2	**	-0.14	0.019
Savings[c] ($)	198	318	-120		-0.06	0.264
Debt ($)	1,062	1,492	-429		-0.09	0.109
Received public benefits (%)						
SSI	8.9	6.9	2.0		0.08	0.230
SNAP[d]	57.4	51.4	6.1	**	0.12	0.036
WIC	17.0	16.2	0.8		0.02	0.710
Public housing/rental assistance	8.8	7.1	1.6		0.06	0.337
TANF/Families First	7.8	8.6	-0.8		-0.03	0.631
Sample size (total = 1,114)	659	455				

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.

(continued)

Table 6.1 (continued)

The effect size is calculated by dividing the impact of the program (difference between program and control groups) by the observed variation for that outcome within the control group (the control group standard deviation).

Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

SSI = Supplemental Security Income.

WIC = Women, Infants and Children.

SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

[a]See Appendix B for definitions of the scales used in this report.

[b]"Couch surfing" is defined as staying in someone else's home temporarily because one does not have a permanent place to live.

[c]The savings measure only includes money held in checking or savings accounts.

[d]SNAP is the new name of the Food Stamp Program.

instability scale. The program's impact on housing instability was driven largely by reductions in experiences with homelessness and couch surfing. Program group members were about 6 percentage points less likely to have been homeless at some point in the year before the survey interview; 21 percent of the program group had spent at least one night homeless compared with 27 percent of the control group. In addition, 36 percent of the program group youth couch-surfed, compared with 44 percent of the control group, a reduction of 8 percentage points. The program did not have a statistically significant impact on the youths' inability to pay rent or on loss of housing because of the inability to pay rent.

- **The Transitional Living program significantly improved economic well-being.**

The second primary outcome of interest in this domain is the economic hardship scale, which is calculated as the number of indicators of economic hardship that a youth experienced in the year before the survey interview out of five indicators that the survey asked about, including not having necessary clothing or shoes, inability to pay a utility bill, having one's gas or electricity shut off because of an inability to pay the bill, having one's phone service shut off because of an inability to pay the bill, and delaying paying a bill in order to buy food. The second line of Table 6.1 shows that the program group experienced significantly fewer forms of economic hardship than did the control group (an average of 1.3 types of economic hardship for the program group compared with an average of 1.5 types of hardship for the control group), representing an effect size of –0.13.

The impact on economic hardship came largely through reductions in hardships related to basic needs like clothing and food. Specifically, 27 percent of program group youth reported that they lacked access to needed clothing or shoes compared with 33 percent of control group

youth, a reduction of about 6 percentage points in this hardship. Also, significantly fewer program group youth reported delaying paying a bill in order to buy food (22 percent compared with 28 percent of the control group). There were no statistically significant differences between the program and control groups in the other measures that make up the economic hardship scale, though the differences are in the expected, negative direction.

A second set of secondary measures of economic hardship focused on youths' levels of savings and debt at the time of the survey interview. Transitional Living did not have a statistically significant impact on the amount of participants' savings or debt. However, the difference in level of debt comes close to significance, with program group youth reporting $429 less overall debt ($1,062) than control group youth ($1,492).[4]

Consistent with the program's intent to connect youth with need-based supports for which they were eligible, a higher percentage of program group youth (57 percent) than control group youth (51 percent) reported that they had received SNAP benefits in the year before the survey interview. Given that program group youth reported less economic hardship and higher earnings from employment (reported in Chapter 5), it is unlikely that this increase in receipt of SNAP benefits resulted from increased neediness among program group members. Instead, it likely indicates that Transitional Living staff succeeded in increasing access to SNAP benefits among youth who were eligible to receive it. Transitional Living did not, however, significantly increase receipt of other public benefits, including Supplemental Security Income (SSI); Woman, Infants, and Children (WIC) program benefits; public housing or rental assistance; and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance. It is probable that only a fairly small portion of sample members were eligible for these benefits, unlike SNAP, for which most sample youth likely met eligibility criteria.

The nature of the Transitional Living program and the service context in which it operates helps put these findings into perspective. The program attempts to help young people avoid housing instability and economic hardship by supporting them in establishing good economic habits, such as budgeting, assisting them with finding and keeping stable housing, helping them to obtain and maintain employment, and connecting them to supportive adults and relevant government programs, but it provides very little direct economic assistance. For example, only 38 percent of program group youth received financial support from Transitional Living to pay for housing or other expenses, and among those who did receive such support, they were provided with $384, on average (as noted in Chapter 3). Moreover, the Tennessee Department of Children's Services provides some ongoing support to youth who age out of foster care, but it

[4]As a result of rounding, the difference between the program and control group means for debt appears to calculate to $430. However, the difference between unrounded means results in a differential of $429.47.

does not routinely provide room and board by allowing youth to remain under the care and supervision of the state agency. In other words, in most cases the young people involved in the Transitional Living Evaluation had very limited access to direct financial support for their basic needs.

In this context, it is noteworthy that the program had significant impacts on outcomes such as housing instability and economic hardship. This finding suggests that Transitional Living succeeded in providing youth with the tools to improve their housing and economic conditions rather than simply providing them with needed monetary resources. Prior research has shown that youth who age out of foster care are most likely to experience homelessness in the first year or so after the government stops providing directly for their care and supervision.[5] The Transitional Living program may be helping youth to better navigate this early period of heightened risk, thereby reducing early housing problems and improving economic well-being.

Conclusion

In summary, the young people involved in the Transitional Living Evaluation experience troubling levels of housing instability and economic hardship. The Transitional Living program succeeded in reducing the overall level of housing instability and economic hardship that these young people experienced, as well as a number of particular indicators of difficulty. The program's impacts in these areas are especially noteworthy given the limited direct economic support it provides. Moreover, among programs targeting youth who are making the transition to independent adulthood from the foster care and juvenile justice systems that have been rigorously evaluated, the Transitional Living program is the only one to date to have statistically significant impacts in these areas.

[5]Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, and Nesmith (2001); Dworsky, Napolitano, and Courtney (2013).

Chapter 7

Impacts on Social Support

Young people who are making the transition to adulthood from state custodial systems might reasonably be expected to lack strong connections to supportive adults. They have generally been physically separated from their families and taken out of their homes, and are often estranged from their families because they were mistreated at home before entering state care.[1] Earlier research on youth making the transition to adulthood from state custody has shown mixed results regarding their access to social support. In order to increase youths' social support, the Transitional Living program attempts to connect its participants with family members and other adults who can provide such support. Frontline staff, called "TL Specialists," also work with these young people to enhance the social skills that can facilitate positive relations with supportive adults. In the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation, therefore, the research team hypothesized that program group youth would report higher levels of social support than would control group youth.

This chapter presents the one-year impacts of the Transitional Living program on youths' self-reported social support for the full sample involved in the evaluation. The analysis uses data from the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey. The social support domain includes two primary outcomes, a social support scale and an indicator of closeness to at least one adult.

Social Support

The first primary outcome in this domain is the social support scale, which is calculated as the mean number of people whom a youth could ask for various types of help, based on the youth's responses to a series of seven survey questions that ask about specific types of help (for example, "How many different people can you go to when you need someone to listen to your problems when you're feeling low?"). The second primary outcome is a binary measure indicating whether a young person reported feeling very close to at least one familial or nonfamilial adult.

- **The Transitional Living program had no statistically significant impact on primary measures of social support.**

[1] See, for example, Courtney and Hughes-Huering (2005) and Ford, Chapman, Connor, and Cruise (2012).

As shown in the top panel of Table 7.1, the Transitional Living program did not have a statistically significant impact on either of the two primary social support outcomes. Youth in both the program and control groups reported that they had about four people to whom they could turn for help with various problems and situations. In addition, over 90 percent of the youth in both study groups reported feeling very close to at least one adult.

Secondary outcomes in this domain include three indicators of closeness to a nonfamilial adult (frequency of general contact with a nonfamilial adult, frequency of in-person contact with a nonfamilial adult, and expressed feelings of closeness toward a nonfamilial adult); the score on a familial closeness scale, which measured perceived level of closeness to parents, grandparents, and siblings; likelihood that a biological relative would offer a youth a place to stay; and likelihood that a friend would offer a youth a place to stay. The program did not have a statistically significant impact on any of these secondary outcomes.

Findings from the follow-up survey interviews with program and control group members in the Transitional Living Evaluation are consistent with the findings of earlier research showing that youth who are making the transition to adulthood from state custody often report high levels of perceived social support in general and frequent contact with and support from family members.[2] In the case of participants in the Transitional Living Evaluation, about one-tenth of the youths reported that they did not have a caring adult to rely on, about one-sixth reported that it was not at all likely that they could rely on a family member for a place to stay, and about one-ninth reported that it was not at all likely that they could rely on a friend for a place to stay. Over two-thirds reported being in contact with a caring adult at least several times per week, and for over 50 percent of the study sample members, that contact was in person. In addition, sample members reported that they can count on an average of over four people for help in the areas covered by the survey, as indicated by their scores on the social support scale.

The absence of program impacts on the primary and secondary measures of social support may be a function of the high overall level of support that these young people reported. If a large proportion of young people who are making the transition to adulthood from state care already have key forms of social support, then social programs will have a difficult time showing a significant impact on social support. For example, while practitioners often report that being connected to at least one supportive adult is central to the well-being of young people, programs will be hard-pressed to show much of an impact on helping youth establish supportive connections if 9 out of 10 youths already have such a relationship. Similarly, youth in the con-

[2]Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, and Nesmith (2001); Courtney and Dworsky (2006).

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Table 7.1

One-Year Impacts on Social Support

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value
Primary outcomes					
Score on social support scale[a]	4.4	4.2	0.2	0.05	0.421
Very close to an adult[b] (%)	92.0	91.2	0.8	0.03	0.639
Secondary outcomes (%)					
Closeness to caring adult outside of family					
Frequency of contact with caring adult					0.655
Did not report a caring adult	9.6	10.2	-0.6	-0.02	
Less than once a month	3.9	5.4	-1.6	-0.07	
Between once a month and once a week	17.2	16.6	0.7	0.02	
Several times a week to almost every day	69.3	67.8	1.5	0.03	
Frequency of in-person contact with caring adult					0.644
Did not report a caring adult	9.6	10.2	-0.6	-0.02	
Less than once a month	12.1	13.2	-1.1	-0.03	
Between once a month and once a week	25.7	22.4	3.3	0.08	
Several times a week to almost every day	52.6	54.2	-1.6	-0.03	
Expressed feelings of closeness toward caring adult	89.0	88.0	1.0	0.03	0.603
Score on familial closeness scale[a]	8.0	7.9	0.1	0.01	0.801
Biological family member would offer respondent a place to stay if needed					0.497
Not at all likely	18.7	16.1	2.6	0.07	
Somewhat likely	27.4	30.8	-3.4	-0.07	
Very likely	18.2	16.8	1.4	0.04	
Definitely	35.6	36.3	-0.7	-0.01	
Friends would offer respondent a place to stay if needed					0.325
Not at all likely	10.1	12.4	-2.3	-0.07	
Somewhat likely	31.5	33.8	-2.2	-0.05	
Very likely	30.8	26.3	4.4	0.10	
Definitely	27.6	27.5	0.1	0.00	
Sample size (total = 1,114)	659	455			

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.

(continued)

Table 7.1 (continued)

The effect size is calculated by dividing the impact of the program (difference between program and control groups) by the observed variation for that outcome within the control group (the control group standard deviation).

Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

[a]See Appendix B for definitions of the scales used in this report.

[b]The "very close to an adult" measure indicates whether sample members reported being very close to a biological mother, a biological father, a stepmother, a stepfather, a grandparent, an adult sibling, or a caring adult outside of their family.

trol group reported that they could count on an average of 4.2 people in the areas of social support that were assessed, suggesting that the youth who were deemed eligible for the Transitional Living program had many adults on whom they could rely. As noted above, program selection criteria resulted in a group of youths who were relatively stable, motivated, or higher-functioning compared with youth who were not deemed eligible for the program. These criteria may have yielded a study population that had relatively high levels of social support compared with the general population of youth who are making the transition to adulthood from the foster care and juvenile justice systems. Last, it is also possible that many of these young people do lack key forms of social support that are crucial to a successful transition to adulthood, but that the measures on the survey did not adequately capture those aspects of social support.

Conclusion

The Transitional Living program did not have statistically significant impacts on the primary social support outcomes that were measured as part of this evaluation. This finding may result from the already high levels of social support reported by control group youth, which may have left little room for the program to improve these outcomes. Although the Transitional Living program focuses on increasing social support for youth who need it, it may be that this need was actually fairly rare among the sample included in the evaluation.

Chapter 8

Impacts on Health, Safety, and Criminal Involvement

Research on health and safety outcomes for young people who have spent time in foster care indicates that they have a higher incidence of mental health problems, experience poorer physical health, and receive insufficient health care as they make the transition to independent living.[1] Similar issues are faced by youth who have been placed in juvenile justice custody.[2] Substance use, risky behaviors, and victimization are also relatively common among both populations.[3] To combat these problems, Transitional Living staff ("TL Specialists") work with youth to address issues related to their mental, physical, and behavioral health, including providing strategies for avoiding risky behaviors. They also work to ensure that youth have access to and make appropriate use of health-related services. Based on these supports, the Transitional Living Evaluation team hypothesized that youth who were offered program services (the program group) would experience better health and safety outcomes than would those who were not eligible to receive those program services (the control group).

At the same time, while most young people with a history of delinquent behaviors do not go on to commit crimes as adults, they are at higher risk of committing adult crimes relative to youth without a history of delinquency.[4] Almost two-thirds of the youth in the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation sample had been arrested before random assignment occurred, and about half had exhibited delinquent behaviors that were serious enough to result in juvenile justice custody, indicating that many youth in the sample were at high risk of criminal involvement as adults. Transitional Living staff worked with the youth in the program group to help them manage problem behaviors and avoid circumstances that could lead to conflicts with the law. The research team, therefore, hypothesized that program group youth would report lower levels of criminal involvement than would control group youth.

This chapter presents the Transitional Living program's one-year impacts on two related outcome domains: (1) health and safety, and (2) criminal involvement. While these domains are distinct, they both measure some aspects of mental and physical well-being and risky behavior. The analysis uses data from the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey.

---

[1]Courtney et al. (2005); Gardner (2008).

[2]National Alliance on Mental Illness—Virginia (2011); Committee on Adolescence (2011); Zajac, Sheidow, and Davis (2013).

[3]Courtney et al. (2005); Chassin (2008).

[4]Piquero, Hawkins, and Kazemian (2012).

Health and Safety

Health

Table 8.1 shows one-year impacts on health, including measures of mental health, physical health, and health care coverage and receipt. The sole primary outcome in the area of health, shown in the top panel of the table, is youths' score on a scale of mental health problems. This outcome was selected as primary based on the Transitional Living staff's strong emphasis on mental health, as detailed in Chapter 2. TL Specialists provide counseling, and, when appropriate, trained TL Specialists administer trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy. While Transitional Living services also cover physical health, the program does not focus on it as strongly; hence, physical health outcomes are considered secondary in this analysis.

- **Transitional Living services significantly improved the mental health of program group youth.**

The Transitional Living program significantly improved youths' mental health as measured by the mental health problems scale, which was constructed using the 21-question Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21).[5] This scale is composed of three individual subscales that measure the severity of symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress. Questions on the scale ask about the frequency with which people experience nervousness, agitation, lack of motivation, frustration, low sense of self-worth, panic, lack of positive feeling, irritability, and fear, among other items. Program group members exhibited fewer mental health problems overall, scoring 1.4 points lower on this scale than did control group members, which represents an effect size of –0.13 standard deviations. This reduction in mental health problems was distributed about evenly across the three subscales. While the majority of youth in both research groups were in the normal range for each subscale in terms of the severity of their symptoms, 35 percent of program group members and 40 percent of control group members suffered from mild to extremely severe symptoms on at least one of the subscales (not shown in table).[6] This difference is statistically significant at the 10 percent level.

The bottom panel of Table 8.1 shows impacts on secondary health outcomes. These measures focus on physical health and health care receipt. A significant impact was found for one of these outcomes: program group members were about 7 percentage points more likely than were control group members to report receiving medical care when they felt it was needed.

[5]Antony et al. (1998).
[6]See Gomez (2014).

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Table 8.1

One-Year Impacts on Health

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value
Primary outcome					
Score on mental health problems scale[a]	9.8	11.2	-1.4 **	-0.13	0.025
Secondary outcomes (%)					
Physical health and health care received					
Self-report of general health					0.104
Excellent/very good	68.6	65.0	3.6	0.08	
Good	21.8	21.2	0.6	0.02	
Fair/poor	9.6	13.8	-4.2	-0.12	
Has a regular place to visit when in need of care	63.4	59.5	3.9	0.08	0.193
Received a physical exam	62.3	58.0	4.3	0.09	0.147
Received a dental exam	57.4	53.3	4.0	0.08	0.186
Did not receive medical care when needed	29.4	36.2	-6.8 **	-0.14	0.018
Has health insurance coverage	79.6	76.5	3.1	0.07	0.228
Sample size (total = 1,114)	659	455			

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.

The effect size is calculated by dividing the impact of the program (difference between program and control groups) by the observed variation for that outcome within the control group (the control group standard deviation).

Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

[a]See Appendix B for definitions of the scales used in this report.

This finding suggests that Transitional Living staff were successful in encouraging youth to seek medical care or in helping them to access health services.

While none of the differences for other secondary measures reached statistical significance individually, many came quite close, including self-reported general health, having a regular health care provider, and receipt of physical and dental examinations. Taken together,

and in combination with the significant impact on receiving medical care when needed, these differences are suggestive of a positive overall pattern of health and health care receipt among program group youth relative to control group youth. For one final secondary outcome, health insurance coverage, the difference between the program and control groups did not come close to reaching statistical significance.

Safety

Table 8.2 shows one-year impacts on safety outcomes. There are five primary outcomes in this area, including measures of binge drinking, illegal drug use, condom use, victimization, and partner violence. These measures reflect the main areas of safety on which the Transitional Living program focused; TL Specialists discussed these topics with youth periodically. There are no secondary outcomes in this area.

- **The Transitional Living program significantly reduced young people's experiences of violence with their partners, but did not have a statistically significant impact on any other safety outcomes.**

Program group members were no less likely than control group members to binge-drink or to use illegal drugs. Both groups indulged in binge drinking for less than one day, on average, in the month before the survey interview, and about one-third of each group reported using an illegal drug in that same time span.

Similarly, the Transitional Living program did not have a significant impact on safe sexual behaviors, as measured by condom use. Most youths in the sample were sexually active during the year since study entry; about 37 percent of program group youth and 40 percent of control group youth had not used a condom during their last sexual encounter. This difference is not statistically significant. Additionally, the program did not reduce victimization: just under one-fourth of both the program and control groups was robbed or assaulted (including sexual assaults) in the year before the survey interview was conducted.

As explained in Chapter 3, substance use and sexual health were discussed less often during Transitional Living sessions, which may explain why significant impacts were not found for their related outcomes. As for victimization, TL Specialists attempted to provide strategies to help youths avoid dangerous situations, such as not walking outside at night and keeping house and car doors locked. One possible explanation for the lack of a significant impact on victimization is that the program was unable to alter participants' safety-related behaviors. However, it may be more likely that this outcome is difficult to affect given that crime is often a result of circumstances beyond the victim's control.

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Table 8.2

One-Year Impacts on Safety

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value
Primary outcomes					
Substance use					
Days of binge drinking in the past month	0.7	0.9	-0.2	-0.07	0.197
Used illegal drugs[a] (%)	31.4	32.8	-1.4	-0.03	0.622
Used a condom during last sexual encounter (%)					0.360
Yes	49.5	47.7	1.8	0.04	
No	36.6	40.3	-3.7	-0.08	
Not sexually active	13.9	12.0	1.9	0.06	
Was robbed or assaulted[b] (%)	24.4	24.2	0.2	0.01	0.929
Partner violence (%)			**		0.021
In a violent relationship[c]	15.1	21.5	-6.4	-0.16	
In a nonviolent relationship	38.6	36.3	2.3	0.05	
Not in a relationship	46.3	42.2	4.1	0.08	
Sample size (total = 1,114)	659	455			

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.

The effect size is calculated by dividing the impact of the program (difference between program and control groups) by the observed variation for that outcome within the control group (the control group standard deviation).

Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

[a]This measure is based on sample members' response to three questions about their use of marijuana, "other illegal drugs," or prescription drugs without the permission of a doctor.

[b]"Assaulted" is defined as attacked, beaten, or sexually victimized.

[c]A "violent relationship" is defined as one in which either partner has ever hit, kicked, shoved, or thrown something potentially harmful at the other, or forced the other to have unwanted sexual relations.

The Transitional Living program did have a significant impact on one key safety outcome: youths' experience of violence, either as a victim or as a perpetrator, in their romantic relationships. About 15 percent of program group youth were in a violent relationship, compared with about 22 percent of control group youth. This reduction appears to be a result of both an increase in the number of youths who were not in a relationship and an increase in the

number of youths who were in a nonviolent relationship. TL Specialists worked with program participants on how to maintain safe and healthy relationships with the people in their lives, including romantic partners. This support may have allowed youth to avoid violent relationships, either by employing strategies that they had learned to prevent conflicts with their partners from escalating to violence, or by eschewing relationships entirely.

Criminal Involvement

Table 8.3 shows one-year impacts on criminal involvement. There are two primary outcomes in this domain. The first of these, the criminal behavior scale, is a composite measure that incorporates several secondary outcomes measuring participation in different crimes into one main crime indicator. The second primary income, which measures contact with the criminal justice system, is the percentage of youth who spent a night in jail or prison during the year before the survey interview took place.[7] This outcome was selected as primary because it is likely to capture arrests for more serious crimes, since arrests such as these are more likely to result in an overnight detainment. Additionally, youth may be more likely to recall an event such as a night in jail than they would other types of contact with the criminal justice system.

- **The Transitional Living program had no significant impacts on primary measures of criminal involvement.**

The first primary outcome, youths' score on a criminal behavior scale, showed that Transitional Living did not reduce participation in the 10 criminal behaviors measured by the scale, including a range of violent, property, drug, and sex crimes. Both program and control group members participated in an average of 0.6 criminal behaviors. Nor did the program have a statistically significant impact on the other primary outcome in this domain, the percentage of youth who had spent at least one night in jail or prison in the 12 months before the survey interview: about one-fourth of each group had spent at least one night in jail or prison. It is not surprising that a substantial portion of the study sample experienced contact with the criminal justice system, given that a substantial portion of them had a history of juvenile offending, putting them at relatively high risk of participating in crime as adults.[8]

[7]Though often used interchangeably, there are key differences between jails and prisons. Jails typically hold people who are awaiting trial or serving shorter sentences (usually less than one year) and are operated by sheriffs and/or city or county governments. Prisons typically hold people convicted of crimes for which they are serving longer sentences (usually more than one year) and are operated by both state governments and the federal government.

[8]Piquero, Hawkins, and Kazemian (2012).

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Table 8.3

One-Year Impacts on Criminal Involvement

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value
Primary outcomes					
Score on criminal behavior scale[a]	0.6	0.6	0.0	0.03	0.664
Spent at least 1 night in jail or prison (%)	23.1	25.2	-2.1	-0.05	0.405
Secondary outcomes (%)					
Arrested	24.3	25.9	-1.5	-0.04	0.549
Convicted of crime	17.1	14.8	2.3	0.07	0.301
Types of crime					
Involved in a gang fight or assault	13.6	13.1	0.5	0.02	0.805
Committed a property crime[b]	15.8	17.2	-1.4	-0.04	0.544
Carried a handgun	9.0	7.9	1.2	0.04	0.490
Sold or helped sell illegal drugs	9.2	7.0	2.2	0.09	0.203
Received cash or goods in exchange for sex	2.2	4.3	-2.2 **	-0.11	0.044
Sample size (total = 1,114)	659	455			

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.

The effect size is calculated by dividing the impact of the program (difference between program and control groups) by the observed variation for that outcome within the control group (the control group standard deviation).

Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

[a]See Appendix B for definitions of the scales used in this report.

[b]Property crimes include stealing property, receiving stolen property, and damaging property.

There was also little evidence of statistically significant impacts on the secondary outcomes in this domain. There were no significant differences between the program and control groups in their rates of arrest (about one-fourth of each group) or conviction (about one-sixth of each group). Similarly, there were no significant differences between research groups in their participation in individual crimes. The most common crimes, among those measured, were property crimes (committed by about 16 percent of sample members) and involvement in a

gang fight or assault (experienced by about 13 percent of both groups). Less than 10 percent of both groups had carried a handgun or sold illegal drugs in the year before the survey interview.

There is one measure — having received cash or goods in exchange for sex in the past year — for which there is a significant difference between the program and control groups. Two percent of program group members reported participating in this type of crime, compared with 4 percent of control group members. However, taking into account both that there were no significant impacts on the primary outcomes (or other secondary outcomes) in this domain and the number of outcomes for which impacts were estimated, it is possible that this difference is the result of chance and does not represent a true impact of the program.

The lack of significant impacts in this domain may reflect the fact that avoiding crime was not the most common focus of Transitional Living services. In interviews, TL Specialists did not cite criminal justice–related concerns as a key issue that they consistently addressed during the weekly sessions. This finding is confirmed by the analysis of participation data presented in Chapter 3; among those who had participated in at least one Transitional Living session, criminal justice issues were discussed in just 16 percent of those sessions.

Conclusion

The results of the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation in the domain of health and safety are mixed. The Transitional Living program had a positive effect on some of the primary outcomes in this domain, including reducing youths' mental health problems and decreasing the likelihood that youth were in violent relationships. The statistically significant impact of the Transitional Living program on improved mental health is a particularly important finding, as mental health is a cross-cutting outcome that directly affects behavior and may have positive effects on other aspects of young people's lives in the future. However, Transitional Living did not have a significant impact on substance use, risky sexual behaviors, or victimization, the other primary outcomes in the health and safety domain. As for the criminal involvement domain, taken together the results indicate that the Transitional Living program did not reduce criminal behavior or contact with the criminal justice system.

Chapter 9

Impacts by Subgroups of Youth

The results presented in Chapters 5 through 8 of this report show that the Youth Villages Transitional Living program improved a number of outcomes among the full research sample of youth in the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation across multiple, though not all, domains. While this report focuses primarily on impacts for the full sample, there are reasons to hypothesize that the Transitional Living program may have larger or smaller impacts on particular outcomes for some subgroups of youth compared with others. Before conducting the impact analysis, the research team hypothesized that the pattern of impacts might differ across four particular sets of subgroup characteristics. This chapter presents the subgroup analyses, which examined the pattern of impacts by history of juvenile justice custody, by geographic setting, by receipt of Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care (EFC) Services (formerly Post-Custody Services) at baseline,[1] and by clusters of baseline characteristics identified by latent class analysis (explained below).

- **The impacts of the Transitional Living program were consistent across different subgroups of youth.**

When conducting a subgroup analysis, the question of interest is not whether there are statistically significant impacts *within* a particular subgroup of youth, but rather, whether the impacts for one subgroup are significantly different from the impacts for another subgroup. That is, are there statistically significant differences in impacts *between* or *across* subgroups? If these impacts are not significantly different from each other, the analysis does not provide evidence that the impacts for a particular subgroup are different from what was found for the full sample.[2] As discussed below, none of the four subgroup analyses uncovered a strong pattern of signifi-

[1]The change from Post-Custody Services to EFC Services went into effect in July 2012. For simplicity, this chapter refers to all such services as EFC Services, but those that were received before July 2012 were Post-Custody Services.

[2]In order to assess whether there were statistically significant differences in impacts across subgroups, split-sample analyses were used. Impacts were first estimated separately for each subgroup, using an ordinary least squares regression model controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics. For example, impacts were estimated for the urban subsample using only data for sample members living in urban areas, and separately for the nonurban subsample using only data for sample members living in nonurban areas. The impacts and standard errors from the subgroup regressions were then used to generate an H-statistic, which indicates whether the difference in impacts between the subgroups (as opposed to the difference between the program and control group members in each subgroup) is statistically significant.

cantly different impacts. That is, the results indicate that the impacts of Transitional Living were consistent across all of the subgroups.

Impacts by History of Juvenile Justice Custody

Tennessee has a combined state custody system, in which foster care and juvenile justice custody are overseen by the Department of Children's Services (DCS). As a result, the target population for the Transitional Living program in the state and for this study includes both foster care and juvenile justice youth. In many other contexts, however, these two groups of youth may not have access to the same services, as many states have separate foster care and juvenile justice agencies, and funding sources for services for the two populations may differ. As a result, in other jurisdictions, Transitional Living and other services are generally targeted at only one of the two groups. This evaluation presents an opportunity to examine whether Transitional Living services are equally effective for both of them.

As noted in Chapter 1, youth with histories of foster care and youth with histories of juvenile justice custody are similar in many ways. In fact, the two populations overlap, as children who experience unstable or abusive family environments, poverty, and other harmful situations are at increased risk of entering both systems.[3] As young adults, both former foster youth and former juvenile justice youth are more likely than their peers to exhibit low levels of educational attainment, sparse employment histories, housing instability, poverty, weak social support, and mental health problems.[4] Therefore, youth in the two groups are expected to have many of the same needs. For this reason, the research team hypothesized that there would be no significant differences between the two groups in impacts on outcomes in the employment and earnings, housing instability and economic well-being, and health and safety domains.

While young adults with histories of foster care or juvenile justice custody are expected to exhibit similar needs in many areas, juvenile justice youth have, by definition, been more deeply involved with the juvenile justice system and are therefore expected to be at greater risk for further criminal involvement. This may be particularly true for youth who are on probation and may be at risk of violating their conditions of probation. In addition, the research team expected that the Transitional Living caseworkers, or "TL Specialists," would spend more time working on criminal justice issues with youth who had been in juvenile justice custody. For those reasons, it was hypothesized that impacts on criminal behaviors and criminal justice

[3]Chung, Little, and Steinberg (2005); Barbell and Freundlich (2001).

[4]Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, and Nesmith (1998); Courtney (2009); Reilly (2003); Nellis and Wayman (2009); Sedlak and McPherson (2010).

contact would be larger among youth with histories of juvenile justice custody than among those without such a history.

In order to test these hypotheses, the research team conducted a subgroup analysis comparing impacts among youth who had been in juvenile justice custody (including youth who had experienced both juvenile justice custody and foster care) with impacts among youth who had been in foster care only. Table 9.1 shows impacts on primary outcomes by history of juvenile justice custody at baseline. As hypothesized, the table shows almost no significant differences in impacts between the two subgroups. In other words, on almost all measures, the Transitional Living program was equally effective in improving outcomes among youth with and without histories of juvenile justice custody.

There is one measure for which impacts between the two subgroups are significantly different. Although no significant difference was observed between juvenile justice and non–juvenile justice groups in impacts on criminal behaviors, there was a significant difference in impacts on spending at least one night in jail or prison, as shown in the bottom row of Table 9.1. However, the direction of this difference is contrary to the research team's hypothesis. The Transitional Living program appears to have been more effective in reducing jail stays among youth who had never been in juvenile justice custody than among youth who had. It may be that the program is more effective at reducing contact with the criminal justice system among youth who are not as deeply involved in crime. However, it is also possible that, given the number of measures included in this analysis and the lack of any clear pattern of impacts observed, this difference represents random chance.

Impacts by Geographic Setting

The Transitional Living program operates out of 13 offices across Tennessee that, together, serve all the counties in the state. Contextual factors such as demographic and economic characteristics, cultural nuances, and the availability of resources and social services vary substantially across counties. One important way in which local areas differ is in population density. As Figure 9.1 illustrates, Tennessee comprises two very dense counties (those in which the cities of Memphis and Nashville are located); a few moderately dense counties, such as the counties in which Knoxville and Chattanooga are located; and a large number of sparsely populated counties.

According to Transitional Living staff, population density correlates with the types of risk and protective factors that youth exhibit, the contextual factors that may influence youths' behaviors, and the availability of resources and services in the community. For example, staff

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Table 9.1

One-Year Impacts on Primary Outcomes, by History of Juvenile Justice Custody at Baseline

Outcome	Previously in Juvenile Justice Custody					Never in Juvenile Justice Custody					Difference Between Subgroup Impacts[a]
	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value	
Education (%)											
Has high school diploma	50.6	50.2	0.4	0.01	0.922	62.0	54.7	7.3 *	0.15	0.068	
Has GED certificate	18.8	17.2	1.6	0.04	0.611	12.2	16.7	-4.5	-0.12	0.155	
Participated in vocational training	10.2	7.4	2.8	0.11	0.244	13.4	11.3	2.2	0.07	0.488	
Employment and earnings ($)											
Earnings from formal work[b]	3,830	3,332	497	0.10	0.232	4,308	3,659	649	0.12	0.146	
Housing stability and economic well-being											
Score on housing instability scale[c]	0.9	1.1	-0.2 *	-0.15	0.060	1.1	1.3	-0.3 **	-0.19	0.026	
Score on economic hardship scale[c]	1.3	1.3	-0.1	-0.06	0.498	1.3	1.6	-0.3 **	-0.21	0.011	
Social support											
Score on social support scale[c]	4.5	4.1	0.4 *	0.13	0.099	4.2	4.3	-0.1	-0.03	0.729	
Very close to an adult[d] (%)	93.1	91.3	1.8	0.06	0.445	91.3	91.0	0.3	0.01	0.916	
Health and safety											
Score on mental health problems scale[c]	9.7	10.3	-0.6	-0.06	0.494	10.0	12.2	-2.2 **	-0.20	0.022	

(continued)

Table 9.1 (continued)

Outcome	Previously in Juvenile Justice Custody: Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value	Never in Juvenile Justice Custody: Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value	Difference Between Subgroup Impacts[a]
Substance use											
Days of binge drinking in the past month	1.0	1.1	-0.1	-0.03	0.720	0.4	0.8	-0.4 *	-0.11	0.091	
Used illegal drugs[e] (%)	35.8	36.6	-0.8	-0.02	0.856	26.7	27.9	-1.2	-0.03	0.758	
Used a condom during last sexual encounter (%)					0.581					0.142	
Yes	49.2	51.6	-2.4	-0.05		49.8	42.4	7.3	0.15		
No	40.7	40.8	-0.1	0.00		32.4	40.7	-8.3	-0.17		
Not sexually active	10.1	7.6	2.5	0.09		17.8	16.8	1.0	0.03		
Was robbed or assaulted[f] (%)	25.1	23.8	1.3	0.03	0.732	25.0	24.2	0.8	0.02	0.842	
Partner violence (%)					0.227			**		0.044	
In a violent relationship[g]	16.5	22.1	-5.6	-0.13		13.1	21.4	-8.3	-0.20		
In a nonviolent relationship	34.9	34.2	0.8	0.02		42.0	39.1	2.9	0.06		
Not in a relationship	48.5	43.7	4.8	0.10		44.9	39.5	5.4	0.11		
Criminal involvement											
Score on criminal behavior scale[c]	0.8	0.7	0.0	0.02	0.847	0.5	0.4	0.1	0.08	0.435	
Spent at least one night in jail or prison (%)	33.0	29.7	3.3	0.07	0.407	13.4	20.0	-6.5 **	-0.16	0.048	†
Sample size (total = 1,098)	330	233				319	216				

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey.

NOTES: Program impacts were calculated separately for each subgroup, using an ordinary least squares model and adjusting for pre-random assignment characteristics. Impact estimates were then examined for statistically significant differences across subgroups.

(continued)

Table 9.1 (continued)

The effect size is calculated by dividing the impact of the program (difference between program and control groups) by the observed variation for that outcome within the control group (the control group standard deviation).

Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

GED = General Educational Development.

[a]When comparing impacts between two subgroups, an H-statistic is generated. The H-statistic is used to assess whether the difference in impacts between the subgroups is statistically significant. Statistically significant differences between subgroups are indicated as: ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.

[b]This self-reported measure includes only earnings from formal employment and does not include overtime pay, tips, commissions, bonuses, or other types of pay, nor does it include earnings from informal work. For the purposes of this measure, formal employment is defined as ongoing employment with a particular employer, such as working at a restaurant or supermarket. Informal work is defined as independent work for several people, with no specific supervisor, such as babysitting and mowing lawns.

[c]See Appendix B for definitions of the scales used in this report.

[d]The "very close to an adult" measure indicates whether sample members reported being very close to a biological mother, a biological father, a stepmother, a stepfather, a grandparent, an adult sibling, or a caring adult outside of their family.

[e]This measure is based on sample members' response to three questions, asking about their use of marijuana, "other illegal drugs," or prescription drugs without the permission of a doctor.

[f]"Assaulted" is defined as attacked, beaten, or sexually victimized.

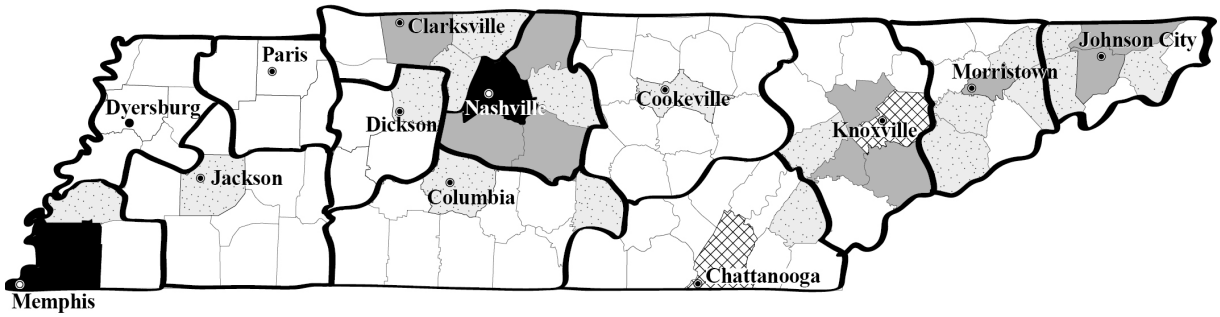
[g]A "violent relationship" is defined as one in which either partner has ever hit, kicked, shoved, or thrown something potentially harmful at the other, or forced the other to have unwanted sexual relations.

pointed to disparities in levels of criminal and gang activity occurring within communities as a factor that may cause variation in the issues facing study participants. Staff working in the cities of Memphis and Nashville indicated that local crime and involvement with gangs are primary barriers to success among their clients, while staff serving more rural service areas did not mention those issues.

The availability of services and resources may also vary largely, though not entirely, along urban and rural lines. Technological resources, such as cell phone service and access to the Internet, public transportation, and postsecondary educational institutions are less prevalent in the more rural areas of the state. While the number of postsecondary institutions may correspond with the demand associated with population size, fewer institutions and a more spread-out population in rural areas mean that such institutions may be relatively difficult to access for a young person living there. Overall, the differences between urban and rural areas were expected to be associated with the types of issues that youth encountered, the availability of services and programs to which Transitional Living staff could refer youth, and the availability of services for the members of the control group.

Figure 9.1

Population Density in Youth Villages Office Service Areas in Tennessee, by County



NOTES: County borders are represented by the thin solid lines. Youth Villages service areas are delineated by the thick solid lines. The cities shown on the map indicate the location of each Youth Villages office for that service area.

Because of these differences, it was hypothesized that the impacts of the Transitional Living program on key outcomes might differ among youth living in urban areas compared with youth living in nonurban areas.[5] The analysis first examined impacts on service receipt, finding some differences by geographic setting (not shown). For example, access to Transitional Living increased the frequency of case management services and help preparing for education more for urban youth than for nonurban youth. However, these differences did not translate into differences in impacts. Table 9.2 shows impacts among urban youth compared with impacts among nonurban youth. The results do not show a pattern of differences in impacts by geographic setting. In other words, the Transitional Living program was equally effective in the urban and nonurban areas.

[5]Youth who lived in zip codes where 70 percent or more of the inhabitants were living on urban blocks, as defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, were considered to be living in urban areas.

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Table 9.2

One-Year Impacts on Primary Outcomes, by Geographic Setting at Baseline

Outcome	Urban					Nonurban					Difference Between Subgroup Impacts[a]
	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value	
Education (%)											
Has high school diploma	53.3	51.6	1.8	0.04	0.628	58.6	53.4	5.2	0.10	0.210	
Has GED certificate	15.0	16.5	-1.5	-0.04	0.605	17.2	18.5	-1.3	-0.03	0.704	
Participated in vocational training	10.5	7.7	2.8	0.11	0.257	12.8	11.1	1.8	0.06	0.565	
Employment and earnings ($)											
Earnings from formal work[b]	4,057	3,708	349	0.06	0.413	4,066	3,287	779 *	0.16	0.072	
Housing stability and economic well-being											
Score on housing instability scale[c]	1.0	1.4	-0.3 ***	-0.24	0.003	0.9	1.0	-0.1	-0.07	0.457	
Score on economic hardship scale[c]	1.4	1.7	-0.2	-0.13	0.105	1.1	1.2	-0.2	-0.13	0.147	
Social support											
Score on social support scale[c]	3.8	4.1	-0.2	-0.06	0.400	5.0	4.4	0.6	0.14	0.101	†
Very close to an adult[d] (%)	91.0	90.4	0.6	0.02	0.799	93.7	92.3	1.3	0.05	0.575	
Health and safety											
Score on mental health problems scale[c]	10.4	11.4	-1.0	-0.09	0.276	9.1	11.0	-1.9 **	-0.18	0.032	

(continued)

Table 9.2 (continued)

Outcome	Urban					Nonurban					Difference Between Subgroup Impacts[a]
	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value	
Substance use											
Days of binge drinking in the past month	0.6	0.8	-0.2	-0.06	0.458	0.8	1.0	-0.3	-0.07	0.336	
Used illegal drugs[e] (%)	32.9	32.4	0.4	0.01	0.910	30.5	32.0	-1.6	-0.03	0.714	
Used a condom during last sexual encounter (%)					0.719					0.501	
Yes	51.2	49.3	1.9	0.04		47.4	45.2	2.2	0.04		
No	32.9	36.0	-3.1	-0.06		41.2	45.7	-4.5	-0.09		
Not sexually active	15.9	14.8	1.1	0.03		11.5	9.1	2.3	0.08		
Was robbed or assaulted[f] (%)	26.5	27.1	-0.6	-0.01	0.873	21.7	19.9	1.8	0.04	0.648	
Partner violence (%)			*		0.051					0.351	
In a violent relationship[g]	14.8	22.5	-7.8	-0.19		15.3	20.2	-4.9	-0.12		
In a nonviolent relationship	34.4	32.2	2.2	0.05		43.6	42.0	1.7	0.03		
Not in a relationship	50.9	45.3	5.6	0.11		41.0	37.8	3.2	0.07		
Criminal involvement											
Score on criminal behavior scale[c]	0.6	0.6	0.0	0.02	0.800	0.6	0.6	0.1	0.07	0.453	
Spent at least one night in jail or prison (%)	22.2	24.8	-2.6	-0.06	0.449	24.5	25.4	-0.9	-0.02	0.819	
Sample size (total = 1,106)	364	246				291	205				

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey.

NOTES: Program impacts were calculated separately for each subgroup, using an ordinary least squares model and adjusting for pre-random assignment characteristics. Impact estimates were then examined for statistically significant differences across subgroups.

(continued)

Table 9.2 (continued)

The effect size is calculated by dividing the impact of the program (difference between program and control groups) by the observed variation for that outcome within the control group (the control group standard deviation).

Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

GED = General Educational Development.

[a]When comparing impacts between two subgroups, an H-statistic is generated. The H-statistic is used to assess whether the difference in impacts between the subgroups is statistically significant. Statistically significant differences between subgroups are indicated as: ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.

[b]This self-reported measure includes only earnings from formal employment and does not include overtime pay, tips, commissions, bonuses, or other types of pay, nor does it include earnings from informal work. For the purposes of this measure, formal employment is defined as ongoing employment with a particular employer, such as working at a restaurant or supermarket. Informal work is defined as independent work for several people, with no specific supervisor, such as babysitting and mowing lawns.

[c]See Appendix B for definitions of the scales used in this report.

[d]The "very close to an adult" measure indicates whether sample members reported being very close to a biological mother, a biological father, a stepmother, a stepfather, a grandparent, an adult sibling, or a caring adult outside of their family.

[e]This measure is based on sample members' response to three questions, asking about their use of marijuana, "other illegal drugs," or prescription drugs without the permission of a doctor.

[f]"Assaulted" is defined as attacked, beaten, or sexually victimized.

[g]A "violent relationship" is defined as one in which either partner has ever hit, kicked, shoved, or thrown something potentially harmful at the other, or forced the other to have unwanted sexual relations.

Impacts by Receipt of EFC Services at Baseline

As described in Chapter 2, DCS provided some foster care and juvenile justice youth with EFC Services. These services included case management (about once a month), financial assistance, access to education or training vouchers, and, after the instatement of EFC, the option to stay in foster care until the age of 21. Not all youth in the study sample were eligible, as they must have been engaged in education or a job training program or have had a medical condition that precluded their ability to engage in such activities. They also could not be leaving a secure juvenile justice facility. At baseline, about 20 percent of the youth in the study sample were receiving EFC Services.

The question of whether Transitional Living is beneficial for both EFC and non-EFC youth (that is, whether there is an added value of Transitional Living for EFC youth over and above the EFC Services) is particularly policy-relevant to DCS and to other foster care agencies that have extended foster care to some or all youth over the age of 18. Some agencies, including DCS, provide funding for a particular youth for *either* EFC Services *or* independent living

services such as Transitional Living, but not both.[6] However, it may be that youth who are receiving EFC Services might also benefit from the more intensive services provided by Transitional Living. Therefore, the evaluation team examined whether the impacts of the Transitional Living program differed for youth who were receiving EFC Services than for youth who were not receiving such services.

Table 9.3 compares the impacts of Transitional Living among youth receiving EFC Services at baseline with the impacts among those who were not receiving such services. Overall, the results provide little evidence of a pattern of differences in impacts by EFC receipt at baseline. While there are some significant differences between impacts for the two groups, those differences do not fall into a clear pattern. These results may be affected by a lack of statistical power, as the size of the EFC group is small, which makes the findings less certain. As a result, the analysis does not provide strong evidence that there are differences in the impacts by receipt of EFC Services at baseline, but it also does not provide strong evidence that there were no differences in impacts between these two groups.

Impacts by Groups Defined by Latent Class Analysis

While youth who have been in foster care or juvenile justice custody have generally had difficult childhood experiences and have fewer resources for making the transition to adulthood than do their peers, this group's circumstances upon reaching adulthood also vary a good deal. Depending on their protective and risk factors, youth may have a relatively easy or relatively difficult time making this transition. It is important to determine how the impacts of services like Transitional Living vary among youth depending on their readiness for the transition to independent living, as such information might help staff target resources and services more effectively.

In order to identify different groups of youth with varying levels of readiness for adulthood, the research team used latent class analysis, which is a technique used to identify subgroups based on the way in which key baseline characteristics cluster among the sample members.[7] In other words, the method identifies different types of youth whose baseline profiles are similar. The research team conducted the analysis using self-reported baseline variables that previous research has shown are indicators of youths' readiness for the transition to adulthood.

[6]Funding provided by the Day Foundation and other philanthropic sources allowed Youth Villages to serve youth who were receiving EFC Services.

[7]McCutcheon (1987).

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Table 9.3

One-Year Impacts on Primary Outcomes, by Receipt of EFC Services at Baseline

Outcome	Receiving EFC Services at Baseline: Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value	Not Receiving EFC Services at Baseline: Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value	Difference Between Subgroup Impacts[a]
Education (%)											
Has high school diploma	69.6	63.7	6.0	0.12	0.310	51.5	49.6	1.9	0.04	0.521	
Has GED certificate	14.3	11.8	2.5	0.08	0.584	16.7	18.1	-1.4	-0.04	0.574	
Participated in vocational training	12.8	12.5	0.3	0.01	0.954	11.6	7.8	3.8 *	0.14	0.063	
Employment and earnings ($)											
Earnings from formal work[b]	4,679	3,124	1,556 **	0.31	0.014	3,884	3,624	260	0.05	0.450	†
Housing stability and economic well-being											
Score on housing instability scale[c]	0.9	1.0	-0.1	-0.07	0.592	1.0	1.2	-0.2 ***	-0.17	0.009	
Score on economic hardship scale[c]	1.2	1.1	0.1	0.04	0.758	1.3	1.6	-0.3 **	-0.16	0.014	
Social support											
Score on social support scale[c]	4.1	5.1	-1.0 **	-0.22	0.043	4.5	4.0	0.5 *	0.12	0.057	†††
Very close to an adult[d] (%)	91.1	94.3	-3.2	-0.14	0.394	92.3	90.6	1.7	0.06	0.376	
Health and safety											
Score on mental health problems scale[c]	9.5	11.1	-1.5	-0.15	0.294	9.8	11.3	-1.5 **	-0.13	0.038	

(continued)

Table 9.3 (continued)

Outcome	Receiving EFC Services at Baseline: Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value	Not Receiving EFC Services at Baseline: Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value	Difference Between Subgroup Impacts[a]
Substance use											
Days of binge drinking in the past month	0.4	0.5	0.0	-0.02	0.876	0.8	1.0	-0.3	-0.07	0.225	
Used illegal drugs[e] (%)	28.7	24.9	3.8	0.09	0.522	32.1	35.0	-3.0	-0.06	0.362	
Used a condom during last sexual encounter (%)					0.755					0.523	
Yes	51.7	47.5	4.2	0.08		48.8	47.7	1.1	0.02		
No	30.1	34.8	-4.7	-0.10		38.6	41.6	-3.0	-0.06		
Not sexually active	18.1	17.7	0.4	0.01		12.6	10.7	1.9	0.06		
Was robbed or assaulted[f] (%)	24.0	10.4	13.6 **	0.41	0.018	24.7	27.3	-2.6	-0.06	0.392	††
Partner violence (%)					0.566			**		0.050	
In a violent relationship[g]	13.2	18.2	-5.0	-0.13		15.7	22.2	-6.5	-0.15		
In a nonviolent relationship	41.1	39.9	1.2	0.03		37.8	35.4	2.5	0.05		
Not in a relationship	45.7	41.9	3.7	0.08		46.4	42.4	4.0	0.08		
Criminal involvement											
Score on criminal behavior scale[c]	0.4	0.3	0.0	0.04	0.764	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.03	0.643	
Spent at least one night in jail or prison (%)	11.4	19.3	-7.9	-0.21	0.101	26.4	27.2	-0.8	-0.02	0.801	
Sample size (total = 1,114)	157	89				502	366				

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey.

NOTES: Program impacts were calculated separately for each subgroup, using an ordinary least squares model and adjusting for pre-random assignment characteristics. Impact estimates were then examined for statistically significant differences across subgroups.

(continued)

Table 9.3 (continued)

The effect size is calculated by dividing the impact of the program (difference between program and control groups) by the observed variation for that outcome within the control group (the control group standard deviation).

Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

EFC = Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care.

GED = General Educational Development.

[a]When comparing impacts between two subgroups, an H-statistic is generated. The H-statistic is used to assess whether the difference in impacts between the subgroups is statistically significant. Statistically significant differences between subgroups are indicated as: ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.

[b]This self-reported measure includes only earnings from formal employment and does not include overtime pay, tips, commissions, bonuses, or other types of pay, nor does it include earnings from informal work. For the purposes of this measure, formal employment is defined as ongoing employment with a particular employer, such as working at a restaurant or supermarket. Informal work is defined as independent work for several people, with no specific supervisor, such as babysitting and mowing lawns.

[c]See Appendix B for definitions of the scales used in this report.

[d]The "very close to an adult" measure indicates whether sample members reported being very close to a biological mother, a biological father, a stepmother, a stepfather, a grandparent, an adult sibling, or a caring adult outside of their family.

[e]This measure is based on sample members' response to three questions, asking about their use of marijuana, "other illegal drugs," or prescription drugs without the permission of a doctor.

[f]"Assaulted" is defined as attacked, beaten, or sexually victimized.

[g]A "violent relationship" is defined as one in which either partner has ever hit, kicked, shoved, or thrown something potentially harmful at the other, or forced the other to have unwanted sexual relations.

These variables include number of state custody placements and measures of whether youths had ever been employed, had contact with their mothers or fathers at least once a week, had ever been held back a grade, had ever been arrested, and had received psychological counseling or attended substance abuse treatment in the year before random assignment.

The latent class analysis identified three subgroups of youth: youth who were "hindered but connected to family," "maltreated but avoiding trouble," and "long-term system-involved but engaged" (that is, involved with the foster care or juvenile justice system over a long period of time but engaged with employment and education). Table 9.4 shows selected baseline characteristics for the three groups. Despite expectations that the latent class analysis would produce groups that ranged from more to less prepared for adulthood, each of these groups exhibited risk factors in some areas, but also protective factors in other areas.

Youth in the "hindered but connected to family" subgroup (Class 1 in Table 9.4), which is largely male, had the most extensive history of contact with the criminal justice system: all had been arrested and about three-fourths had been in juvenile justice custody. Youth in this

group were also relatively likely to have been held back in school or suspended, and they were hindered by low levels of educational attainment and little employment history. However, this group was also the most likely to be living with and frequently interacting with biological family members, indicating that they were most connected to family. This group appears to be largely made up of youth who were in state custody primarily for juvenile justice reasons rather than because of abuse and neglect by family.

Youth in the "maltreated but avoiding trouble" group (Class 2 in Table 9.4) look quite different. This group is largely female and is made up mostly of youth who entered state custody because of abuse or neglect rather than delinquency. Very few of the youth in this category had ever been arrested or had attended a substance abuse treatment program. Relative to the first group, these young people were much less connected to their biological families. On measures of human capital, including employment and educational attainment, this group was similar to the total sample, with neither very poor nor very good circumstances.

Finally, youth in the "long-term system-involved but engaged" group (Class 3 in Table 9.4) exhibited the most extensive histories of state custody, with many experiencing a large number of foster care or juvenile justice placements and with nearly 20 percent having been in both foster care and juvenile justice custody (not shown in table). This group entered state custody early (before age 15) relative to the other two groups. These youths also had relatively little contact with their biological families, and like the "hindered but connected to family" subgroup, all of the individuals in this subgroup had been arrested before. However, they also exhibited the highest level of engagement in employment and education, with nearly 80 percent having been employed and about 87 percent either in school or already having earned a high school diploma.

Because the Transitional Living program is designed to identify and address the areas in which each youth needs the most assistance, the research team hypothesized that impacts for each domain would be largest for the subgroup that was least prepared for the transition to adulthood in that particular domain. For example, because the "hindered but connected to family" subgroup exhibited the least engagement with education and employment, it was expected that impacts on education and employment would be largest among this subgroup.

Table 9.5 shows the impacts of the Transitional Living program by latent class assignment. Despite the variation among the three subgroups in their risk and protective factors, the results show almost no statistically significant differences in impacts across subgroups. While this finding may reflect, in part, low statistical power for detecting differences in impacts for subgroups this small, the results provide little evidence that the Transitional Living program affected outcomes for one of these subgroups more than the others.

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Table 9.4

Characteristics of Sample Members, by Latent Class Assignment at Baseline

Characteristic	Class 1[a]	Class 2[b]	Class 3[c]	Full Sample
Age categories (%)				
18 years old	74.4	74.5	65.7	71.4
19 years old	22.1	14.7	22.2	19.4
20-24 years old	3.5	10.7	12.2	9.2
Gender (%)				
Male	67.0	37.6	55.7	52.0
Female	33.0	62.4	44.3	48.0
Race/ethnicity (%)				
Hispanic	5.2	6.7	5.4	5.8
White, non-Hispanic	41.8	55.7	53.6	51.1
Black, non-Hispanic	48.9	32.7	32.2	37.1
Other, non-Hispanic	4.1	4.9	8.7	6.0
Ever employed (%)	28.6	49.7	79.1	54.1
Employed at baseline (%)	10.4	18.0	27.6	19.2
Educational attainment and school enrollment (%)				
No high school diploma or GED certificate, not enrolled in school	26.8	14.1	13.2	17.3
No high school diploma or GED certificate, enrolled in school	39.2	47.9	32.1	40.0
High school diploma or GED certificate, not enrolled in postsecondary school	23.8	24.4	38.2	29.1
High school diploma or GED certificate, enrolled in postsecondary school	10.2	13.6	16.5	13.7
Ever repeated a grade or been held back a grade (%)	70.3	40.5	24.8	43.3
Ever been suspended from school (%)	91.0	66.0	87.8	80.5
Ever been in special education (%)	30.5	22.8	24.7	25.6
Contact with biological mother (%)				
Every day	70.6	33.3	31.7	43.1
At least once a week but not every day	20.4	14.9	14.8	16.4
At least once a month but not every week	2.2	8.3	11.5	7.7
Less than once a month	1.6	11.1	10.0	8.1
Never	5.2	32.3	32.0	24.7
Contact with biological father (%)				
Every day	24.5	13.3	13.1	16.4
At least once a week but not every day	17.7	13.3	9.2	13.1
At least once a month but not every week	6.0	8.5	8.3	7.7
Less than once a month	9.3	12.5	8.7	10.3
Never	42.5	52.3	60.7	52.5

(continued)

Table 9.4 (continued)

Characteristic	Class 1[a]	Class 2[b]	Class 3[c]	Full Sample
Had contact with any other relatives at least once per month (%)	94.6	85.3	87.0	88.4
Ever arrested (%)	100.0	5.1	100.0	64.4
Received psychological or emotional counseling in past year (%)	56.1	52.2	59.1	55.7
Attended substance abuse treatment program in past year (%)	44.5	15.2	37.6	31.1
State custody history				
Ever in state custody because of (%)				
Neglect, abuse, or unruly adjudication[d] (foster care)	35.8	79.5	61.8	61.3
Delinquency (juvenile justice)	76.0	28.4	58.0	51.9
Age in years at first custody entry (%)				
0-5	2.2	6.9	9.4	6.5
6-10	2.8	8.7	6.6	6.3
11-14	17.7	21.1	29.8	23.2
15-16	32.9	31.5	32.6	32.3
17-18	44.5	31.7	21.7	31.7
Age in years at final custody exit (%)				
16 or under	2.5	5.7	5.7	4.8
17	27.8	29.0	25.8	27.6
18 or over	36.8	40.0	40.7	39.4
Still in custody at baseline	32.9	25.2	27.8	28.3
Number of different custody placements (%)				
1 placement	44.9	37.4	24.0	34.8
2-5 placements	48.3	51.3	49.3	49.8
6-10 placements	4.8	7.2	16.5	9.8
More than 10 placements	2.0	4.1	10.1	5.6
Sample size	367	495	460	1,322

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation Baseline Information Form.

NOTES: The following variables were used to conduct latent class analysis: number of custody placements, ever employed, contact with mother or father at least once per week, ever repeated a grade or been held back, ever arrested, received psychological or emotional counseling or attended drug or alcohol abuse treatment in the past year. These variables were all created using information collected at baseline.

GED = General Educational Development.

[a]Class 1 represents the "Hindered but connected to family" latent class.

[b]Class 2 represents the "Maltreated but avoiding trouble" latent class.

[c]Class 3 represents the "Long-term system-involved but engaged" latent class.

[d]An unruly adjudication occurs because children are determined to have behavioral problems serious enough that their health and safety are at risk or because they have committed an offense, such as truancy, that is applicable only to minors.

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Table 9.5

One-Year Impacts on Primary Outcomes, by Latent Class Assignment at Baseline

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value	Difference Between Subgroup Impacts[a]
Hindered but connected to family						
Education (%)						
Has high school diploma	44.3	41.4	2.9	0.06	0.597	
Has GED certificate	15.8	17.2	-1.5	-0.04	0.728	
Participated in vocational training	11.5	6.4	5.1	0.23	0.160	
Employment and earnings ($)						
Earnings from formal work[b]	3,642	3,285	357	0.07	0.560	
Housing stability and economic well-being						
Score on housing instability scale[c]	1.0	1.0	-0.1	-0.06	0.608	
Score on economic hardship scale[c]	1.4	1.5	-0.1	-0.09	0.457	
Social support						
Score on social support scale[c]	4.4	4.1	0.3	0.08	0.487	
Very close to an adult[d] (%)	92.4	91.8	0.6	0.02	0.870	
Health and safety						
Score on mental health problems scale[c]	10.4	9.6	0.8	0.08	0.512	
Substance use						
Days of binge drinking in the past month	0.7	1.3	-0.6	-0.14	0.143	††
Used illegal drugs[e] (%)	36.0	38.3	-2.3	-0.05	0.711	
Used a condom during last sexual encounter (%)					0.996	
Yes	53.1	52.8	0.3	0.01		
No	33.7	33.6	0.0	0.00		
Not sexually active	13.3	13.6	-0.4	-0.01		
Was robbed or assaulted[f] (%)	27.5	21.0	6.4	0.15	0.248	
Partner violence (%)					0.782	
In a violent relationship[g]	18.0	21.2	-3.2	-0.08		
In a nonviolent relationship	36.5	33.5	3.0	0.06		
Not in a relationship	45.5	45.3	0.2	0.00		
Criminal involvement						
Score on criminal behavior scale[c]	0.8	0.8	0.0	-0.01	0.934	
Spent at least one night in jail or prison (%)	34.0	34.2	-0.2	0.00	0.977	
Sample size (total = 306)	185	121				

(continued)

Table 9.5 (continued)

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Effect Size	P-Value	Difference Between Subgroup Impacts[a]
Maltreated but avoiding trouble						
Education (%)						
Has high school diploma	63.3	60.2	3.1	0.06	0.499	
Has GED certificate	12.4	13.6	-1.2	-0.04	0.733	
Participated in vocational training	10.2	11.1	-0.9	-0.03	0.780	
Employment and earnings ($)						
Earnings from formal work[b]	3,922	3,491	431	0.09	0.380	
Housing stability and economic well-being						
Score on housing instability scale[c]	0.9	1.0	-0.1	-0.11	0.269	
Score on economic hardship scale[c]	1.2	1.3	-0.1	-0.06	0.522	
Social support						
Score on social support scale[c]	4.6	4.5	0.1	0.02	0.867	
Very close to an adult[d] (%)	91.9	92.7	-0.8	-0.03	0.772	
Health and safety						
Score on mental health problems scale[c]	9.8	11.9	-2.1 *	-0.18	0.060	
Substance use						
Days of binge drinking in the past month	0.3	1.0	-0.7 **	-0.18	0.014	††
Used illegal drugs[e] (%)	25.7	22.3	3.4	0.08	0.456	
Used a condom during last sexual encounter (%)					0.596	
Yes	50.9	45.6	5.4	0.11		
No	34.3	37.8	-3.4	-0.07		
Not sexually active	14.7	16.7	-1.9	-0.05		
Was robbed or assaulted[f] (%)	21.3	19.0	2.3	0.06	0.584	
Partner violence (%)					0.291	
In a violent relationship[g]	12.1	17.0	-4.9	-0.13		
In a nonviolent relationship	40.2	41.0	-0.9	-0.02		
Not in a relationship	47.7	41.9	5.8	0.12		
Criminal involvement						
Score on criminal behavior scale[c]	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.19	0.108	
Spent at least one night in jail or prison (%)	11.1	13.3	-2.3	-0.07	0.515	
Sample size (total = 427)	260	167				

(continued)

Table 9.5 (continued)

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)		Effect Size	P-Value	Difference Between Subgroup Impacts[a]
Long-term system-involved but engaged							
Education (%)							
Has high school diploma	55.6	53.9	1.7		0.03	0.726	
Has GED certificate	20.1	21.0	-0.9		-0.02	0.840	
Participated in vocational training	13.7	8.8	4.8		0.16	0.160	
Employment and earnings ($)							
Earnings from formal work[b] ($)	4,557	3,838	719		0.13	0.187	
Housing stability and economic well-being							
Score on housing instability scale[c]	1.1	1.4	-0.3	**	-0.23	0.020	
Score on economic hardship scale[c]	1.3	1.6	-0.3	*	-0.19	0.061	
Social support							
Score on social support scale[c]	4.1	4.0	0.2		0.05	0.609	
Very close to an adult[d] (%)	92.0	89.2	2.8		0.09	0.360	
Health and safety							
Score on mental health problems scale[c]	9.3	11.5	-2.2	**	-0.21	0.041	
Substance use							
Days of binge drinking in the past month	1.1	0.7	0.5		0.20	0.140	††
Used illegal drugs[e] (%)	36.4	36.8	-0.4		-0.01	0.931	
Used a condom during last sexual encounter (%)						0.111	
Yes	45.3	45.2	0.1		0.00		
No	41.6	48.1	-6.5		-0.13		
Not sexually active	13.1	6.7	6.4		0.26		
Was robbed or assaulted[f] (%)	26.1	31.2	-5.1		-0.11	0.287	
Partner violence (%)				**		0.026	
In a violent relationship[g]	15.4	27.0	-11.6		-0.26		
In a nonviolent relationship	38.9	33.0	6.0		0.13		
Not in a relationship	45.6	40.0	5.6		0.11		
Criminal involvement							
Score on criminal behavior scale[c]	0.8	0.7	0.1		0.06	0.589	
Spent at least one night in jail or prison (%)	29.5	29.3	0.3		0.01	0.958	
Sample size (total = 381)	214	167					

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey.

(continued)

Table 9.5 (continued)

NOTES: Program impacts were calculated separately for each subgroup, using an ordinary least squares model and adjusting for pre-random assignment characteristics. Impact estimates were then examined for statistically significant differences across subgroups.

The effect size is calculated by dividing the impact of the program (difference between program and control groups) by the observed variation for that outcome within the control group (the control group standard deviation).

Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

GED = General Educational Development.

[a]When comparing impacts between two subgroups, an H-statistic is generated. The H-statistic is used to assess whether the difference in impacts between the subgroups is statistically significant. Statistically significant differences across subgroups are indicated as: ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.

[b]This self-reported measure includes only earnings from formal employment and does not include overtime pay, tips, commissions, bonuses, or other types of pay, nor does it include earnings from informal work. For the purposes of this measure, formal employment is defined as ongoing employment with a particular employer, such as working at a restaurant or supermarket. Informal work is defined as independent work for several people, with no specific supervisor, such as babysitting and mowing lawns.

[c]See Appendix B for definitions of the scales used in this report.

[d]The "very close to an adult" measure indicates whether sample members reported being very close to a biological mother, a biological father, a stepmother, a stepfather, a grandparent, an adult sibling, or a caring adult outside of their family.

[e]This measure is based on sample members' response to three questions, asking about their use of marijuana, "other illegal drugs," or prescription drugs without the permission of a doctor.

[f]"Assaulted" is defined as attacked, beaten, or sexually victimized.

[g]A "violent relationship" is defined as one in which either partner has ever hit, kicked, shoved, or thrown something potentially harmful at the other, or forced the other to have unwanted sexual relations.

Conclusion

The full sample analysis, presented in the earlier chapters of this report, indicated that the Transitional Living program improved a number of outcomes in some key domains. This chapter examines whether those impacts were concentrated among particular groups of youth. That is, was the Transitional Living program more effective in helping some youth than others? The results provide almost no evidence of variation in impacts across different subgroups of youth defined by history of juvenile justice custody, by geographic setting, by receipt of EFC Services at baseline, or by latent class assignment. This finding suggests that the Transitional Living program was equally effective in helping a wide variety of youth.

Chapter 10

Discussion and Policy Implications

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation is one of the largest and most rigorous evaluations of services in the United States for young people who were formerly in the foster care or juvenile justice system. The findings presented in this report on the one-year impacts of the Transitional Living program have important implications for future policymaking and research. This chapter synthesizes those findings and situates them with respect to other studies of programs that have been designed to help similar populations of youth. It then assesses the generalizability of the findings to other contexts and to the broader population of young adults with histories of state custody. The policy and research implications of those findings are then considered. The chapter concludes by outlining the next steps for the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation.

The Impacts of the Transitional Living Program

The results presented in this report show that the Transitional Living program improved several outcomes for youth across a number of domains. The program boosted earnings, increased housing stability and economic well-being, and improved mental health. However, it did not increase educational attainment, improve social support, or reduce criminal behaviors among young people. While the individual significant impacts were not large, the breadth of those impacts across several domains points to the effectiveness of the Transitional Living program.

The youth in the study exhibited a wide variety of experiences, needs, and circumstances at baseline, and the program was highly individualized. This meant that the services provided by the program covered a variety of domains, and that the need for assistance in any particular domain did not apply to all youth in the program. For example, some youth already had stable housing and did not need or receive extensive assistance in that area; instead they focused on other goals with their TL Specialists. The Transitional Living program would not be expected to improve housing stability for those youth. The individualized, wide-ranging nature of the program services may explain why the impacts were not large but were present across a variety of domains.

The impacts of the Transitional Living program on housing stability and economic well-being are particularly notable given that the program does not directly provide housing or substantial financial support. Only 38 percent of program group youth received financial support to pay for housing or other expenses, and those who did receive support were provided with $384, on average. While this assistance likely did help some youth at critical points, such

as when they needed to pay a security deposit for an apartment or when they found themselves without enough money to pay for food, it is likely that the impacts on housing stability and economic well-being were also achieved more indirectly. For example, assistance from TL Specialists may have provided youth with the skills needed to budget and set aside money to pay for rent, groceries, and other basic needs. Similarly, TL Specialists may have used their training in evidence-based cognitive behavioral interventions to help youth avoid "burning bridges" with adults who provided them with housing and other concrete support. The positive impact of the program on earnings may also have helped to increase housing stability and economic well-being. It may be that by improving young people's skills and ability to earn more money, the Transitional Living program will lead to more lasting impacts on housing and economic well-being than might be the case if it provided housing directly to youth.

The significant impacts produced by the Transitional Living program are particularly noteworthy given how few other programs have been shown to improve outcomes among former foster care and juvenile justice youth. Four other programs for youth aging out of foster care have undergone random assignment evaluations as part of the Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs.[1] In three of those programs, no significant impacts were observed on any key outcomes. One of the three programs, which was designed to provide 30 hours of classroom-based life skills training, was like the Transitional Living program in its intent to influence a wide range of outcomes for youth.[2] The other two programs, one providing tutoring/mentoring aimed at bringing youth up to grade level in math and reading,[3] and one providing employment services intended to help youth obtain and maintain employment,[4] focused on a narrower range of outcomes.

The fourth program in the Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs is the only other program shown to have any significant impacts among former foster youth in an experimental evaluation. That program, the Massachusetts Adolescent Outreach program, was similar to the Transitional Living program in providing intensive case management to youth who were making the transition to independent adulthood, albeit somewhat less intensive help than that provided by the Transitional Living program.[5] Adolescent Outreach, like the Transitional Living program, was also an individualized program intended to improve a wide range of youth outcomes. The main impact of Adolescent Outreach was on college enrollment: the program led to an increase in college enrollment of 18 percentage points. However, the researchers conclud-

[1]OPRE (n.d.).
[2]Courtney et al. (2008b).
[3]Courtney et al. (2008a).
[4]Courtney, Zinn, Koralek, and Bess (2011).
[5]Courtney, Zinn, Johnson, and Malm (2011).

ed that this positive impact was largely mediated by the program's ability to help youth continue to receive Massachusetts' foster care services, which at the time were conditioned on youth being enrolled in college. Relative to the evidence on these four other programs, the findings presented in this report, which demonstrate a breadth of significant impacts produced by the Transitional Living program, are quite positive.

Rigorous evaluations have been more common with respect to programs for juvenile justice youth, and there is evidence that other programs have produced significant impacts. The effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy programs in particular is supported by a fairly strong research base, which has found that these programs are effective in reducing problem behaviors like criminal recidivism and substance abuse.[6] However, previous studies have placed little emphasis on measuring impacts on other outcomes that are important to all vulnerable youth, such as employment, education, and housing.

In the end, the findings presented in this report indicate that the Transitional Living program was successful in significantly improving some key outcomes for young adults with histories of foster care and juvenile justice custody. That said, young people with this history, including those who receive Transitional Living services, continue to face many challenges and to experience poor outcomes relative to their peers. Still, the results of this study are encouraging and they provide evidence that interventions exist that can effectively lessen some of the difficulties that many of these young people face.

The Generalizability of the Findings Presented in This Report

The findings presented in this report provide evidence about the effectiveness of the Transitional Living program in the particular context of Tennessee, which is unusual in a number of respects. One contextual factor that may be important is the availability of other services. Community-based services for the foster care and juvenile justice populations were not extensively available in Tennessee during the evaluation. In addition, the state's extended foster care services were not generous or commonly accessed relative to some other states.[7] It is possible that the impacts of Transitional Living would be different if the program were implemented in another state that provides more extensive extended foster care services. In such a setting, impacts might be smaller, as the control group would have access to more services. On the other hand, with more extensive extended foster care services available, it is possible that the Transitional Living program could focus less on housing and economic

[6]See, for example, Lipsey, Landenberger, and Wilson (2007) and Botvin, Baker, Filazzola, and Botvin (1990).

[7]"Extended foster care" is care that has been extended to youth beyond age 18.

security and more on other areas, such as education and employment. If so, impacts in those other outcome domains might be larger than those that were found in this study. Indeed, the impact of the Massachusetts Adolescent Outreach program on college enrollment,[8] in a context of routine provision of extended foster care for youth who enroll in college, provides some grounds for optimism regarding the potential impact of the Transitional Living program on college enrollment in such a context.

Another specific feature of the Tennessee context is that foster care and juvenile justice custody are the responsibilities of a single agency. This situation may mean that, given funding sources and recruitment avenues, the Transitional Living program would serve a different set of youth — most likely more exclusively from the foster care system — in other states in which juvenile justice custody is the responsibility of a separate agency. However, given that the findings presented in this report provide little evidence of a difference in impacts by history of juvenile justice custody, the impacts of the Transitional Living program may be no different in a setting in which juvenile justice youth are less likely to be recruited into the program.

While this study only provides evidence about the effectiveness of the Transitional Living program in the particular context of Tennessee, it does also speak to the program's effectiveness across a wide range of contexts *within* Tennessee. Contextual factors such as economic characteristics and the availability of resources and services vary substantially across the different regions and municipalities of Tennessee.[9] Population density appeared to correlate with many of those factors. Compared with the more rural areas of the state, urban areas were characterized by a greater availability of social services, educational programs, and transportation, as well as more crime and gang activity. Despite such differences, there is very little evidence that the impacts of the Transitional Living program were different in urban areas compared with nonurban areas. This finding provides some evidence that the impacts presented in this report may be applicable to other contexts in other states.[10]

In addition to local contextual factors, the selection of youth into the Transitional Living Evaluation also has implications regarding the generalizability of the findings presented in this report. Using lists provided by the Tennessee Department of Children's Services,[11] a large number of youth were identified as being potentially eligible for the study. Using those lists, Youth Villages staff were ultimately able to recruit only about 25 percent of those youths into

[8]Courtney, Zinn, Johnson, and Malm (2011).

[9]Manno, Jacobs, Alson, and Skemer (2014).

[10]While Youth Villages does operate the Transitional Living program in other states that constitute other contexts, the impacts of those programs have not been rigorously evaluated. Therefore, useful information is not available about whether the impacts of Transitional Living are similar in those contexts.

[11]In addition, a small number of youth were identified by word of mouth or other methods.

the study. Many of the young people on the lists who did not ultimately enter the evaluation could not be reached by Youth Villages' assessment staff, stopped responding to contacts, had moved out of state, or refused services because they did not believe they required help or because they were uninterested. This outcome is not surprising given that the youth on the lists were not actively referred to Youth Villages and were not known to have an interest in receiving services. Contact information may also have been out of date for many. A smaller number of young people with serious mental health issues or substance abuse problems, a history of serious violence, and those with developmental delays were excluded from participation in the study based on program eligibility criteria. It is likely that those youths would experience relatively poor outcomes compared with youths exiting state care who do not exhibit such risk factors.

Relative to youth who could not be contacted, were determined to be a poor fit for the Transitional Living program based on serious mental health issues or histories of violence, or opted not to participate in the program, it is likely that the youth recruited into the study were relatively stable, motivated, or higher-functioning. This supposition suggests that the impact findings presented in this report may not be generalizable to all young adults with histories of foster care or juvenile justice custody. Nevertheless, the characteristics of the young people who did participate in the evaluation and the outcomes experienced by the control group suggest that the Transitional Living program is serving a population with significant need for intensive support during the transition to adulthood.

It is not clear how the results would differ if the program served all youth who are making the transition to adulthood from the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Impacts might be larger, as youth with greater need and more room for change would be served. On the other hand, impacts might be smaller, as Youth Villages staff might have a more difficult time engaging relatively less motivated or more troubled youth.

Policy and Research Implications

The results of this study provide evidence that Transitional Living is effective at improving multiple important outcomes for young people who are making the transition to independent living from the foster care and juvenile justice systems in Tennessee. Federal funds that are available through the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and the option for states to claim federal Title IV-E foster care funding through a youth's twenty-first birthday make it possible for states to provide services like Transitional Living to youth who are currently or were formerly in foster care. The positive impacts of the Transitional Living program on the lives of these youths provide some justification for increasing child welfare agencies' investments in the Transitional Living program.

While many youth who are involved with the juvenile justice system are also eligible for services through the federal Title IV-E Foster Care Program, others are not. [12] In general, it is not clear that youth in the juvenile justice system have as much access as do youth in foster care to programs that focus broadly on improving their lives; most services for youth who are involved with the juvenile justice system focus on reducing their criminal behavior and preventing future incarceration. While the sources of funding to provide programs like Transitional Living to youth who are involved with the juvenile justice system are less clear, the evaluation findings presented here suggest that the benefits for these youth are no less than for their peers in foster care. However, the program did not reduce criminal behavior, which is a key outcome for juvenile justice youth. This finding suggests that, to be more attractive to juvenile justice authorities, Transitional Living services may need to focus more on criminal behaviors or better incorporate other services, such as certain cognitive behavioral therapies, that are designed to affect criminal behaviors.

While the evaluation of the Transitional Living program provides strong evidence of its broad effectiveness, the distinct characteristics of the population it served and the context in which it was evaluated call for further study. Would the program be more or less effective with populations that are not currently served because of eligibility restrictions? What would program impacts look like in states and localities with service contexts that differ from Tennessee's? Two aspects of the service context seem particularly relevant. First, to what extent could the availability of other case management services that are focused on assisting youth with the transition to adulthood affect the impacts achieved by the Transitional Living program? For example, many child welfare agencies have moved in the direction of creating specialized caseworkers who work exclusively with adolescents, sometimes focusing specifically on youth who remain in care after their eighteenth birthdays, while others do not provide any kind of specialized casework for teens or young adults. Some juvenile justice systems are making much bigger investments than others in programs of intensive supervision that are specifically intended to support youths' reentry into the community. Second, how might extending foster care to the age of 21, by providing basic economic support and access to other services, influence the impacts of the Transitional Living program? Similarly, for youth involved in the juvenile justice system who are not eligible for extended foster care, how would combining Transitional Living services with more substantial financial supports (for example, housing assistance) influence program impacts? These important questions can only

[12]The Social Security Act precludes youth held in secure detention facilities from accessing Title IV-E funds. However, youth who are in other types of state custody placements, including those living with a foster family or in a group home, can access such funding.

be answered by rigorously evaluating the impact of the Transitional Living program on other populations and in other contexts.

Next Steps for the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

The positive results that are presented in this report set the stage for additional analysis and evaluation of the Transitional Living program. MDRC will conduct a benefit-cost analysis that will provide additional information about the monetary benefits, to both society and program participants, of these impacts, relative to the costs of the program. In addition, the research team will assess longer-term impacts of the Transitional Living program based on additional data covering two years after study enrollment for each individual. This analysis is important. Many program group youths were actively participating in the program throughout much of the one-year follow-up period, and additional data will provide information about whether the impacts of Transitional Living are sustained when youth have little direct contact with the program. In addition, one year after study enrollment, most youth in the study sample were still only 19 or 20 years old, and it is possible that the Transitional Living program's impacts will change or expand over time as youth pursue postsecondary education, employment, and other aspects of adulthood. Additional follow-up data will include administrative data on postsecondary enrollment, employment and earnings, and criminal justice outcomes. In 2016, MDRC will publish a report presenting the results of both the benefit-cost analysis and the analysis of the two-year impacts of the Transitional Living program. Finally, MDRC is exploring the possibility of conducting additional research on the Transitional Living program in other contexts.

Appendix A

Survey Response Bias Analysis

This appendix assesses the reliability of the impact results captured by the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation 12-Month Survey. It also examines whether the impacts for the survey respondents can be generalized to the impacts for the full research sample. First, the response rates for the research sample and for the program and control groups are described. Next, the differences between survey respondents and nonrespondents are examined. The program and control groups among the survey respondents are then compared. Finally, the respondent sample is compared with the full research sample on outcomes based on administrative data.

This appendix concludes, with some caution, that the 12-month survey is reliable and that the results for the survey respondent sample can be generalized to the research sample. There are some significant differences between survey respondents and nonrespondents. However, there are very few research group differences in baseline characteristics among survey respondents. Where research group differences among survey respondents do exist, they reflect differences found among the full research sample; those differences likely occurred by chance during the random assignment process. Additionally, no meaningful differences were observed between the respondent sample and the full research sample for impact estimates based on administrative data. Overall, the results suggest that it is unlikely that the differences between respondents and nonrespondents affect the impact estimates.

Survey Response Rates

The research sample includes 1,322 sample members who were randomly assigned from October 2010 through October 2012. Of those 1,322 individuals, a total of 1,114 sample members, or 84.3 percent of the research sample, were interviewed; they are referred to as "survey respondents," or the *respondent sample*. Of the 1,114 survey respondents, 659 were from the program group (83.6 percent of all program group members) and 455 were from the control group (85.2 percent of all control group members). Response rates are not significantly different between the program and control groups.

Of the 208 individuals (15.7 percent of the research sample) who were not interviewed — referred to as "nonrespondents," or the *nonrespondent sample* — 90 (43 percent) could not be located for the interview. Another 77 (37 percent) were unavailable to complete the interview because they missed appointments or calls. The remaining 41 nonrespondents (20 percent of the nonrespondent sample) refused to participate, were deceased, or were not interviewed for other reasons.

Whenever the response rate is lower than 100 percent, as it is in this case, "nonresponse bias" may occur. That is, differences may exist between the respondent sample and the full research sample owing to differences between sample members who were interviewed and

those who were not. Furthermore, the impact estimates may be biased if the background characteristics differ between program group members and control group members in the respondent sample.

Comparisons Between Respondents and Nonrespondents Within the Research Sample

This section examines whether there are any systematic differences between those who were interviewed and those who were not. Appendix Table A.1 presents selected baseline characteristics of respondents and nonrespondents. The results show some statistically significant differences between the two groups: respondents were more likely to be female, had more regular contact with their biological mothers and relatives other than their biological parents at baseline, and were less likely to have attended substance abuse treatment in the year before random assignment was conducted. In addition, survey respondents exited state custody for the final time at an earlier age than did nonrespondents. However, while respondents and nonrespondents differ in several ways, a number of those differences are relatively small. Additionally, as discussed in the next section, the respondent sample mirrors the full research sample in spite of those differences.

Comparisons Between the Research Groups in the Survey Respondent Sample

Although random assignment research designs minimize potential bias, it is possible that the characteristics of the research groups will differ because of the selective nature of the survey response process. If that is true, the reliability of impact estimates for the respondent sample could be affected.

Appendix Table A.2 shows selected baseline characteristics of the survey respondents by research group. In general, differences between the program and control groups are relatively small and are not statistically significant. Only three significant differences, measured by chi-square tests, were found between research groups: the groups differed in terms of frequency of contact with their biological mothers, recent contact with relatives other than their biological parents, and age at first entry into state custody. All of these differences were also observed among the full research sample, and therefore likely reflect random chance in the random assignment process rather than a systematic survey response bias.

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Table A.1

Baseline Characteristics of Survey Respondents and Nonrespondents

Characteristic (%)	Respondent Group	Nonrespondent Group	Total	Sig.
Age categories				
18 years old	71.8	69.2	71.4	
19 years old	18.7	23.1	19.4	
20-24 years old	9.5	7.7	9.2	
Gender				***
Male	50.0	63.0	52.0	
Female	50.0	37.0	48.0	
Race/ethnicity				
Hispanic	5.7	6.8	5.8	
White, non-Hispanic	50.9	51.9	51.1	
Black, non-Hispanic	37.7	33.5	37.1	
Other, non-Hispanic	5.7	7.8	6.0	
Ever employed	54.2	53.4	54.1	
Employed at baseline	18.7	22.1	19.2	
Educational attainment and school enrollment				
No high school diploma or GED certificate, not enrolled in school	17.5	15.9	17.3	
No high school diploma or GED certificate, enrolled in school	40.0	40.1	40.0	
High school diploma or GED certificate, not enrolled in postsecondary school	28.4	32.4	29.1	
High school diploma or GED certificate, enrolled in postsecondary school	14.1	11.6	13.7	
Ever repeated a grade or been held back a grade	43.4	42.8	43.3	
Ever been suspended from school	80.4	81.3	80.5	
Ever been in special education	26.0	23.6	25.6	
Contact with biological mother				*
Every day	43.4	41.3	43.1	
At least once a week but not every day	17.4	11.1	16.4	
At least once a month but not every week	7.4	9.6	7.7	
Less than once a month	8.1	8.2	8.1	
Never	23.7	29.8	24.7	
Contact with biological father				
Every day	16.1	17.9	16.4	
At least once a week but not every day	13.6	10.6	13.1	
At least once a month but not every week	8.4	4.3	7.7	
Less than once a month	10.2	10.6	10.3	
Never	51.8	56.5	52.5	

(continued)

Table A.1 (continued)

Characteristic (%)	Respondent Group	Nonrespondent Group	Total	Sig.
Had contact with any other relatives at least once per month	89.2	84.1	88.4	**
Ever arrested	63.6	69.2	64.4	
Received psychological or emotional counseling in past year	56.2	53.4	55.7	
Attended substance use treatment program in past year	29.7	38.5	31.1	**
State custody history				
Ever in state custody because of				
Neglect, abuse, or unruly adjudication[a] (foster care)	62.0	57.6	61.3	
Delinquency (juvenile justice)	51.3	55.1	51.9	
Age in years at first custody entry				
0-5	6.3	7.2	6.5	
6-10	6.7	4.3	6.3	
11-14	23.3	22.7	23.2	
15-16	33.2	27.1	32.3	
17-18	30.4	38.6	31.7	
Age in years at final custody exit				**
16 or under	5.4	1.5	4.8	
17	27.7	26.8	27.6	
18 or over	39.8	36.9	39.4	
Still in custody at baseline	27.1	34.8	28.3	
Number of different custody placements				
1 placement	34.7	35.3	34.8	
2-5 placements	49.7	50.2	49.8	
6-10 placements	10.2	7.7	9.8	
More than 10 placements	5.4	6.8	5.6	
Sample size	1,114	208	1,322	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation Baseline Information Form.

NOTES: In order to assess differences in characteristics across research groups, chi-square tests were used for categorical variables, and two-tailed t-tests were used for continuous variables. Statistical significance levels (Sig.) are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

GED = General Educational Development.

[a]An unruly adjudication occurs because children are determined to have behavioral problems serious enough that their health and safety are at risk or because they have committed an offense, such as truancy, that is applicable only to minors.

The Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation

Table A.2

Baseline Characteristics of Survey Respondents, by Research Group

Characteristic (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Full Sample	Sig.
Age categories				
18 years old	73.0	70.1	71.8	
19 years old	17.3	20.7	18.7	
20-24 years old	9.7	9.2	9.5	
Gender				
Male	50.8	48.8	50.0	
Female	49.2	51.2	50.0	
Race/ethnicity				
Hispanic	5.0	6.6	5.7	
White, non-Hispanic	51.3	50.4	50.9	
Black, non-Hispanic	38.5	36.6	37.7	
Other, non-Hispanic	5.2	6.4	5.7	
Ever employed	52.5	56.7	54.2	
Employed at baseline	18.8	18.5	18.7	
Educational attainment and school enrollment				
No high school diploma or GED certificate, not enrolled in school	16.3	19.3	17.5	
No high school diploma or GED certificate, enrolled in school	38.8	41.7	40.0	
High school diploma or GED certificate, not enrolled in postsecondary school	29.7	26.6	28.4	
High school diploma or GED certificate, enrolled in postsecondary school	15.2	12.4	14.1	
Ever repeated a grade or been held back a grade	43.2	43.6	43.4	
Ever been suspended from school	79.5	81.8	80.4	
Ever been in special education	27.4	24.1	26.0	
Contact with biological mother				**
Every day	41.3	46.6	43.4	
At least once a week but not every day	17.0	18.0	17.4	
At least once a month but not every week	6.5	8.6	7.4	
Less than once a month	9.7	5.7	8.1	
Never	25.5	21.1	23.7	
Contact with biological father				
Every day	14.7	18.0	16.1	
At least once a week but not every day	13.8	13.2	13.6	
At least once a month but not every week	8.8	7.7	8.4	
Less than once a month	11.2	8.8	10.2	
Never	51.4	52.3	51.8	

(continued)

Table A.2 (continued)

Characteristic (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Full Sample	Sig.
Had contact with any other relatives at least once per month	90.6	87.3	89.2	*
Ever arrested	63.1	64.2	63.6	
Received psychological or emotional counseling in past year	55.8	56.6	56.2	
Attended substance use treatment program in past year	29.4	30.2	29.7	
State custody history				
Ever in state custody because of				
Neglect, abuse, or unruly adjudication[a] (foster care)	62.6	61.0	62.0	
Delinquency (juvenile justice)	50.8	51.9	51.3	
Age in years at first custody entry				***
0-5	7.5	4.7	6.3	
6-10	7.4	5.8	6.7	
11-14	26.0	19.3	23.3	
15-16	31.1	36.4	33.2	
17-18	28.0	33.9	30.4	
Age in years at final custody exit				
16 or under	4.7	6.4	5.4	
17	27.3	28.3	27.7	
18 or over	39.1	40.9	39.8	
Still in custody at baseline	28.9	24.4	27.1	
Number of different custody placements				
1 placement	33.1	36.9	34.7	
2-5 placements	50.2	49.1	49.7	
6-10 placements	10.5	9.7	10.2	
More than 10 placements	6.2	4.3	5.4	
Sample size	659	455	1,114	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation Baseline Information Form.

NOTES: In order to assess differences in characteristics across research groups, chi-square tests were used for categorical variables, and two-tailed t-tests were used for continuous variables. Statistical significance levels (Sig.) are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

GED = General Educational Development.

[a]An unruly adjudication occurs because children are determined to have behavioral problems serious enough that their health and safety are at risk or because they have committed an offense, such as truancy, that is applicable only to minors.

Comparisons Between the Respondent Sample and the Research Sample

This section briefly discusses whether the survey respondents' impacts can be generalized to the full research sample. Consistency of impact findings between the survey respondent sample and the full research sample is considered to be the best result, suggesting that impacts on measures calculated from survey responses can be generalized to the full research sample. Administrative outcomes from two different sources were used in the impact analysis, including (1) data on receipt of Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care Services, formerly known as Post-Custody Services, provided by the Tennessee Department of Children's Services, and (2) data on postsecondary enrollment, provided by the National Student Clearinghouse. Results for those outcomes did not differ between the respondent sample and the full research sample (results not shown in table).

Appendix B

Definitions of the Scales Used in This Report

Criminal behavior scale. The criminal behavior scale is the sum of responses to 10 survey questions that ask whether a sample member was involved in a gang fight, carried a handgun, purposely damaged or destroyed property, stole something worth less than $50, stole something worth $50 or more, committed other property crimes, attacked someone, sold or helped sell illegal drugs, received cash for having sexual relations, or received any service or material good in trade for having sexual relations. The scale ranges from 0 to 10.

Economic hardship scale. The economic hardship scale is the sum of responses to five survey questions that ask whether a sample member was unable to afford clothing or shoes, unable to pay a utility bill, had gas or electricity shut off because of the inability to pay, had phone service shut off because of the inability to pay, or put off paying a bill in order to have money for food. The scale ranges from 0 to 5.

Familial closeness scale. The familial closeness scale is based on responses to six survey questions that ask how close a sample member feels to particular family members, including his or her biological mother, biological father, stepmother, stepfather, closest grandparent, and closest adult sibling. Responses are given on an ordinal scale ("not at all close," "not very close," "somewhat close," and "very close"); "not applicable: no such person or person is deceased" was also an answer option. Responses of "not at all close" and "not applicable" were coded as 0, "not very close" as 1, "somewhat close" as 2, and "very close" as 3. A sum was then produced using these six values (that is, one value for each of the six questions). The scale ranges from 0 to 18.

Housing instability scale. The housing instability scale is the sum of responses to four survey questions that ask whether a sample member experienced homelessness, couch-surfed, was unable to pay rent, or lost housing because of an inability to pay rent. The scale ranges from 0 to 4.

Mental health problems scale. The mental health problems scale is based on responses to the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales).[1] For the purposes of this outcome measure, the three subscales (depression, anxiety, and stress) were collapsed into one "mental health problems" scale comprising 21 questions that ask how often a person has felt a particular way. Responses were given on an ordinal scale ("none of the time," "some of the time," "a good part of the time," and "most of the time"). Responses of "none of the time" were coded as 0, "some of the time" as 1, "a good part of the time" as 2, and "most of the time" as 3. A sum was then produced using these 21 values (that is, one value for each of the 21 questions). The scale ranges from 0 to 63.

[1] Antony et al. (1998).

Social support scale. The social support scale is a mean of responses to seven survey questions that ask about the number of people a sample member can count on for various types of support, including invitations to go out and do things, help with budgeting or money problems, advice about important subjects, help with transportation, listening to problems, granting small favors, and providing monetary loans in the event of an emergency. The scale ranges from 0 to 99.

References

Andrews, D. A., and James Bonta. 2010. "Rehabilitating Criminal Justice Policy and Practice." *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law* 16, 1: 39-55.

Antony, Martin, Peter J. Bieling, Brian J. Cox, Murray W. Enns, and Richard P. Swinson. 1998. "Psychometric Properties of the 42-Item and 21-Item Versions of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales in Clinical Groups and a Community Sample." *Psychological Assessment* 10: 176-181.

Aud, Susan, Angelina KewalRamani, and Lauren Frohlich. 2011. "America's Youth: Transitions to Adulthood." NCES 2012-026. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

Barbell, Kathy, and Madelyn Freundlich. 2001. "Foster Care Today." Washington, DC: Casey Family Programs.

Black, Pamela J., Michael Woodworth, Moreen Tremblay, and Tara Carpenter. 2012. "A Review of Trauma-Informed Treatment for Adolescents." *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne* 53, 3: 192-203.

Botvin, Gilbert J., Eli Baker, Anne D. Filazzola, and Elizabeth M. Botvin. 1990. "A Cognitive-Behavioral Approach to Substance Abuse Prevention: One-Year Follow-Up." *Addictive Behaviors* 15, 1: 47-63.

Brank, Eve, Jodi Lane, Susan Turner, Terry Fain, and Amber Sehgal. 2008. "An Experimental Juvenile Probation Program: Effects on Parent and Peer Relationships." *Crime & Delinquency* 54, 2: 193-224.

Bullis, Michael, Paul Yovanoff, Gina Mueller, and Emily Havel. 2002. "Life on the 'Outs': Examination of the Facility-to-Community Transition of Incarcerated Adolescents." *Exceptional Children* 69, 1: 7-22.

Caspi, Avshalom, Bradley E. Wright, Terrie E. Moffitt, and Phil A. Silva. 1998. "Early Failure in the Labor Market: Childhood and Adolescent Predictors of Unemployment in the Transition to Adulthood." *American Sociological Review* 63, 3: 424-451.

Chapin Hall Center for Children. 2012. "Predictors of Homelessness During the Transition from Foster Care to Adulthood." *Inside the Research.* Online document. Website: www.chapinhall.org.

Chassin, Laurie. 2008. "Juvenile Justice and Substance Use." *The Future of Children Journal* 18, 2: 165-178.

Child Trends. 2014. "Educational Attainment: Indicators on Children and Youth." Child Trends DataBank. Website: www.childtrends.org.

Chung, He Len, Michelle Little, and Laurence Steinberg. 2005. "The Transition to Adulthood for Adolescents in the Juvenile Justice System: A Developmental Perspective." Chapter 3 in D. Wayne Osgood, E. Michael Foster, Constance Flanagan, and Gretchen Ruth (eds.), *On Your Own Without a Net: The Transitions to Adulthood for Vulnerable Populations.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Clayton, Ashley. 2009. "Mentoring for Youth Involved in Juvenile Justice Programs: A Review of the Literature." Boston: Department of Youth Services Project Team, Commonwealth Corporation.

Committee on Adolescence. 2011. "Health Care for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System." *Pediatrics* 128, 6 (December 1): 1219-1235.
Website: http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/128/6/1219.full.html.

Courtney, Mark E. 2009. "The Difficult Transition to Adulthood for Foster Care Youth in the U.S.: Implications for the State as Corporate Parent." *Social Policy Report* 23, 1: 3-18.

Courtney, Mark E., and Amy Dworsky. 2006. "Early Outcomes for Young Adults Transitioning From Out-Of-Home Care in the U.S.A." *Child and Family Social Work* 11, 3: 209-219.

Courtney, Mark E., Amy Dworsky, Adam Brown, Colleen Cary, Kara Love, Vanessa Voorhies. 2011. *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 26*. Chicago: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

Courtney, Mark E., Amy Dworsky, Gretchen Ruth Cusick, Judy Havlicek, Alfred Perez, and Tom Keller. 2007. *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 21*. Chicago: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

Courtney, Mark E., Amy Dworsky, Gretchen Ruth, Tom Keller, Judy Havlicek, and Noel Bost. 2005. *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 19.* Chicago: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

Courtney, Mark E., Amy Dworsky, JoAnn S. Lee, and Melissa Raap. 2010. *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 23 and 24.* Chicago: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

Courtney, Mark E., and Darcy Hughes-Huering. 2005. "The Transition to Adulthood for Youth 'Aging Out' of the Foster Care System." In D. Wayne Osgood, E. Michael Foster, Constance Flanagan, and Gretchen R. Ruth (eds.), *On Your Own Without a Net: The Transition to Adulthood for Vulnerable Populations*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Courtney, Mark E., JoAnn Lee, and Alfred Perez. 2011. "Receipt of Help Acquiring Life Skills and Predictors of Help Receipt among Former Foster Youth." *Children and Youth Services Review* 33: 2442-2451.

Courtney, Mark E., Irving Piliavin, Andrew Grogan-Kaylor, and Ande Nesmith. 2001. "Foster Youth Transitions to Adulthood: A Longitudinal View of Youth Leaving Care." *Child Welfare* 80, 6: 685-717.

Courtney, Mark E., Irving Piliavin, Andrew Grogan-Kaylor, and Ande Nesmith. 1998. *Foster Youth Transitions to Adulthood: A Longitudinal View of Youth Leaving Care.* Madison, WI: Institute for Research on Poverty.

Courtney, Mark E., and Sherri Terao. 2002. "Classification of Independent Living Programs." Draft report submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Courtney, Mark E., Andrew Zinn, Heidi Johnson, and Karin E. Malm. 2011. *Evaluation of the Massachusetts Adolescent Outreach Program for Youths in Intensive Foster Care: Final Report*. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Courtney, Mark E., Andrew Zinn, Robin Koralek, and Roseana J. Bess. 2011. *Evaluation of the Independent Living – Employment Services Program, Kern County, California: Final Report.* Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Courtney, Mark E., Andrew Zinn, Erica H. Zielewski, Roseana J. Bess, and Karin E. Malm. 2008a. *Evaluation of the Early Start to Emancipation Preparation — Tutoring Program Los Angeles County, California: Final Report*. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Courtney, Mark E., Andrew Zinn, Erica H. Zielewski, Roseana J. Bess, and Karin E. Malm. 2008b. *Evaluation of the Life Skills Training Program Los Angeles County, California: Final Report*. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

DuBois, David L., Bruce E. Holloway, Jeffrey C. Valentine, and Harris Cooper. 2002. "Effectiveness of Mentoring Programs for Youth: A Meta-Analytical Review." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 30, 2: 157-197.

DuBois, David L., Nelson Portillo, Jean F. Rhodes, Naida Silverthorn, and Jeffrey C. Valentine. 2011. "How Effective Are Mentoring Programs for Youth? A Systematic Assessment of the Evidence." *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 12, 2: 57-91.

Dworsky, Amy, Keri-Nicole Dillman, M. Robin Dion, Brandon Coffee-Borden, and Miriam Rosenau. 2012. *Housing for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care: A Review of the Literature and Program Typology*. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research.

Dworsky, Amy, Laura Napolitano, and Mark E. Courtney. 2013. "Homelessness During the Transition From Foster Care to Adulthood." *American Journal of Public Health* 103, S2: 318-323.

Ford, Julian D., John Chapman, Daniel F. Connor, and Keith R. Cruise. 2012. "Complex Trauma and Aggression in Secure Juvenile Justice Settings." *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 39, 6: 694-724.

Gardner, Deseree. 2008. *Youth Aging Out of Foster Care: Identifying Strategies and Best Practices*. Washington, DC: National Association of Counties.

Gomez, Fernando. 2014. "A Guide to the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale." New South Wales: Inner West Sydney Medicare Local. Website: www.iwsml.org.au/images/mental_health/Frequently_Used/Outcome_Tools/Dass21.pdf.

Goode, Erica. 2011. "Many in the U.S. Are Arrested by Age 23, Study Finds." *The New York Times* (December 19), p. A16.

Greenwood, Peter W., and Susan Turner. 2011. "Establishing Effective Community-Based Care in Juvenile Justice." In Francine Sherman and Francine Jacobs (eds.), *Juvenile Justice: Advancing Research, Policy, and Practice*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.

Lane, Jodi, Susan Turner, Terry Fain, and Amber Sehgal. 2005. "Evaluating an Experimental Intensive Juvenile Probation Program: Supervision and Official Outcomes." *Crime & Delinquency* 51, 1: 26-52.

Lane, Jodi, Susan Turner, Terry Fain, and Amber Sehgal. 2007. "The Effects of an Experimental Intensive Juvenile Probation Program on Self-Reported Delinquency and Drug Use." *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 3: 201-219.

Leone, Peter, and Lois Weinberg. 2010. *Addressing the Unmet Educational Needs of Children and Youth in the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Systems*. Washington, DC: Center for Juvenile Justice System Reform.

Lipsey, Mark W., Nana A. Landenberger, and Sandra J. Wilson. 2007. "Effects of Cognitive-Behavioral Programs for Criminal Offenders." *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 6: 27.

Manno, Michelle, Erin Jacobs, Julianna Alson, and Melanie Skemer. 2014. *Moving into Adulthood: Implementation Findings from the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation.* New York: MDRC.

McCutcheon, Allen L. 1987. *Latent Class Analysis.* Series: Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences, Book 64.. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Montgomery, Paul, Charles Donkoh, and Kristen Underhill. 2006. "Independent Living Programs for Young People Leaving the Care System: The State of Evidence." *Children and Youth Services Review* 28, 12: 1435-1448.

National Alliance on Mental Illness—Virginia. 2011. "Fact Sheet: Youth with Mental Illness in the Criminal Justice System." Website: http://www.nami.org.

National Center for Education Statistics. n.d. "Enrollment," in "Postsecondary and Beyond." *Fast Facts*. Website: http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts.

National Resource Center for Youth Development. 2015. "State by State Facts." Online publication. Website: www.nrcyd.ou.edu/state-pages.

Nellis, Ashley, and Richard Hooks Wayman. 2009. *Back on Track: Supporting Youth Reentry from Out-of-Home Placement to the Community*. Washington, DC: Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Coalition, Youth Reentry Task Force.

Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE). n.d. "Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs (Chafee Independent Living Evaluation Project), 2001-2010." Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Pecora, Peter J., Ronald C. Kessler, Kirk O'Brien, Catherine Roller White, Jason Williams, Eva Hiripi, Diana English, James White, and Mary Anne Herrick. 2006. "Educational and Employment Outcomes of Adults Formerly Placed in Foster Care: Results from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study." *Children and Youth Services Review* 28: 1459-1481.

Piquero, Alex R., J. David Hawkins, and Lila Kazemian. 2012. "Criminal Career Patterns." Pages 14-46 in Rolf Loeber and David P. Farrington (eds.), *Juvenile Delinquency to Adult Crime*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ramchand, Rajeev, Andrew R. Morral, and Kirsten Becker. 2009. "Seven-Year Life Outcomes of Adolescent Offenders in Los Angeles." *American Journal of Public Health* 99, 5: 863-870.

Reilly, Thom. 2003. "Transition from Care: The Status and Outcomes of Youth Who Have Aged Out of the Foster Care System." *Child Welfare* 82, 6: 727-746.

Rubin, David M., Evaline Alessandrini, Chris Feudtner, David S. Mandell, A. Russell Localio, and Trevor Hadley. 2004. "Placement Stability and Mental Health Costs for Children in Foster Care." *Pediatrics* 113: 1336-1341.

Ryan, Joseph P., and Mark F. Testa. 2005. "Child Maltreatment and Juvenile Delinquency: Investigating the Role of Placement and Placement Instability." *Children and Youth Services Review* 27, 3: 227-249.

Sampson, Robert J., and John H. Laub. 1990. "Crime and Deviance over the Life Course: The Salience of Adult Social Bonds." *American Sociological Review* 55, 5: 609-627.

Schoeni, Robert, and Karen Ross. 2005. "Material Assistance Received from Families During the Transition to Adulthood." In Richard A. Settersten, Jr., Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr., and Rubén G. Rumbaut (eds.), *On the Frontier of Adulthood: Theory, Research, and Public Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sedlak, Andrea J., and Karla S. McPherson. 2010. *Youth's Needs and Services: Findings from the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Settersten, Richard A., Frank F. Furstenberg, and Rubén G. Rumbaut (eds.). 2005. *On the Frontier of Adulthood: Theory, Research, and Public Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Silverman, Wendy K., Armando A. Pina, and Chockalingam Viswesvaran. 2008. "Evidence-Based Psychosocial Treatments for Phobic and Anxiety Disorders in Children and Adolescents." *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology* 37, 1: 105-130.

Snyder, Howard N. 2004. "An Empirical Portrait of the Youth Reentry Population." *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 2, 1: 39-55.

Tennessee Department of Children's Services. 2002. *Administrative Policies and Procedures: 16.52: Eligibility for Interdependent Living and Voluntary Post-Custody Services.* Nashville: Tennessee Department of Children's Services.

Tierney, Joseph P., and Jean Baldwin Grossman. 2000. *Making a Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters*. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

Toro, Paul A., Amy Dworsky, and Patrick J. Fowler. 2007. "Homeless Youth in the United States: Recent Research Findings and Intervention Approaches." Paper developed for the National Symposium on Homelessness Research, March 1-2. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

U.S. Department of Education. 2012. *Digest of Education Statistics: 2011*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2014. *The AFCARS Report: Preliminary FY 2013 Estimates as of July 2014*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2008. *Coming of Age: Employment Outcomes for Youth Who Age Out of Foster Care Through Their Middle Twenties*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2014. *Employment Status of the Civilian Non-institutional Population by Age, Sex, and Race.* CPS Tables, Household Data, Annual Averages. Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Zajac, Kristyn, Ashli J. Sheidow, and Maryann Davis. 2013. *Transition Age Youth with Mental Health Challenges in the Juvenile Justice System*. Washington, DC: Technical Assistance Partnership for Child and Family Mental Health.

EARLIER MDRC PUBLICATIONS ON THE YOUTH VILLAGES TRANSITIONAL LIVING EVALUATION

Moving Into Adulthood:
Implementation Findings from the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation
2014. Michelle Manno, Erin Jacobs, Julianna Alson, Melanie Skemer.

After Foster Care and Juvenile Justice:
A Preview of the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation
2012. Sara Muller-Ravett and Erin Jacobs.

NOTE: The Transitional Living program was renamed "YVLifeSet" after the evaluation was completed.

A complete publications list is available from MDRC and on its website (www.mdrc.org), from which copies of reports can also be downloaded.

About MDRC

MDRC is a nonprofit, nonpartisan social and education policy research organization dedicated to learning what works to improve the well-being of low-income people. Through its research and the active communication of its findings, MDRC seeks to enhance the effectiveness of social and education policies and programs.

Founded in 1974 and located in New York City and Oakland, California, MDRC is best known for mounting rigorous, large-scale, real-world tests of new and existing policies and programs. Its projects are a mix of demonstrations (field tests of promising new program approaches) and evaluations of ongoing government and community initiatives. MDRC's staff bring an unusual combination of research and organizational experience to their work, providing expertise on the latest in qualitative and quantitative methods and on program design, development, implementation, and management. MDRC seeks to learn not just whether a program is effective but also how and why the program's effects occur. In addition, it tries to place each project's findings in the broader context of related research — in order to build knowledge about what works across the social and education policy fields. MDRC's findings, lessons, and best practices are proactively shared with a broad audience in the policy and practitioner community as well as with the general public and the media.

Over the years, MDRC has brought its unique approach to an ever-growing range of policy areas and target populations. Once known primarily for evaluations of state welfare-to-work programs, today MDRC is also studying public school reforms, employment programs for ex-offenders and people with disabilities, and programs to help low-income students succeed in college. MDRC's projects are organized into five areas:

- Promoting Family Well-Being and Children's Development
- Improving Public Education
- Raising Academic Achievement and Persistence in College
- Supporting Low-Wage Workers and Communities
- Overcoming Barriers to Employment

Working in almost every state, all of the nation's largest cities, and Canada and the United Kingdom, MDRC conducts its projects in partnership with national, state, and local governments, public school systems, community organizations, and numerous private philanthropies.