Chafee Strengthening Outcomes for Transition to Adulthood Project: Impact Evaluation of My First Place

OMB Information Collection Request

Chafee Strengthening Outcomes for Transition to Adulthood Project Overarching Generic
0970-0618

Supporting Statement
Part B

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Submitted By:
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
4th Floor, Mary E. Switzer Building
330 C Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Project Officers: Kelly Jedd McKenzie and Harmanpreet Bhatti

Part B

B1. Objectives

Study Objectives

The information collected under this umbrella generic clearance is intended to utilize innovative learning methods to evaluate interventions and services for young adults transitioning out of foster care through the Chafee Strengthening Outcomes for Transition to Adulthood (Chafee SOTA) project. The data collections under this umbrella generic clearance consist of a series of mixed methods studies to evaluate promising practices and improve the feasibility and rigor of evaluations that test the effectiveness of program services or components. The purpose of these data collection efforts is to inform ACF programming by building evidence about what works to improve outcomes for the target population, and to identify innovative learning methods that address common evaluation challenges.

This information collection is necessary to allow the Chafee SOTA project team to collect data for an evaluation of My First Place (MFP), a comprehensive program for young adults ages 18-25 transitioning out of foster care in Los Angeles. MFP has a young adult-centered, team-based, intensive case-management approach that centers on the provision of housing as well as employment and education support services. The information will allow the team to assess the benefits of the program using innovative learning methods.

Generalizability of Results

The population of interest is young adults over age 18 in or transitioning out of foster care in Los Angeles. The information collected in this project is intended to inform our understanding of how to best serve that population. The information collected under this umbrella generic is intended to produce estimates of the impact of program services or components in chosen sites, not to promote statistical generalization to other sites or service populations.

Appropriateness of Study Design and Methods for Planned Uses

As noted in Supporting Statement A (SSA), this information is not intended to be used as the principal basis for public policy decisions and is not expected to meet the threshold of influential or highly influential scientific information.

B2. Methods and Design

Target Population

The target population for this study is young adults transitioning from foster care. We will compare outcomes of MFP participants in Los Angeles with comparison groups of young adults in Los Angeles who receive either housing only without services or services only without housing.

Design

To address the research question, we will use a non-equivalent group design to compare outcomes of MFP participants with groups of young adults who 1) receive housing only (time-limited subsidy (TLS) participants) and 2) those who receive services only (Safe Place for Youth [SPY] drop-in center participants). Non-equivalent group design (NEGD) is a quasi-experimental study design that compares differences in an outcome(s) of interest between a minimum of two groups, one that received an

intervention and one or more comparison groups that did not receive an intervention. We will also use propensity score analysis, a statistical matching technique used to strengthen the equivalence of treatment and comparison groups where outcome differences may be influenced by differences between the two groups, to "weight" the impact of individuals in the comparison groups such that the overall comparison group characteristics are balanced with those of treatment group characteristics

This study will rely on primary data collected through baseline surveys upon entry into the programs and two follow-up surveys administered 6 and 9-12 months later.

Sampling and Site Selection

The sampling for the NGED will involve three groups in Los Angeles: MFP participants, TLS participants, and SPY drop-in center participants. For each group we anticipate recruiting 200 young adults, for a total of 600 young adults completing the baseline survey. For the follow-up survey, we estimated a 10% attrition rate, leading to 540 young adults completing the baseline survey.

MFP intervention group participants will be recruited from MFP's Los Angeles site. As of 2024, the program could house 172 young adults and enrolled approximately 90-100 new entrants each year. Based on these numbers, and including a conservative estimate, we anticipate recruiting approximately 90-160 young adults from this site for the evaluation during a 12-month recruitment period.

To enhance the power of the study, and proactively mitigate problems with inadequate study enrollment, we will also recruit young adults who moved into MFP housing up to three months prior to the study's onset. Historic enrollment patterns at the LA site suggest that for each month added, we could plausibly add another 10-11 participants on average (i.e., 6.25% of beds). This would enable us to increase our sample by approximately 30-33 young adults.

Also, MFP has plans to add 48 more beds by summer 2026, resulting in a total of 220 bed capacity. The addition of enrolling young adults with fewer than three months of experience in the program, and the additional beds from program expansion, results in a sample of 120-183 potential evaluation participants. We will use an intent-to-treat model which requires examination of outcomes for program participants whether or not they stay in the program.

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Housing Only Comparison Group Participants will be recruited for the study from TLS[1] providers in Los Angeles County. TLS is a housing assistance program for young adults, ages 18-24, who are unstably housed or experiencing homelessness. This program was selected as it offers a housing intervention that is very similar to that offered by MFP.

Services Only Comparison Group Participants will be recruited for the study from the SPY drop-in center, which annually serves about 1000 young adults who are unstably housed or experiencing homelessness.

[1] Time limited subsidy is the terminology used in Los Angeles for rapid re-housing assistance. In Los Angeles, time limited subsidies are funded through a range of sources, including federal, state, and local funds. This study is limited to young adults receiving time limited subsidies through HUD's YHDP.

Recruitment and Eligibility

All young adults entering MFP will be eligible for participation if they are able to complete a survey in English or Spanish[2]. Upon enrollment into the program, participants meet with an Intake Specialist. During this in-person meeting, the Intake Specialist will provide eligible participants with a consent to contact form (Appendix 1), and a document that provides answers to Frequently Asked Questions (Appendix 2). For those MFP participants that have newly moved into housing at the beginning of our enrollment period, the Intake Specialist will coordinate with the participants' Youth Advocates to recruit those young adults into the evaluation.

In order to create samples as comparable to MFP participants, for both TLS and SPY, we will recruit young adults who are aged 18-21 at the time of program entry and are able to complete a survey in English or Spanish. For SPY participants, we will further limit the sample to those young adults who have a history of foster care involvement over the age of 13. Given the more limited sample size available for TLS participants, we will waive this requirement.

If participants agree to provide their name and contact information to the evaluation team, the consent to contact form will be emailed to Westat/Kempe staff through an encrypted email. Westat/Kempe staff will then reach out to participants via the methods specified in the consent to contact form (e.g., email, phone), share information about the evaluation with them, explain what participation will involve, and invite them to participate. If participants agree, Westat/Kempe staff will send them an electronic copy of the informed consent form (Appendix 3). This form will explain the purpose of the evaluation, the voluntary nature of their participation, treatment of responses, and the methods of ensuring security of the data.

At the beginning of each survey, participants will again be presented with the informed consent form and asked to electronically indicate their consent to participate in the survey. At the end of the baseline survey, we will notify them of subsequent surveys, and request permission for MFP staff to help study personnel track them.

Research Question

The key research question that we will address through an evaluation of MFP is:

- How effective is the MFP program compared to housing alone and services only in achieving short-term outcomes (6-12 months) for 1) housing stability, 2) improvements in education and employment, and 3) improvements in independence for young adults transitioning from foster care?

B3. Design of Data Collection Instruments

Development of Data Collection Instruments

Primary data from MFP and comparison group participants will include a baseline survey at enrollment with follow-up surveys 6 and 9-12 months after enrollment. Topics covered in the baseline survey include: demographic characteristics and family composition; education and employment histories, status, and current barriers; housing histories and current living situation; independent living skills, socio-emotional support; foster care history, and well-being. Follow-up surveys administered at 6 and 9-12 months focus on activities accomplished and capture changes over time in housing stability,

[2] ACF acknowledges that English is the official language and authoritative version of all federal information and will note this on the translated instruments.

education, employment, independent living skills, income, youth connections, and well-being. Development of the instruments was informed by research on validated scales and prior studies of the target population, as well as a set of discussions with current MFP participants, program staff, and young adults with foster care experience.

B4. Collection of Data and Quality Control

For primary data collected, we will implement a process for routine monitoring of the data collection process and the quality of the data. We will use processes for electronic data collection that ensure data are collected and computerized in a standardized fashion and for secure transfer procedures that will facilitate safe and prompt submission of primary data collected on site. We will implement a process for immediate review of the data for quality, completeness, and integrity. As part of our quality review process, we will meet with program staff on a regular basis to review the data, discuss any issues, and problem-solve challenges or barriers staff may be facing in the timely and accurate collection of the data.

B5. Response Rates and Potential Nonresponse Bias

Response Rates

We will use an intent-to-treat model which requires examination of outcomes for program participants whether or not they stay in the program. We anticipate program attrition may occur. Even though some attrition is inevitable, we will use the contact information shared by participants each time they complete a survey to continue to engage study participants whether or not they remain in the MFP or engaged with comparison group programs.

To further increase the likelihood of participation, we will also offer $50 tokens of appreciation for completing each survey. Further, participants who complete a survey within two days of receipt will be eligible for a $5 bonus (per survey). In addition, participants who complete all three survey waves will be eligible for a $50 bonus.

Young adults transitioning out of foster care can be a notoriously difficult group to track; therefore, we anticipate challenges tracking young adults who leave the MFP or comparison group programs and engaging them for follow-up surveys. The tokens of appreciation are intended to help encourage participants to stay in touch with the study team. Further, as part of the baseline survey and subsequent contacts, we will ask young adults to share or update contact information for a variety of people who can help us find them if their housing circumstances change and/or if they change their phone number or email addresses.

NonResponse

As participants will not be randomly sampled and findings are not intended to be representative, non-response bias will not be calculated. Respondent demographics will be documented and reported in written materials associated with the data collection.

B6. Production of Estimates and Projections

Quasi-experimental short-term, and within treatment group impact estimates, primarily produced through linear and logistic regression and survival analyses, will be made using nonequivalent group design and propensity score analysis. When appropriate, subgroup analyses (e.g., parenting vs non-parenting young adults) may be conducted.

B7. Data Handling and Analysis

Data Handling

We will use several methods to protect the integrity of collected data while we are preparing and analyzing them. For each individual's data, we will ensure that records from each round of data collection have a linking identifier to ensure that an individual's records can be linked across survey waves. We will develop all appropriate codebooks and data logs documenting decisions made. We will also run basic quality assurance checks on all data. For example, basic quality assurance checks will involve assessing consistency across variables that should be consistent (e.g., whether education attainment is measured consistently across time). We will also explore the distributions of all outcome variables and covariates, examine outlier values, address any needed modeling assumptions, and identify incomplete or missing data.

Data Analysis

Non equivalent group design is well-suited for bivariate and multivariate analysis techniques dependent on the outcome of interest. It permits analysis of short-term outcomes, as long as they are available for both the treatment and comparison groups. Possible analytic techniques include t-tests, ANCOVA, OLS regression, logistic regression, survival analysis, and Poisson regression.

We will explore distributions of all variables to inform correct model specifications. These preliminary analyses will include exploring:

- The shape of the distributions of all (non-binary) outcome variables, and implementing strategies to handle non-normality (e.g., log transformations, specifying Poisson or negative binomial outcomes).
- The time trend of each outcome to determine how to specify the effect of year in the models (e.g., linear, quadratic, categorical/dummy).
- The degree and randomness of missing data, and appropriate strategies to handle missingness (e.g., maximum likelihood, imputation, weighting).

Program participant characteristics (such as socio-demographics) will be included as model covariates, along with background characteristics related to history of child welfare involvement. We will select covariates to use based on prior literature and what we learn from MFP participants and staff, and empirical exploration of the data.

Data Use

Under this umbrella generic, information collected is meant to inform ACF activities and may be incorporated into documents or presentations that are made public such as through conference presentations, websites, or social media.

The following are some examples of ways in which we may share information resulting from these data collections: technical assistance plans, webinars, presentations, infographics, issue briefs/reports, project specific reports, or other documents relevant to the field, such as federal leadership and staff, grantees, local implementing agencies, researchers, and/or T/TA providers. We may also request information for the sole purpose of publication in cases where we are working to create a single source for users (clients, programs, researchers) to find information about resources such as services in their area, TA materials, different types of programs or systems available, or research using ACF data. In

sharing findings, we will describe the study methods and limitations regarding generalizability and as a basis for policy.

B8. Contact Persons

Kathryn A. Henderson, Ph.D.
Westat
Address: 7501 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 1000E Bethesda, MD 20814-6527
Phone: 301-610-4849
Email: kathrynhenderson@westat.com

John D. Fluke, Ph.D.
Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect
Address: 13123 East 16th Avenue, B390, Aurora, CO, 80045
Phone: 303-864-5219
Email: john.fluke@ucdenver.edu

Attachments

Instrument A: Youth Baseline Survey
Instrument B: Youth Follow-Up Survey

Appendix 1: Consent to Contact Form
Appendix 2: Recruitment FAQs
Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form