

# **In-Depth Case Studies of Authentic Youth Engagement in Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Sites**

**Integrative, Multisite Report**

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## Executive Summary

### Purpose

The purpose of this study is to synthesize and share the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative's approach to youth engagement. The study's findings communicate how authentically engaging youth can help both the Jim Casey Initiative and youth-serving systems achieve their desired results.

### Research Questions

The study's ultimate goal is to develop an understanding of how authentic youth engagement occurs and operates as part of the work in Jim Casey Initiative sites. More specifically, this study answers six questions, which are outlined in the Results section below.

### Method

The approach used in this study can be described as in-depth, mixed-methods organizational case studies. The six research questions were answered using four data sources: (1) reviews of site documentation, (2) secondary analysis of data from the Opportunity Passport® Participant Survey, (3) surveys with 46 site youth and 35 staff/community partners, and (4) interviews with 15 site youth and 15 staff/community partners.

### Key Findings

**1. *What does authentic youth engagement look like, and how does it operate in Jim Casey Initiative work within sites?***

Definitions of authentic youth engagement were consistent across sites, with a focus on youth empowerment and the four components of authentic youth engagement: youth–adult partnerships, preparation, opportunities, and support. Youth leadership boards were the highest area of youth participation across sites, followed by self-advocacy. Youth no longer in care, male-identified youth, youth of color, and LGBTQ+ youth are perceived as under-represented in Jim Casey Initiative activities.

**2. *What capacity do sites have/not have to implement activities related to authentic youth engagement?***

Staff surveys yielded high ratings of site capacity to do youth engagement work, with “processes in place to include youth voice” and “leaders who understand and support youth engagement initiatives” rated most highly among capacity items. Staff buy-in and staff preparation and skills were consistently cited as contributing to capacity. Accessing existing community resources, expanding and deepening community support, and cultivating community champions are areas of potential capacity expansion.

**3. *What successes and challenges/barriers to authentic youth engagement have Jim Casey Initiative sites experienced?***

Youth–adult partnerships were universally reported as successful across sites. In addition, youth empowerment, agency, and voice were seen as successes, benefitting both transitioning youth and

policy and practice. The most commonly discussed barriers to authentic youth engagement, beyond resource limitations, focused around challenges in initiating and maintaining youth engagement, particularly with youth who are having trouble meeting their basic needs.

**4. *How does authentic youth engagement contribute to the achievement of Jim Casey Initiative results?***

Classes and trainings across sites build young people’s confidence, life skills, and self-advocacy skills to help them transition to adulthood. Youth engagement also contributes to changes in policy and practice, including extending foster care, addressing barriers to Medicaid coverage, and increasing living allowances for pregnant/parenting youth.

**5. *What are the lessons learned and recommended strategies and approaches for authentically engaging youth?***

The importance of nurturing trusting relationships between youth and adults was emphasized as a recommendation for authentically engaging youth. Keeping youth at the center of the work and amplifying youth voice are critical. Sites suggested expanding opportunities for youth through building community partnerships and educating community members. A helpful logistic strategy recommended was using multiple modes of communication to reach youth, including email, social media, and texting.

**6. *What are participants’ perceptions of the sustainability of activities related to authentic youth engagement?***

Youth and staff perceptions of sustainability were high, with existing structure and buy-in from leadership cited as contributing to the sustainability of authentic youth engagement work over the next year, and then over the coming five years.

## **Implications**

Potential areas to focus on for next steps include the following:

- Engaging more youth and a larger diversity of youth (e.g., parenting youth, youth no longer in care, LGBTQ+ youth, youth of color, older youth, males, youth in kinship placements, youth with juvenile justice system involvement)
- Developing better strategies for recruiting youth and sustaining youth engagement over the long term (e.g., including culturally relevant practices)
- Finding more ways for adults and youth to cultivate trusting relationships and communication
- Supporting youth in implementing their ideas and seeing themselves as change agents
- Offering more opportunities involving practice impact, self-advocacy, and policy
- Bolstering and maintaining a strong staff through support, training, and self-care
- Better preparing staff to engage in youth–adult partnerships and to support youth, and making available the resources they need to do this work well
- Improving information sharing about upcoming opportunities
- Increasing availability of transportation to events and activities
- Finding ways to schedule activities that work better for everyone
- Finding new, creative ways to connect with and reach out to youth

## Introduction

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative® is an effort of the Annie E. Casey Foundation that works to ensure that young people ages 14 to 26 who have spent at least one day in foster care after their 14th birthday have the resources, relationships, and opportunities to achieve well-being and success. With partnerships in 17 states, the Jim Casey Initiative focuses on four key indicators: permanency, stable housing, educational success and economic security, and pregnancy prevention and parenting support. The Initiative's approach, rooted in adolescent brain research, employs best-practice principles to authentically engage young people in the decisions that shape their lives, applies a racial and ethnic equity lens to reduce system-level disparities, leverages community partnerships to develop and align resources toward a shared result, uses data and evaluation to assess progress and improve outcomes, and builds public will to create better policies and practices that sustain enhancements over time.

To achieve the Jim Casey Initiative's vision that all young people transitioning from foster care have the relationships, resources, and opportunities to ensure well-being and success, young people must develop the knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy that result from playing a primary role in idea development and decision making. The purpose of this study is to synthesize and share the Jim Casey Initiative's approach to youth engagement. Importantly, it also communicates how authentically engaging youth can help both the Jim Casey Initiative and youth-serving systems achieve their desired results. It provides specific strategies for supporting authentic youth engagement that sites can use to effectively embed authentic youth engagement into their structure and functions. This report summarizes findings across four Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative sites: Georgia, Hawai'i, New Mexico, and Tennessee.

## Research Questions

The study's ultimate goal is to develop an understanding of how authentic youth engagement occurs and operates in Jim Casey Initiative sites. More specifically, this study answers the following six questions:

1. What does authentic youth engagement look like, and how does it operate in Jim Casey Initiative work within sites?
2. What capacity do sites have/not have to implement activities related to authentic youth engagement?
3. What successes and challenges/barriers to authentic youth engagement have Jim Casey Initiative sites experienced?
4. How does authentic youth engagement contribute to the achievement of Jim Casey Initiative results?
5. What are the lessons learned and recommended strategies and approaches for authentically engaging youth?

6. What are participants' perceptions of the sustainability of activities related to authentic youth engagement?

## Methodology

The study's approach is in-depth, mixed-methods organizational case studies of four Jim Casey Initiative sites. As Mills, Harrison, Franklin, and Birks (2017)<sup>1</sup> explain:

Case study research is consistently described as a versatile form of qualitative inquiry most suitable for a comprehensive, holistic, and in-depth investigation of a complex issue (phenomena, event, situation, organization, program, individual, or group) in context, where the boundary between the context and issue is unclear and contains many variables (Creswell, 2014; Flyvbjerg, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). Case study research can be used to study a range of topics and purposes (Simons, 2009; Stake, 2006; Stewart, 2014); however, the essential requisite for employing case study stems from one's motivation to illuminate understanding of complex phenomena (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). Primarily exploratory and explanatory in nature, case study is used to gain an understanding of the issue in real life settings and recommended to answer *how* and *why* or less frequently *what* research questions (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009; Stake, 2006; Stewart, 2014; Yin, 2014).

In essence, case studies are valuable approaches when the topic of interest is complex, varies across sites or settings, and an in-depth, mixed-methods approach is needed to gain a clear understanding of the topic. The case study approach is particularly useful for the study of authentic youth engagement in Jim Casey Initiative sites, as this is a complex, multifaceted practice that varies across sites. The multiple methods used in the case study concurrently allow for exploration of the unique circumstances regarding authentic youth engagement in each site, while also providing information about authentic youth engagement that can be compared across sites.

### Site Selection

The Jim Casey Initiative selected four sites for participation in-depth case study: Georgia (Georgia Youth Opportunities Initiative), Hawai'i (HI HOPES Initiative), New Mexico (New Mexico Child Advocacy Network, or NMCAN), and Tennessee (Tennessee Department of Children's Services). Casey staff selected these sites based on a Casey-developed rubric intended to identify sites with stronger levels of authentic youth engagement. The Jim Casey Initiative reviewed a variety of criteria such as Opportunity Passport® Participant Survey (OPPS) responses on youth engagement in Jim Casey Initiative activities as well as factors including geography, length and quality of authentic youth engagement implementation, and administrative location of the site leadership.

### Data Sources

The six research questions were answered using four data sources: (1) review of site documents, (2) secondary analysis of data from the Opportunity Passport® Participant Survey, (3) surveys with site

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<sup>1</sup> Mills, J., Harrison, H., Franklin, R., & Birks, M. (2017). Case study research: Foundations and methodological orientations. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (Vol. 18, No. 1, p. 17). DEU.

youth and staff/community partners, and (4) interviews with site youth and staff/community partners. Each of these four data sources is described below.

### ***Document Review***

Documentation of authentic youth engagement from Jim Casey Initiative sources helps build an understanding of the organizational framing and thinking around how the Jim Casey Initiative sites approach authentic youth engagement. Relevant past and current documents including Jim Casey Initiative reports, site plans, mid-year reports, logic models, program materials, publications, convening materials, and other documents identified as applicable by Jim Casey Initiative national and local staff were collected and reviewed to develop and document an understanding of the Jim Casey Initiative's approach to integrating authentic youth engagement into sites' work.

Documents provided by each site's lead agency were reviewed and summarized by the research team. A total of 66 documents were reviewed, including documents submitted by the four sites and 12 documents from the national Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. Appendix 1 lists all documents reviewed.

- Georgia Youth Opportunities Initiative submitted 10 documents that are included in the document review. These documents encompass preparation materials and information for the trip to the state capitol, training materials for youth on legislative advocacy, policy recommendations and fact sheets on specific legislation created for advocacy, and flyers offering information on policy, resources, and opportunities relevant to young people.
- Hawai'i's HI HOPES Initiative submitted 22 documents that are included in the document review. These documents encompass grant proposals, youth board meeting notes, reports to funders, various agendas, youth advocacy documents, and youth leadership institute training materials.
- New Mexico Child Advocacy Network (NMCAN) submitted 11 documents that are included in the document review. These documents encompass activity reports to funders, financial coach pre-service training materials, policy blueprint documents, strategic sharing and youth leader training materials, and a book created for youth entering care.
- Tennessee's Department of Children's Services submitted 11 documents that are included in the document review. These documents encompass training and informative materials for adults striving to authentically engage youth, articulation of plans and goals around authentic youth engagement, the youth engagement model, and meeting notes.

All document content was reviewed and coded according to the six research questions guiding this study. Appendix 2 provides a table with information from the documents organized by research question. Themes identified across sites within each research question based on document content are also reported in the respective research question sections of this report.



## ***Secondary Data Analysis***

Data from the Opportunity Passport® Participant Survey (OPPS) were included in this study. As Poirier, Wilkie, Sepulveda, and Uruchima (2018)<sup>2</sup> explain:

Significantly, through its biannual surveys of Opportunity Passport participants, the Jim Casey Initiative has developed a unique and robust database that tells us how well young people in foster care are faring and what more needs to be done to equip them for adulthood. All Opportunity Passport participants take a comprehensive online survey that captures data on youth outcomes, including their experiences with permanency, education, employment, housing, physical and mental health, social capital, and financial capability. The survey also collects demographic data including gender, race, age, marital and parental status, foster care placements, and youth engagement. Moreover, survey items on youth engagement measure the meaningful participation of a young person with adults on policy advocacy, program assessment, and other leadership activities.

Each young person completes a baseline survey at the time of enrollment in Opportunity Passport and thereafter completes a follow-up survey every six months (making it possible to carry out rich longitudinal analyses). Young people may take the survey on a computer or a mobile device. They receive a stipend of \$40 for each survey completed. Since 2013, survey response rates have ranged from 85% to 87%. (p. 7)

OPPS data that focuses on authentic youth engagement are an already-existing source of information on how authentic youth engagement operates in sites and were used to help answer the research questions. The data were requested from Child Trends (the Jim Casey Initiative's evaluation partner) through the Jim Casey Initiative lead for data and self-evaluation and analyzed as part of this report. The full OPPS instrument can be found in Appendix 3.

OPPS data were analyzed in a cross-sectional fashion, including surveys from all youth who participated between January 1 and June 30, 2018. If more than one entry was present for the same individual, only the most recent entry was included in analyses. This approach resulted in 854 youth surveys from the four states involved in the study. Data analyses included descriptive statistics as well as statistical tests to explore differences in youth demographic and transition-related outcomes based on their engagement in various activities. Statistical tests included chi-square difference tests, t-tests, and analysis of variance tests (ANOVA), as appropriate. Statistical significance is at  $p < .05$ , unless otherwise noted.

The following table provides descriptive data on Opportunity Passport participants' demographics. Due to limited sample sizes, certain demographic categories were collapsed or excluded so that statistical tests could be run. Decision points regarding computation or exclusion of response categories are included in the final column of these tables.

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<sup>2</sup> Poirier, J. M., Wilkie, S., Sepulveda, K., & Uruchima, T. (2018). Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative: Experiences and outcomes of youth who are LGBTQ. *Child Welfare, 96*(1).

Youth Opportunity Passport Survey Participant Demographics.											
Demographic	Overall		Georgia		Hawai'i		New Mexico		Tennessee		Notes About How this Variable Was Used
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	
<b>Age</b>											
<i>Under 18</i>	202	23.7%	52	21.8%	41	12.4%	8	16%	101	43%	
<i>18 and older</i>	652	76.4%	186	78.2%	290	87.6%	42	84%	134	57%	
<b>Race</b>											
<i>Black/African-American, non-Hispanic</i>	247	30%	136	57.1%	4	1.3%	2	4.2%	105	45.1%	The following racial categories were combined into "Other race(s), non-Hispanic" for analyses: (1) Native American/Native Alaskan, (2) Asian, non-Hispanic, (3) Other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic, (4) Other race, non-Hispanic Note: Due to minimal presence at sites other than Hawai'i, Hawaiian racial identity will be included in "Other race(s), non-Hispanic" for sites other than Hawai'i.
<i>White, non-Hispanic</i>	168	20.4%	56	23.5%	17	5.6%	11	22.9%	84	36.1%	
<i>Hispanic/Latino, of any race(s)</i>	108	13.1%	25	10.5%	30	9.9%	29	60.4%	24	10.3%	
<i>Native Hawaiian or part Hawaiian, non-Hispanic</i>	219	26.6%	1	0.4%	217	71.4%	0	0%	1	0.4%	
<i>Other race(s), non-Hispanic</i>	81	9.8%	20	8.4%	36	11.8%	6	12.5%	19	8.2%	
<b>Gender</b>											
<i>Female</i>	576	67.5%	163	68.5%	236	71.3%	26	52%	151	64.3%	Since so few participants answered with a response other than Female or Male, only these two categories will be included in the analyses that follow.
<i>Male</i>	267	31.3%	71	29.8%	93	28.1%	24	48%	79	33.6%	
<i>Feel male sometimes and female at other times</i>	4	0.5%	1	0.4%	1	0.3%	0	0%	2	0.9%	
<i>Feel neither male nor female</i>	1	0.1%	1	0.4%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	
<i>I am not sure yet</i>	2	0.2%	0	0%	1	0.3%	0	0%	1	0.4%	
<i>Prefer not to answer</i>	4	0.5%	2	0.8%	0	0%	0	0%	2	0.9%	
<b>Parenting Status</b>											
<i>Parenting</i>	192	22.5%	47	19.7%	95	28.7%	13	26%	37	15.7%	"Parenting" means having children who currently live with you.
<i>Not parenting</i>	662	77.5%	191	80.3%	236	71.3%	37	74%	198	84.3%	
<b>Foster Care Status</b>											
<i>Still in care</i>	278	33.5%	122	52.8%	45	14%	7	14%	104	45.8%	
<i>No longer in care</i>	552	66.5%	109	47.2%	277	86%	43	86%	123	54.2%	
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>											
<i>Heterosexual/straight</i>	690	80.8%	185	77.73	274	82.8%	36	72%	195	83%	For the following analyses, two groups will be compared: (a) Heterosexual, and (b) Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual.
<i>Bisexual</i>	74	8.7%	29	12.18	26	7.9%	6	12%	13	5.5%	
<i>Gay or lesbian</i>	48	5.6%	8	3.36	26	7.9%	3	6%	11	4.7%	
<i>I am not sure yet</i>	3	0.4%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	1	.4%	
<i>Prefer not to answer</i>	24	2.8%	9	3.78	3	0.9%	2	4%	10	4.3%	
<i>Not listed</i>	15	1.8%	7	2.94	1	0.3%	2	4%	5	2.1%	

## Surveys

Surveys provide quantitative measures of topics related to authentic youth engagement. Survey instruments were developed by the research team, in partnership with the Jim Casey Initiative team and other Annie E. Casey Foundation staff. Measures were included, adapted, or developed from sources including the *Youth Engagement Toolkit Evaluation Tool*,<sup>3</sup> *Youth Involvement in Systems of Care*,<sup>4</sup> and various documents from the Jim Casey Initiative. Surveys were conducted through Web-based Qualtrics survey software and took participants approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete. Surveys were completed between December 2018 and March 2019.

A total of 81 surveys (46 youth surveys, 35 staff/professional surveys) were conducted with participants across the four sites (Georgia, Hawai'i, New Mexico, Tennessee) to further explore authentic youth engagement and to detect patterns in participants' experiences of engagement. Participants were identified and made aware of the study by local Jim Casey Initiative staff and recruited by the research team. Youth participants were given a \$25 payment for their participation, as is customary for Jim Casey Initiative involvement. The following table provides information on survey participation rates.

Survey Participation Information							
	Invited to participate	Full complete	Ineligible to participate <sup>5</sup>	Response rate [full complete ÷ (invited–ineligible)]	Partial complete	Declined participation	Unable to obtain a complete or a decline
Youth	68	46	3	70.8%	4	0	15
Staff/professionals	43	35*	0	81.4%	2	5	1

\*Note: One staff/professional participant classified as a partial completer completed half of the survey, and their responses were included in this report, so some staff/professional survey findings have an *N* of 36 rather than 35.

Survey data were analyzed using SAS. Analyses consisted primarily of descriptive analyses and comparisons of group differences using t-tests and ANOVAs (for continuous outcomes) and chi squares (for categorical outcomes). Statistical significance is at  $p < .05$ , unless otherwise noted.

<sup>3</sup> Youthrex (2013). *Youth Engagement Toolkit Evaluation Tool*. British Columbia, Canada: Ministry of Children and Family Development.

<sup>4</sup> Matarese, M., McGinnis, L., & Mora, M. (2005). *Youth involvement in systems of care: A guide to empowerment*. Retrieved December 15, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> See "Notes about Youth Survey and Interview Participants" at the end of the Methodology section for more information.

Youth survey participant demographics can be found in the following table.<sup>5</sup>

<b>Youth Participant Demographics</b>										
	<b>All</b>		<b>GA</b>		<b>HI</b>		<b>NM</b>		<b>TN</b>	
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Female</i>	33	71.7%	7	58.3%	11	91.7%	6	66.7%	9	69.2%
<i>Male</i>	9	19.6%	5	41.7%	1	8.3%	1	11.1%	2	15.4%
<i>Something else</i>	1	2.2%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	7.7%
<i>Did not respond</i>	3	6.7%	0	0%	0	0%	2	22.2%	1	7.7%
<b>Race</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Black/African-American, non-Hisp</i>	11	23.9%	6	50.0%	0	0%	1	11.1%	4	30.8%
<i>White, non-Hispanic</i>	11	23.9%	2	16.7%	2	16.7%	1	11.1%	6	46.1%
<i>Hispanic/Latino, of any race(s)</i>	9	19.6%	1	8.3%	3	25.0%	4	44.4%	1	7.7%
<i>Native Hawaiian or part Hawaiian, non-Hispanic</i>	6	13.0%	0	0%	6	50.0%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>Other race(s), non-Hispanic</i>	3	6.5%	1	8.3%	1	8.3%	1	11.1%	0	0%
<i>Did not respond</i>	6	13.0%	2	16.7%	0	0%	2	22.2%	2	15.4%
<b>Age</b>	<b>Mean</b>		<b>Mean</b>		<b>Mean</b>		<b>Mean</b>		<b>Mean</b>	
	23.1		23.6		23.6		21.9		23.1	
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Lesbian</i>	3	6.5%	1	8.3%	1	8.3%	0	0%	1	7.7%
<i>Gay</i>	1	2.2%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	7.7%
<i>Bisexual</i>	6	13.0%	2	16.7%	0	0%	2	22.2%	2	15.4%
<i>Queer</i>	1	2.2%	0	0%	1	8.3%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>Questioning/not sure</i>	1	2.2%	0	0%	1	8.3%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>Heterosexual</i>	27	58.7%	8	66.7%	8	66.7%	4	44.4%	7	53.8%
<i>Other</i>	3	6.5%	0	0%	0	0%	1	11.1%	2	15.4%
<i>Did not respond</i>	4	8.7%	1	8.3%	1	8.3%	2	22.2%	0	0%
<b>Identify as Having a Disability?</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Yes</i>	3	6.5%	2	16.7%	0	0%	1	11.1%	0	0%
<i>No</i>	36	78.3%	9	75.0%	10	83.3%	6	66.7%	11	84.6%
<i>Did not respond</i>	7	15.2%	1	8.3%	2	16.7%	2	22.2%	2	15.4%
<b>Parenting Status</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Yes</i>	13	28.3%	3	25.0%	5	41.7%	3	33.3%	2	15.4%
<i>No</i>	32	69.6%	9	75.0%	7	58.3%	5	55.6%	11	84.6%
<i>Did not respond</i>	1	2.2%	0	0%	0	0%	1	11.1%	0	0%
<b>Foster Care Status</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Still in care</i>	7	15.2%	3	25.0%	0	0%	0	0%	4	30.8%
<i>No longer in care</i>	38	82.6%	9	75.0%	12	100%	8	88.9%	9	69.2%
<i>Did not respond</i>	1	2.2%	0	0%	0	0%	1	11.1%	0	0%
<b>Current Living Situation</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Non-relative foster care</i>	2	4.3%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	15.4%
<i>Group home</i>	3	6.5%	3	25%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>Live by myself</i>	24	52.2%	7	58.3%	5	41.7%	4	44.4%	8	61.5%
<i>Live with friends</i>	5	10.9%	0	0%	2	16.7%	2	22.2%	1	7.7%
<i>Other</i>	10	21.7%	2	16.7%	5	41.7%	1	11.1%	2	15.4%
<i>Did not respond</i>	2	4.3%	0	0%	0	0%	2	22.2%	0	0%

Staff/professional survey demographics can be found in the following table.

<b>Staff/Professional Participant Demographics</b>										
	<b>All</b>		<b>GA</b>		<b>HI</b>		<b>NM</b>		<b>TN</b>	
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Female</i>	28	77.8%	5	62.5%	9	75%	4	80%	10	90.9%
<i>Male</i>	6	16.7%	3	37.5%	2	16.7%	1	20%	0	0%
<i>Transgender female</i>	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>Transgender male</i>	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>Agender/no gender</i>	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>Something else</i>	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>Did not respond</i>	2	5.6%	0	0%	1	8.3%	0	0%	1	9.1%
<b>Race</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Black/African-American, non-Hispanic</i>	8	22.2%	2	25%	0	0%	0	0%	6	54.5%
<i>White, non-Hispanic</i>	13	36.1%	3	37.5%	5	41.7%	1	20%	4	36.4%
<i>Hispanic/Latino, of any race(s)</i>	3	8.3%	1	12.5%	0	0%	2	40%	0	0%
<i>Native Hawaiian or part Hawaiian, non-Hispanic</i>	1	2.8%	0	0%	1	8.3%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>Other race(s), non-Hispanic</i>	6	16.7%	0	0%	5	41.7%	1	20%	0	0%
<i>Did not respond</i>	5	13.9%	2	25%	1	8.3%	1	20%	1	9.1%
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Lesbian</i>	1	2.8%	1	12.5%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>Gay</i>	1	2.8%	0	0%	1	8.3%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>Bisexual</i>	2	5.6%	0	0%	1	8.3%	1	20%	0	0%
<i>Queer</i>	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>Questioning/not sure</i>	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>Heterosexual</i>	27	75%	5	62.5%	9	75%	3	60%	10	90.9%
<i>Other</i>	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>Did not respond</i>	5	13.8%	2	25%	1	8.3%	1	20%	1	9.1%
<b>Identify as Having a Disability?</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Yes</i>	2	5.6%	0	0%	1	8.3%	0	0%	1	9.1%
<i>No</i>	30	83.3%	7	87.5%	10	83.3%	4	80%	9	81.8%
<i>Did not respond</i>	4	11.1%	1	12.5%	1	8.3%	1	20%	1	9.1%

### **Interviews**

Interviews complement the survey data by capturing more in-depth feedback on the details and context related to authentic youth engagement. Interview questions and protocols were developed by the research team, in partnership with Jim Casey Initiative and other Annie E. Casey Foundation staff. Topics explored in the interviews included recollections of participants' experiences with authentic youth engagement, challenges or barriers to youth engagement that they have observed, lessons learned, and recommendations for strengthening efforts to authentically engage youth, among others. Interviews took place by telephone with a trained research staff member. These interviews were guided by a semi-structured interview protocol and lasted approximately 30 minutes to one hour. Interviews were completed between October 2018 and January 2019.

A total of 30 stakeholder interviews (15 youth interviews, 15 staff/professional interviews) were conducted to explore stakeholders' experiences of authentic youth engagement within the context of their involvement with the Jim Casey Initiative. Participants were identified and made aware of the study by local Jim Casey Initiative staff and recruited by the research team. Youth participants were emailed a \$50 gift card for their participation. The following table provides information on interview participation rates.

Interview Participation Information							
	Invited to participate	Full complete	Ineligible to participate <sup>5</sup>	Response rate [full complete ÷ (invited–ineligible)]	Partial complete	Declined participation	Unable to obtain a complete or a decline
Youth	19	15	0	78.9%	0	1	3
Staff/professionals	19	15	0	78.9%	0	1	3

Interviews were recorded and transcribed using a professional transcription service. Data were analyzed using Dedoose qualitative data analysis software. The analysis approach was conventional thematic content analysis. Codes were grouped into themes, and thematic networks were created as visual depictions of these codes and themes.

Interview participant demographics are included in the following table.<sup>5</sup> Due to the small sample size, broader categorizations were used rather than highly descriptive ones to help maintain participant anonymity.

Interview Participant Demographics (broad categories used due to small sample size to help maintain anonymity)												
	Gender			Race/ethnicity				Sexual orientation			Disability	
	Female	Male	Other	Black	White	Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Other/Mult. Races	Hetero sexual	LGB+	Missing	Yes	No
Youth	10	4	1	4	2	3	6	12	2	1	1	14
Staff/professionals	14	1	0	3	6	2	4	13	2	0	0	15

### Notes About Youth Survey and Interview Participants

- Youth participants for the surveys and interviews were identified by site staff, who were asked to choose a wide diversity of youth to include in the potential participant pool. Eligibility criteria included (a) being age 18 or older, and (b) being involved in one of the following six activities in the past year:
  - Youth leadership board
  - Community partnership board
  - Self-evaluation efforts (e.g., reviewing data to understand their meaning or to help with the quality of site work)
  - Developing policy agenda (e.g., providing input or advocating on state policy changes or legislation)

- Influencing public will (e.g., reaching out to community members to make them aware of challenges faced by transitioning young people)
  - Increasing opportunities and support (e.g., helping to create improvements or supports for young people in community, such as employment or education supports)
- Youth survey participants did not participate in an interview, and vice versa.
- Youth survey/interview participants may or may not have participated in the OPPS survey. Their participation in the OPPS had no impact on whether or not they were included in this study.

## Findings

### **Research Question 1: What does authentic youth engagement look like, and how does it operate in Jim Casey Initiative work within sites?**

The data sources examined for this study provided a great deal of content for answering this research question; thus, the findings are organized into three sections: (a) How do sites define and/or talk about authentic youth engagement?, (b) What does authentic youth engagement actually look like in sites?, and (c) What youth are missing from engagement opportunities?

#### **a. How do sites define and/or talk about authentic youth engagement?**

##### **Document Review**

Based on site documents, overall the four sites define authentic youth engagement consistently with the national Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative's definition: "young people who are actively and authentically involved, motivated, and excited about an issue, process, event, or program" (Issues Brief #3 Youth–adult Partnerships, p. 1). Across sites, focus lies in the four components of authentic youth engagement: youth–adult partnerships, preparation, opportunities, and support. Although sites were consistent in prioritizing the four components and four key indicators (permanency, housing, education, pregnancy prevention) advocated by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, each had a slightly different emphasis in their definition of authentic youth engagement. For example, NMCAN couches authentic youth engagement as one of three "pillars to engagement that heals," alongside being trauma informed and responsive, and utilizing developmental coaching/mentoring. Tennessee has developed a mission and model specific to their site that parallels the core principles of authentic youth engagement according to the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. The stated mission of Tennessee Department of Children's Services is to "promote meaningful youth–adult partnerships that support system and organizational change within the department while providing opportunities for youth to develop, master, and apply." This mission is supported by three pillars: 1) system change and policy advocacy, 2) organizational culture, and 3) youth leadership and professional development.

Hawai'i differed from other sites in that they emphasized benefit to systems and communities in their definition of authentic youth engagement. This aligns with the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative's conceptualization of authentic youth–adult partnerships, in which true balance is created where adults learn from youth. This mutual learning distinguishes authentically engaging youth from mentoring-type relationships. The HI HOPES Initiative operates under the philosophy that youth possess a critical understanding to help improve systems and communities. The training materials used by HI HOPES to train both youth and adults reflect the focus on the potential for authentic youth engagement to "offer young people meaningful opportunities to take responsibility and leadership" with caring adults who share power with them. The HI HOPES Initiative recognizes that "an honest exploration of power can be extremely helpful to any group seeking to achieve a more equitable balance of power."

Georgia did not explicitly define authentic youth engagement in the documents provided.



## Secondary Data Analysis

*No relevant information identified through this source.*

## Surveys

*No relevant information identified through this source.*

## Interviews

### ***“How do participants define authentic youth engagement?”***

The thematic networks emerging from this analysis are included below. A high level of consensus exists across sites in defining authentic youth engagement. Across all four sites, both staff and youth interviewed included youth empowerment/voice/agency, youth–adult partnerships (connection), supporting youth, and making an impact or change as crucial components in defining authentic youth engagement. The importance of hearing youth voice and creating youth–adult partnerships is exemplified by one HI HOPES staff’s conceptualization of authentic youth engagement: “I would define it as just bringing yourself to a level where you understand youth and they can understand you, and just being able to level with them, understand where they’re coming from, and just be able to truly identify what their needs are, how you can help them.”

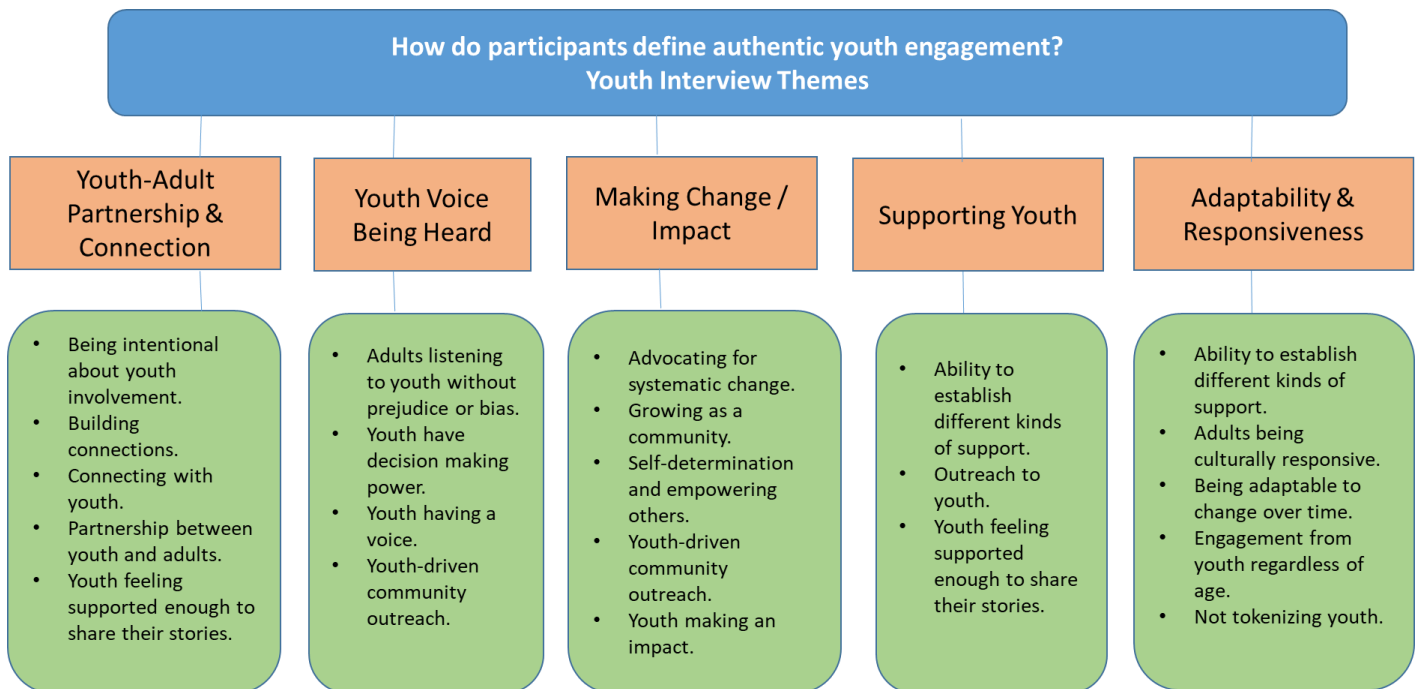
Youth empowerment refers to youth experiencing self-determination, having decision-making power, and leading community outreach efforts. In the words of one youth interviewee in Hawai’i: “[Authentic youth engagement] is being given the second chance to be able to make decisions for myself and also to help make decisions for other people in the community that were once foster kids.” A youth interviewee in Tennessee described youth empowerment a different way: “When we’re participating in something ... our actions have results.”

In staff interviews in Hawai’i and Tennessee, *adult engagement and skills* emerged as a theme. This theme includes adults listening without bias or prejudice, being genuine and transparent in interactions with youth, and using a trauma-informed approach. A staff interviewee in Hawai’i stated: “When I think about authentic youth engagement ... there is a responsibility on the part of the adults that are engaging with [youth] to be aware of their needs, to be aware of some challenges they may be facing, and that’s where adolescent brain [science] comes in, that’s where knowledge about trauma comes in.” Staff focus on strengths is also important to youth empowerment. One Tennessee staff commented, “I consider engagement to be talking to [youth] about what their needs are, but also their strengths — what they do well, and how they can use those strengths to be able to contribute to their success.”

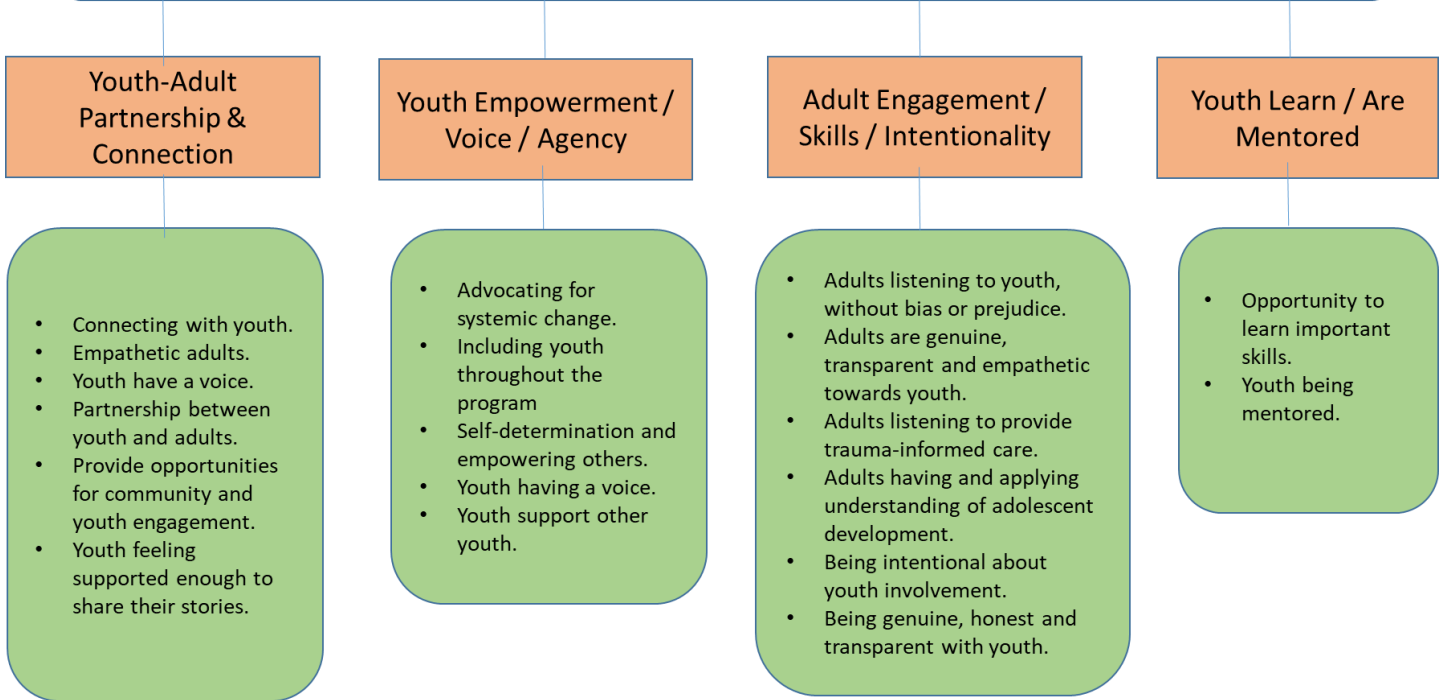
Three themes emerged in both youth and staff interviews that were unique to NMCAN. Similar to the theme adult engagement and skills identified among staff in Hawai’i and Tennessee, *adult intentionality* emerged as a theme among staff in New Mexico. Both youth and staff emphasized adults

listening to youth without bias or prejudice, a central aspect of adult intentionality, as critical to authentic youth achievement. Youth value among staff “the fact that they just take time to understand, like, who you are.” Adult intentionality is closely related to cultural humility and responsiveness, a theme among New Mexico youth interviewees. A youth who identifies as an indigenous person stated, “For an agency to authentically engage with me, they would already need to have ... cultural competence. Or they would need to have at least a basic understanding of intergenerational trauma or colonialism, et cetera.” This intentionality among staff facilitates youth empowerment, “empowering [youth] to make the decisions about their own lives” (New Mexico staff/ professional) and encourages youth–adult connection. Staff interviewees at NMCAN also emphasized growth and change as central to defining authentic youth engagement. This encompasses youth-driven community outreach and collaboration to build community. Staff in New Mexico “partner with young people to build community and lead change,” as one New Mexico staff/ professional participant said. These community connections are a valuable aspect of authentic youth engagement. One youth stated, “I believe that community, getting more connections and building that community, is very important in a young person’s life.”

Unique to youth interviewees at the HI HOPES Initiative, *adaptability* emerged as a theme in defining authentic youth engagement, encompassing being adaptable to change over time and having the ability to establish various types of supports for youth.



## How do participants define authentic youth engagement? Staff/ Professional Interview Themes



### **b. What does authentic youth engagement actually look like in sites?**

#### **Document Review**

Similar to the ways in which the sites defined authentic youth engagement, the operationalization of authentic youth engagement is fairly consistent across sites, but with differences in emphasis regarding being responsive to youth need and input. Legislative advocacy is a strategy implemented across sites toward the four key outcome indicators: permanency, stable housing, educational success and economic security, and pregnancy prevention and parenting support. Youth legislative advocacy is particularly critical to authentic youth engagement in Georgia, where youth are given extensive training in legislative advocacy and are taken to the Capitol. Legislative advocacy is also included in Hawai'i's four key strategies: 1) a public will, policy, and practice campaign to promote normalcy, equity, and inclusion efforts for Native Hawaiian children and youth; 2) statewide financial capability opportunities; 3) youth voice and engagement to improve supports for youth in care; and 4) a focus on data, accountability, and learning. As indicated in the first strategy, the HI HOPES Initiative incorporates race equity into activities related to authentic youth engagement.

For NMCAN and the Tennessee Department of Children's Services, the focus of authentic youth engagement is informed by the pressing needs of the youth they serve. In Tennessee, services are weighted toward meeting the basic needs of youth, including resource centers, collaboration for

homelessness prevention, and services for pregnant and parenting youth. In New Mexico, education success and economic security are central to how authentic youth engagement operates, with activities encompassing a work-based learning pilot, postsecondary bridging supports, and partnerships with postsecondary institutions.

Consistent with the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative's operationalization of authentic youth engagement, the four sites focused on preparing adults to expect no more and no less from a young person, respect young people's time and responsibilities, treat young people as individuals, take time to explain, plan for young people's involvement, and recognize internal and external barriers to youth–adult partnerships. At each of the sites (except Hawai'i, which did not provide staff training materials to the researchers), training content for adults centers around the four components of authentic youth engagement (youth–adult partnerships, preparation, opportunities, support). The sites also train adults in adolescent brain development. New Mexico also incorporates cultural humility into training for adults.

## Secondary Data Analysis

### *Engagement in Leadership and Advocacy Skills*

Youth were asked about their engagement in leadership and advocacy skills. The OPPS question asks: “Have you attended a training, or received help from staff or adults in the community, to support your leadership and advocacy skills (for example, deciding what policies and practices to advocate for, preparing for meetings with legislatures, planning for educating or training on foster care awareness, planning for participation in panels, providing feedback on laws and/or programs in your state, etc.)?” The following table shows youth responses, overall and by various demographics. Youth engagement in leadership and advocacy skill development significantly differed between sites overall, ranging from 29.6% in Hawai’i to 56% in New Mexico. Certain demographics were associated with more engagement, with youth currently in foster care reporting greater amounts of support in leadership and advocacy skill development. Engagement in these activities also varied across race.

<b>Youth Engaged in Development of Leadership and Advocacy Skills, Overall and by Various Demographics</b>						
<b>Engaged in Development of Leadership and Advocacy Skills</b>	<b>% of Youth in Each Category Who Are Engaged</b>					<b>Chi-square test of difference</b>
	<b>All Sites</b>	<b>GA</b>	<b>HI</b>	<b>NM</b>	<b>TN</b>	
Youth overall	38.2%	47.9%	29.6%	56%	36.6%	+
<b>Age</b>						
<i>Under 18</i>	40.6%	46.2%	43.9%	37.5%	36.6%	n.s.
<i>18 and older</i>	37.4%	48.4%	27.6%	59.5%	36.6%	
<b>Race</b>						
<i>Black/African-American, non-Hispanic</i>	42.5%	49.3%	25%	50%	34.3%	+
<i>White, non-Hispanic</i>	38.1%	44.6%	17.7%	54.6%	35.7%	
<i>Hispanic/Latino, of any race(s)</i>	48.2%	48%	9.9%	58.6%	41.7%	
<i>Native Hawaiian or part Hawaiian, non-Hispanic</i>	30.6%	N/A	30%	N/A	N/A	
<i>Other race(s), non-Hispanic</i>	35.8%	47.6%	22.2%	50%	50%	
<b>Gender</b>						
<i>Female</i>	36.5%	47.2%	28%	61.5%	33.8%	n.s.
<i>Male</i>	41.2%	49.3%	32.3%	50%	41.8%	
<b>Parenting Status</b>						
<i>Parenting</i>	35.4%	48.9%	22.1%	76.9%	37.8%	n.s.
<i>Not parenting</i>	39%	48.9%	32.6%	48.7%	36.4%	
<b>Foster Care Status</b>						
<i>Still in care</i>	48.2%	57.4%	53.3%	60.5%	36.5%	+
<i>No longer in care</i>	33.3%	39.5%	25.3%	28.6%	36.6%	
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>						
<i>Heterosexual/straight</i>	37.5%	46.5%	29.2%	52.8%	38%	n.s.
<i>Lesbian/gay/bisexual</i>	43.8%	59.1%	32.1%	72.7%	31%	
Note: ‘n.s.’ = non-statistically significant difference, ‘+’ = positive statistically significant difference, ‘-’ = negative statistically significant difference						

### Engagement in Working on Transition-Related Outcome Areas

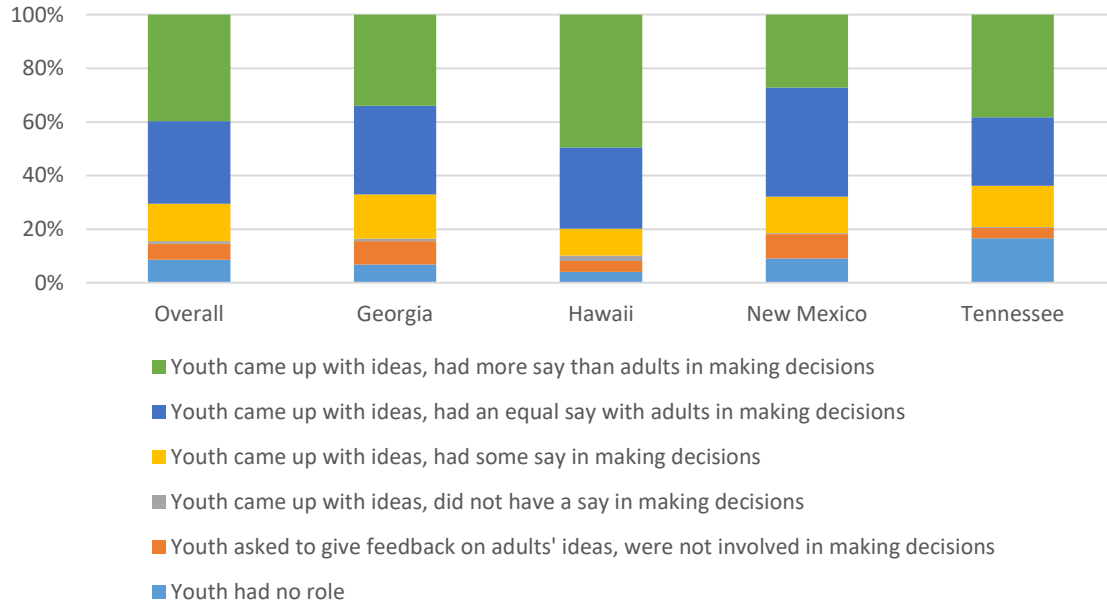
Youth were also asked about their engagement in critical transition-related outcomes areas. The OPPS question asks: “Outside of the work with your caseworker, within the past 6 months have you met or worked with staff or adults in the community on any of these: education, housing, transportation, physical and mental health, social capital, permanence, financial capability, or employment?” The following table shows youth responses overall and by various demographics. Youth engagement in improving transition-related outcomes significantly differed between sites overall, ranging from 29.9% in Hawai’i to 44% in New Mexico. The only demographic associated with overall difference in engagement was current foster care status, with youth in care receiving greater support.

Youth Engaged in Transition-Related Outcomes, Overall and By Various Demographics						
Engaged in Transition-Related Outcomes	% of Youth in Each Category Who are Engaged					Chi-square test of difference
	All Sites	GA	HI	NM	TN	
Youth Overall	35.4%	43.3%	29.9%	44%	33.2%	+
<b>Age</b>						
<i>Under 18</i>	37.6%	42.3%	43.9%	37.5%	32.7%	n.s.
<i>18 and older</i>	34.7%	43.6%	27.9%	45.2%	33.6%	
<b>Race</b>						
<i>Black/African-American, non-Hispanic</i>	38.1%	44.1%	50%	50%	29.5%	n.s.
<i>White, non-Hispanic</i>	35.7%	41.1%	17.7%	36.4%	35.7%	
<i>Hispanic/Latino, of any race(s)</i>	41.7%	44%	40%	44.8%	37.5%	
<i>Native Hawaiian or part Hawaiian, non-Hispanic</i>	28.3%	N/A	28.1%	N/A	N/A	
<i>Other race(s), non-Hispanic</i>	33.3%	42.9%	22.2%	50%	40%	
<b>Gender</b>						
<i>Female</i>	34.2%	40.5%	30.5%	53.9%	31.1%	n.s.
<i>Male</i>	37.8%	50.7%	26.9%	58.3%	38%	
<b>Parenting Status</b>						
<i>Parenting</i>	31.8%	31.9%	25.3%	69.2%	35.1%	n.s.
<i>Not parenting</i>	36.4%	46.1%	31.8%	35.1%	32.8%	
<b>Foster Care Status</b>						
<i>Still in care</i>	47.1%	55.7%	51.1%	28.6%	36.5%	+
<i>No longer in care</i>	29.2%	28.4%	26.4%	46.5%	30.1%	
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>						
<i>Heterosexual/straight</i>	35.1%	42.7%	30.3%	41.7%	33.3%	n.s.
<i>Lesbian/gay/bisexual</i>	36.5%	50%	26.4%	45.5%	31%	

Note. ‘n.s.’ = non-statistically significant difference, ‘+’ = positive statistically significant difference, ‘-’ = negative statistically significant difference

Youth who reported being engaged in assisting adults with improving outcomes areas were asked in what way they worked with adults on this. The following bar graph shows the frequency of their responses overall and by site.

### Youths' Roles in Their Work on Transition-Related Outcomes



### Youth Engagement in Evaluation

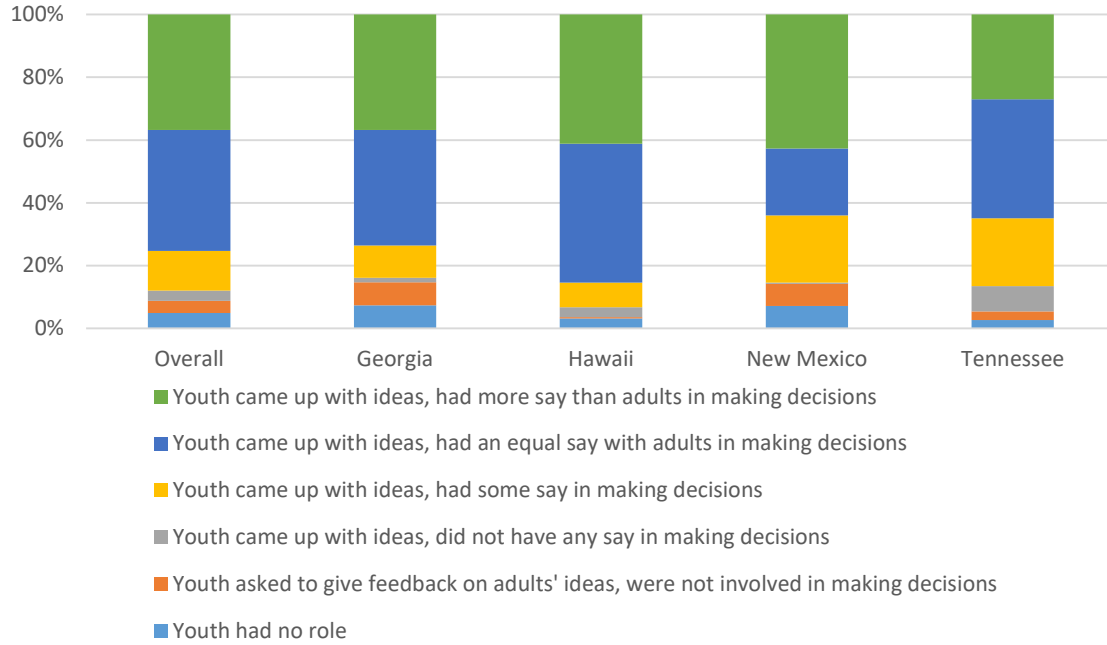
Youth were also asked about their engagement in evaluation. The OPPS question asks: “Outside of the work with your caseworker, in the past 6 months have you met with staff or adults in the community about evaluation (for example, talking about and sharing data with others, reflecting on the data, analyzing the information, etc.)?” The following table shows youth responses, overall and by various demographics. Youth engagement in evaluation efforts significantly differed between sites overall, ranging from 15.7% in Tennessee to 28.6% in Georgia. Certain demographics were associated with different levels of engagement, with youth currently in foster care reporting greater amounts of engagement in evaluation efforts. Engagement in these activities varied across race as well.

<b>Youth Engaged in Evaluation, Overall and By Various Demographics</b>						
<b>Engaged in Evaluation</b>	<b>% of Youth in Each Category Who Are Engaged</b>					<b>Chi-square test of difference</b>
	<b>All Sites</b>	<b>GA</b>	<b>HI</b>	<b>NM</b>	<b>TN</b>	
Youth overall	21.3%	28.6%	19%	28%	15.7%	+
<b>Age</b>						
<i>Under 18</i>	20.9%	26.9%	29.3%	12.5%	18.8%	n.s.
<i>18 and older</i>	22.8%	29%	17.6%	31%	13.4%	
<b>Race</b>						
<i>Black/African-American, non-Hispanic</i>	25.9%	32.4%	50%	50%	16.2%	+
<i>White, non-Hispanic</i>	19.1%	23.2%	11.8%	27.3%	16.7%	
<i>Hispanic/Latino, of any race(s)</i>	25.9%	28%	30%	27.6%	16.7%	
<i>Native Hawaiian or part Hawaiian, non-Hispanic</i>	16.4%	N/A	16.6%	N/A	N/A	
<i>Other race(s), non-Hispanic</i>	16.1%	19.1%	13.9%	33.3%	10%	
<b>Gender</b>						
<i>Female</i>	20.5%	27%	18.2%	26.9%	15.9%	n.s.
<i>Male</i>	23.6%	33.8%	20.4%	29.2%	16.5%	
<b>Parenting Status</b>						
<i>Parenting</i>	20.8%	23.4%	16.8%	21.6%	15.2%	n.s.
<i>Not parenting</i>	21.5%	29.8%	19.9%	46.2%	18.9%	
<b>Foster Care Status</b>						
<i>Still in care</i>	30.6%	41%	35.6%	0%	18.3%	+
<i>No longer in care</i>	17%	16.5%	16.3%	32.6%	13.8%	
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>						
<i>Heterosexual/straight</i>	21.6%	27%	20.1%	33.3%	16.4%	n.s.
<i>Lesbian/gay/bisexual</i>	19.7%	36.4%	11.3%	9.1%	13.8%	
<i>Note. 'n.s.' = non-statistically significant difference, '+' = positive statistically significant difference, '-' = negative statistically significant difference</i>						



Youth who had been engaged in evaluation activities were asked in what way they worked with adults on this. The following bar graph shows the frequency of their responses.

Youths' Roles in Their Work on Evaluation



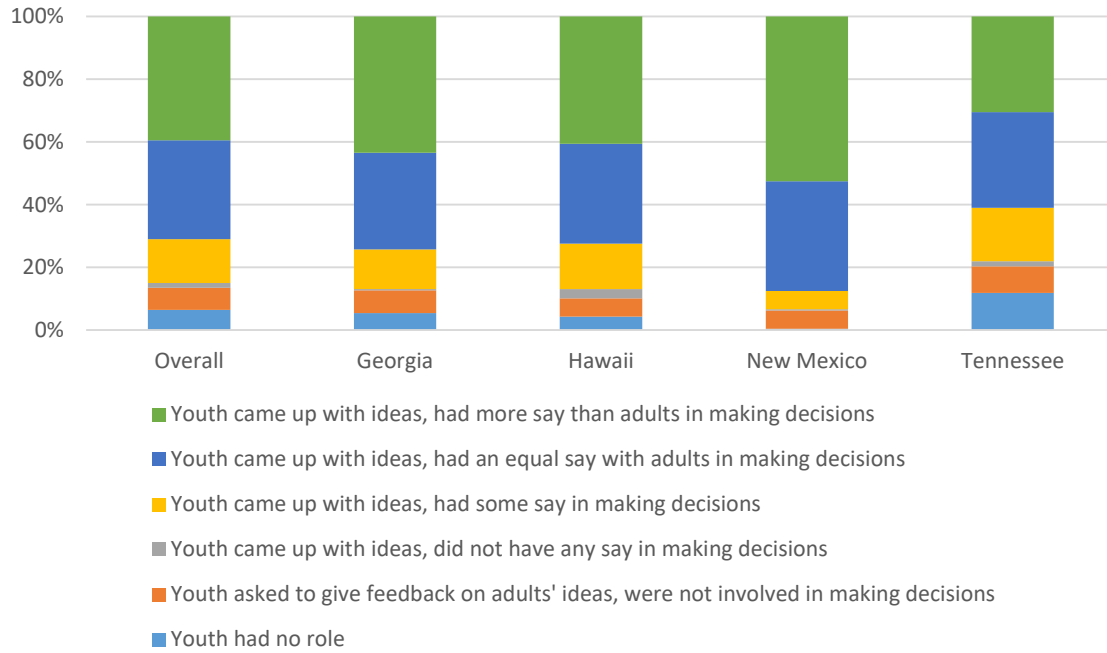
### Youth Engagement in Advocacy

Youth were also asked about their engagement in advocacy. The OPPS question asks: “Outside of the work with your caseworker, in the past 6 months did you meet or work with staff or adults in the community in advocating for young people (for example, deciding what policies and practices to advocate for, preparing for meetings with legislatures, planning for educating or training on foster care awareness, planning for participation in panels, providing feedback on laws and/or programs in your state, etc.)?” The following table shows youth responses overall and by various demographics. Youth engagement in advocacy efforts ranged from 20.9% in Hawai’i to 34% in New Mexico, but this difference was not significant. Certain demographics were associated with different levels of engagement, with youth currently in foster care reporting greater amounts of engagement in advocacy efforts. Engagement in these activities varied across race as well.

<b>Youth Engaged in Advocacy, Overall and By Various Demographics</b>						
<b>Engaged in Advocacy</b>	<b>% of Youth in Each Category Who Are Engaged</b>					<b>Chi-square test of difference</b>
	<b>All Sites</b>	<b>GA</b>	<b>HI</b>	<b>NM</b>	<b>TN</b>	
Youth overall	23.4%	23.1%	20.9%	34%	25.1%	n.s.
<b>Age</b>						
<i>Under 18</i>	25.7%	15.4%	36.6%	25%	26.7%	n.s.
<i>18 and older</i>	22.7%	25.3%	18.6%	35.7%	23.9%	
<b>Race</b>						
<i>Black/African-American, non-Hispanic</i>	23.9%	27.9%	0%	0%	20%	+
<i>White, non-Hispanic</i>	25%	12.5%	29.4%	36.4%	31%	
<i>Hispanic/Latino, of any race(s)</i>	33.3%	28%	36.7%	37.9%	29.2%	
<i>Native Hawaiian or part Hawaiian, non-Hispanic</i>	17.8%	N/A	18%	N/A	N/A	
<i>Other race(s), non-Hispanic</i>	18.5%	14.3%	16.7%	16.7%	25%	
<b>Gender</b>						
<i>Female</i>	23.4%	24.5%	21.6%	26.9%	24.5%	n.s.
<i>Male</i>	22.5%	19.7%	17.2%	41.7%	25.3%	
<b>Parenting Status</b>						
<i>Parenting</i>	20.8%	25.5%	21.6%	38.5%	13.5%	n.s.
<i>Not parenting</i>	24.2%	22.5%	19%	32.4%	27.3%	
<b>Foster Care Status</b>						
<i>Still in care</i>	33.5%	28.7%	35.6%	14.3%	35.6%	+
<i>No longer in care</i>	19.8%	18.4%	18.8%	37.2%	17.1%	
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>						
<i>Heterosexual/straight</i>	22.3%	21.1%	22.3%	33.3%	21.5%	n.s.
<i>Lesbian/gay/bisexual</i>	27.7%	34.1%	13.2%	36.4%	41.4%	
Note. ‘n.s.’ = non-statistically significant difference, ‘+’ = positive statistically significant difference, ‘-’ = negative statistically significant difference						

Youth who had been engaged with advocacy were asked in what way they worked with adults on this. The following bar graph shows the frequency of their responses.

Youths' Roles in Their Work on Advocacy



**Youth Connection to Resources and Activities**

Youth were asked whether they had been connected to 12 different resources and activities in the past 12 months. Across all sites, youth reported being connected to an average of 1.9 resources/activities within the six months preceding their completion of the spring 2018 OPPS survey. Within sites, averages ranged from 1.7 to 2.3; 65.8% of all participating youth reported being connected with at least one resource or activity, with 41.7% reporting being connected with two or more resources or activities. The following table shows the percentages of youth connected to each type of resource/activity.

<b>Percentages of Youth Connected to 12 Types of Resources/Activities in Their Community by Staff or Adults in the Past 6 months</b>					
<b>Types of Resources/Activities</b>	<b>% of Youth Connected to This Resource/Activity</b>				
	<b>All Sites</b>	<b>GA</b>	<b>HI</b>	<b>NM</b>	<b>TN</b>
Connected to events	24.2%	28.2%	24.2%	32%	18.7%
Connected to lifestyle training	17.1%	23.1%	10.9%	28%	17.5%
Connected to employment	25.8%	27.7%	24.5%	24%	26%
Connected to public speaking opportunities	9.1%	10.1%	9.4%	16%	6.4%
Connected to financial literacy classes	13.9%	15.1%	13%	24%	11.9%
Connected to educational opportunities	19.6%	26.9%	12.1%	18%	23%
Connected to college help	13.9%	16.4%	14.2%	14%	11.1%
Connected to tutoring	8.8%	13.9%	5.1%	6%	9.4%
Connected to housing	11%	13.0%	10.9%	6%	10.2%
Connected to medical care	7.9%	11.8%	6.3%	4%	6.8%
Connected to mental health care	8.1%	8.8%	5.1%	4%	12.3%
Connected to a mentor	11%	16.8%	6.9%	12%	10.6%
Connected to other miscellaneous resources or opportunities	0.9%	0.4%	0.9%	0%	1.7%

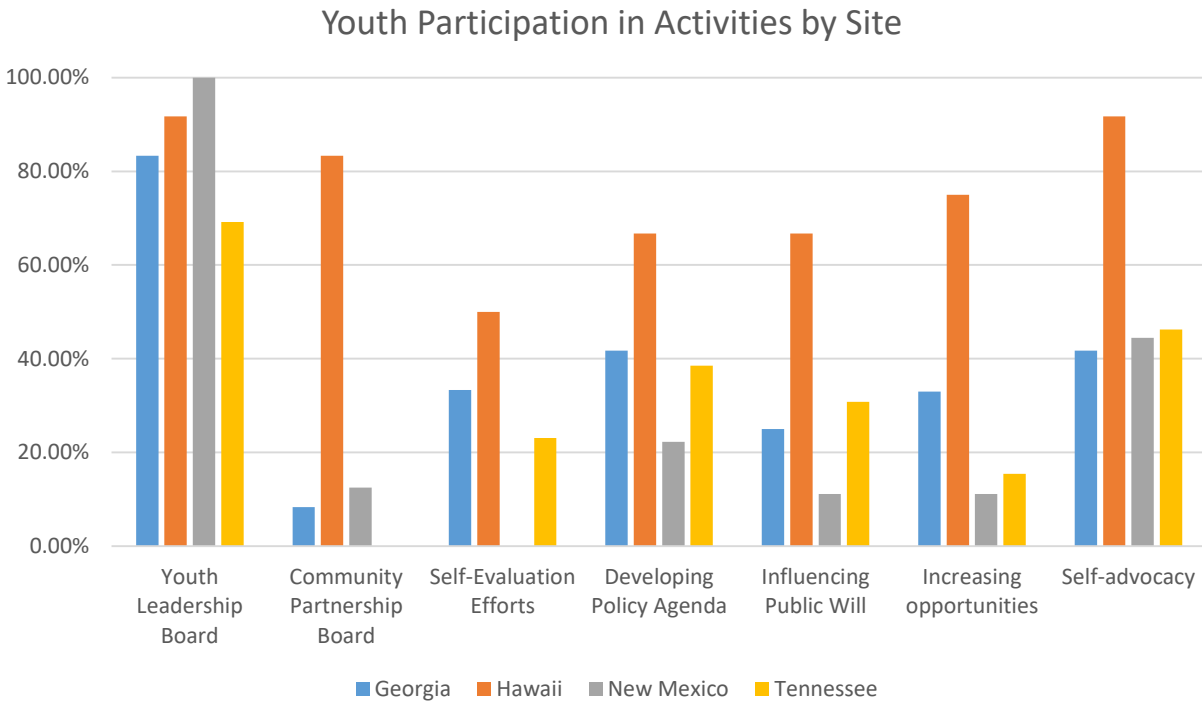
The following table shows the average number of resources or activities youth were connected to, by various demographics. As the number of resources and activities available to youth was continuous (up to 12), t-tests, rather than chi-square tests, were used to assess the significance of differences between groups. In the case of race, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to assess multiple-group difference across this continuous outcome. The average number of resources or activities youth were connected to did significantly differ between sites overall, ranging from 1.7 in Hawai'i to 2.3 in both in Georgia and New Mexico. Foster care status and parenting status were the only demographics that were associated with connection to resources/activities. Youth currently in foster care reported being connected to greater amounts of resources/activities, while youth currently parenting noted lesser connection to resources or activities.

<b>Average Number of Resources/Activities Connected To, by Various Demographics</b>						
<b>Average Number of Resources/Activities Connected To</b>	<b>% of Youth in Each Category Who Are Engaged</b>					<b>T-test/ANOVA</b>
	<b>All Sites</b>	<b>GA</b>	<b>HI</b>	<b>NM</b>	<b>TN</b>	
Youth overall	1.9	2.3	1.7	2.3	1.8	+
<b>Age</b>						
<i>Under 18</i>	1.7	2.2	1.9	0.9	1.5	n.s.
<i>18 and older</i>	2	2.4	1.6	2.6	2.1	
<b>Race</b>						
<i>Black/African-American, non-Hispanic</i>	2.1	2.5	0	0	1.6	n.s.
<i>White, non-Hispanic</i>	1.8	1.9	1.2	1.9	1.8	
<i>Hispanic/Latino, of any race(s)</i>	2.2	2.3	1.9	2.8	1.9	
<i>Native Hawaiian or part Hawaiian, non-Hispanic</i>	1.7	N/A	1.7	N/A	N/A	
<i>Other race(s), non-Hispanic</i>	1.9	2.2	1.7	1.6	2.2	
<b>Gender</b>						
<i>Female</i>	1.9	2.1	1.7	2	1.8	n.s.
<i>Male</i>	2.1	2.8	1.5	2.6	1.9	
<b>Parenting Status</b>						
<i>Parenting</i>	1.6	1.9	1.8	3.3	1.2	+ Note: significant at p < .06
<i>Not parenting</i>	2	2.5	1.4	1.9	1.9	
<b>Foster Care Status</b>						
<i>Still in care</i>	2.3	2.8	1.9	1	1.9	+
<i>No longer in care</i>	1.8	1.9	1.6	2.5	1.8	
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>						
<i>Heterosexual/straight</i>	1.9	2.5	1.7	2.2	1.7	n.s.
<i>Lesbian/gay/bisexual</i>	1.9	2.1	1.3	2.9	2.3	
Note. 'n.s.' = non-statistically significant difference, '+' = positive statistically significant difference, '-' = negative statistically significant difference						

## Surveys

### *Activities Youth Are Engaged In*

Youth were asked to report which activities they have been involved with in their site over the past 12 months. The following bar chart shows the percentage of youth who had participated in each of 7 activities.



Youth rated their satisfaction with their involvement in various youth engagement activities.

<b>Youth Mean Satisfaction Ratings for Different Engagement Activities</b>																				
<b>Engagement Activity</b>	I enjoy[ed] participating in this activity.					Participating in this activity has helped me build my skills.					My participation has contributed to this activity's success.					It's important that my site effectively engages youth in this activity.				
	All	GA	HI	NM	TN	All	GA	HI	NM	TN	All	GA	HI	NM	TN	All	GA	HI	NM	TN
Youth leadership board	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.5	3.6	3.1	3.9	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.1	3.8	3.5	3.4	3.8	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.4
Community partnership board	3.8	3	3.9	3	N/A	3.8	3	3.9	3	N/A	3.4	2	3.6	3	N/A	3.9	4	3.9	4	N/A
Self-evaluation efforts	3.9	4	4	N/A	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.8	N/A	3.3	3.4	3.7	3.7	N/A	2.7	3.8	3.7	4	N/A	3.7
Developing a policy agenda	3.6	3.4	3.8	3.5	3.4	3.9	3.6	4	4	4	3.6	3.4	3.9	3.5	3.4	3.9	3.8	3.9	4	3.8
Influencing public will	3.9	4	3.9	4	4	3.8	4	4	4	3.3	3.8	4	3.9	4	3.3	3.8	4	4	4	3.3
Increasing opportunities and support in the community	3.9	3.8	4	4	3	3.7	3.5	4	4	2	3.6	3.5	4	4	2	3.8	3.8	4	4	3
Self-advocacy	3.7	3.4	3.8	4	3.7	3.8	3.6	3.9	4	3.8	3.8	3.6	3.8	4	3.8	3.9	3.6	4	4	3.8

*Note.* These scales had a possible range of 1 (Not at All) to 4 (A Lot)

Staff also rated their satisfaction with their involvement in various youth engagement activities.

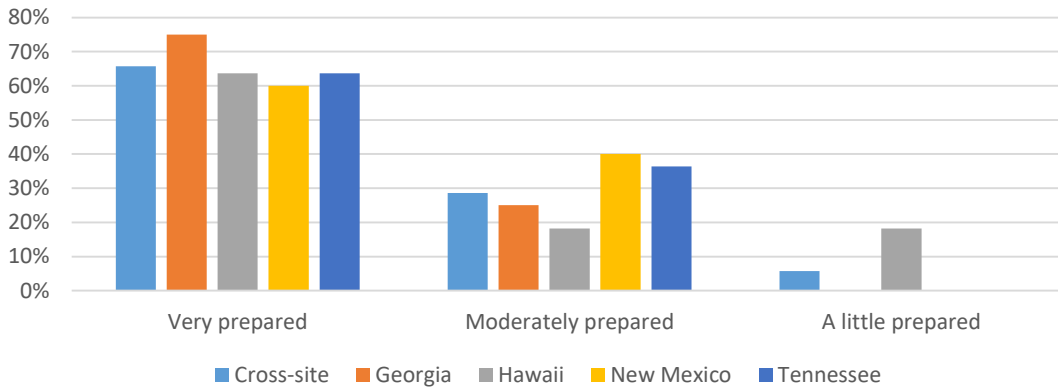
<b>Staff Mean Satisfaction Ratings for Different Engagement Activities</b>																
<b>Engagement Activity</b>	1. I enjoy helping to implement this activity.					2. Youth enjoy participating in this activity.					3. Participation in this activity helps youth build skills.					
	All	GA	HI	NM	TN	All	GA	HI	NM	TN	All	GA	HI	NM	TN	
Youth leadership board	3.8	4	4	4	3.7	3.5	4	3.8	4	3.1	3.8	4	4	4	3.7	
Community partnership board	3.9	3.7	4	4	3.7	3.1	3	3.3	3.5	2	3.6	3	3.8	4	3	
Self-evaluation efforts	3.7	3	4	3.3	4	3.2	3	3.4	2.5	4	3.8	4	3.8	3.8	4	
Developing a policy agenda	3.8	3.5	4	4	4	3.7	3.3	3.8	4	4	3.8	3.5	4	4	4	
Influencing public will	3.8	3.5	4	4	3.7	3.7	3.5	3.8	4	3.5	3.9	3.8	4	4	4	
Increasing opportunities and support in community	3.9	3.9	3.9	4	3.8	3.6	3.4	3.7	4	3.3	3.7	3.6	3.7	4	3.7	
Self-advocacy	4	4	3.9	4	4	3.6	3.3	3.8	4	3.5	3.8	3.5	3.9	4	4	

*Note.* These scales had a possible range of 1 (Not at All) to 4 (A Lot)

### Staff Preparation to Effectively Engage Youth

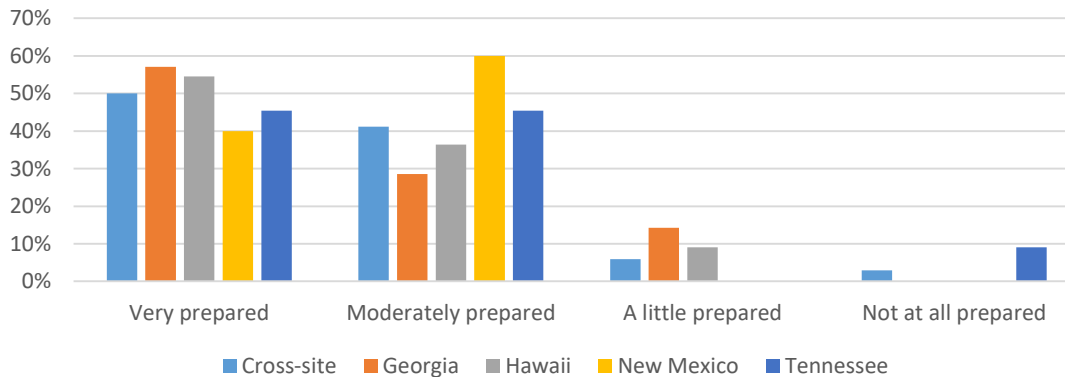
When asked what their sites do to prepare/train adults to engage youth in high-quality youth–adult partnerships, staff/professional participants described meeting with youth to hear their hopes and expectations, being briefed on challenges faced by youth, and receiving continuing training/education around adolescent brain development and communication. The following bar chart shows how well prepared participants feel that adults are for this work.

Thinking about adults in your site who work with youth, how well prepared are they to engage youth in quality youth–adult partnerships?



When asked what their sites do to prepare/train adults to provide preparation, opportunities, and supports for youth partners, staff/professional participants described the importance of leveraging community connections and educating adults about resources available to youth. The following bar chart shows how well prepared participants feel that adults are for this work.

Thinking about adults in your site who work with youth, how well prepared are they to prepare and provide opportunities and supports for youth partners?





## Interviews

### *“How does authentic youth engagement operate in this site?”*

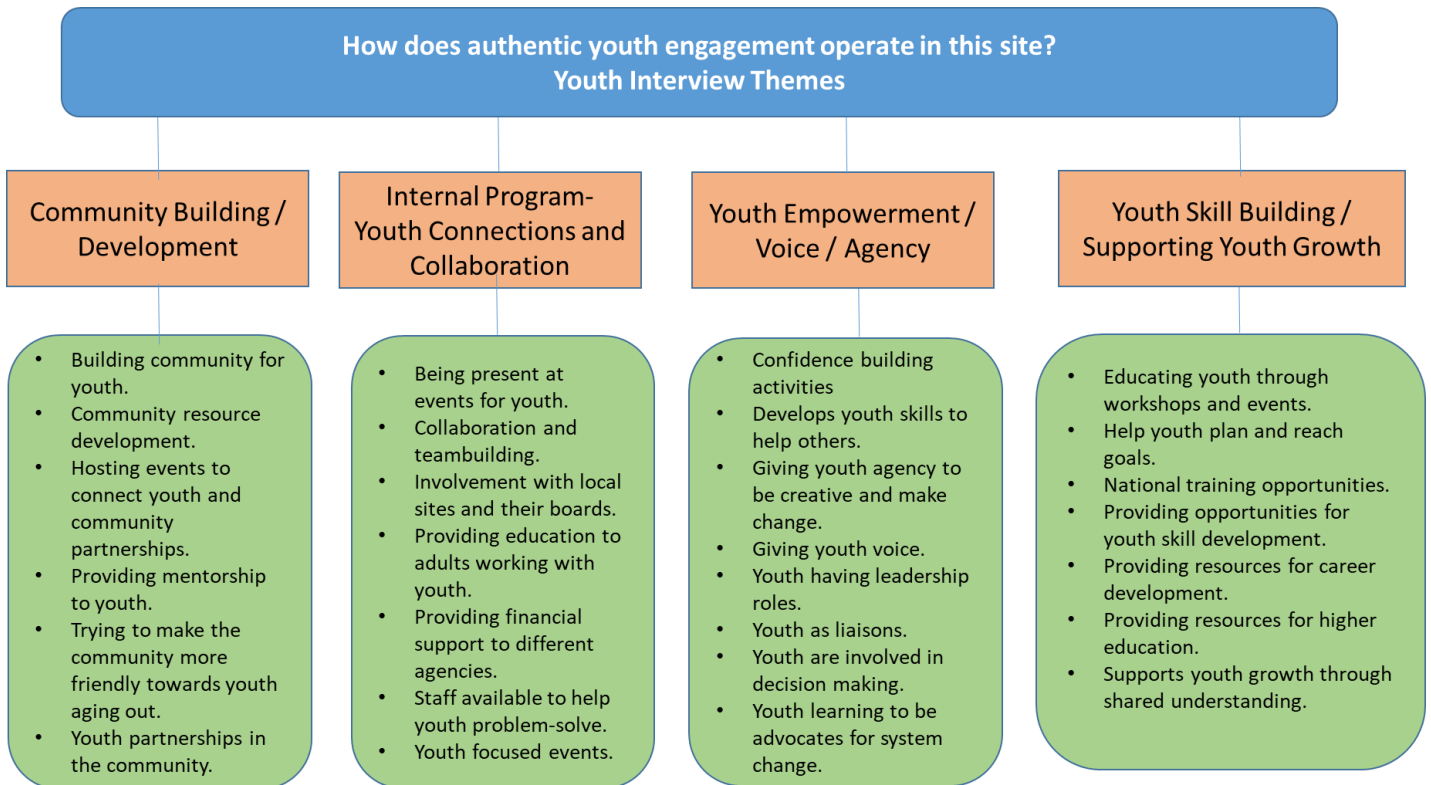
The thematic networks emerging from this analysis are included below. Across sites, staff and youth discussed community building and collaboration, youth empowerment/voice/agency, and youth skill building as integral to the operation of authentic youth engagement. Building community for young people by creating connections between youth and their peers, and between youth and adult partners, happens both internally through youth engagement in programs, and externally through community outreach and collaboration. An important aspect of building community for young people is facilitating opportunities to advocate for other youth who experience foster care. A staff interviewee in Hawai'i discussed this connection to community: “We’ve made an effort to having lasting connections with the youth who’ve aged out. The ones that have been advocates, they continue to give back to the current young people that are aging out of foster care.” These “lasting connections” benefit all youth who experienced foster care; youth advocacy in Hawai'i has “made it so the youth aging out of foster care have resources that are more reflective of their true needs” (HI HOPES staff interviewee).

Youth empowerment operates in many ways across sites, but a youth interviewee in Hawai'i provided a statement representative of many youth interviewees on their experiences of authentic youth engagement: “I was involved in many things. I really know about some of the things involved with the board. We give out grant money to different agencies, we train adults on certain topics that affect young people. I’ve attended many meetings on the community partnership meetings. Many things... because there were grant opportunities, we can come up with our own ideas.” Youth skill building is another integral component of the operation of authentic youth engagement. A youth interviewee in Tennessee stated: “We learn all the important skills we need really, I guess, to survive in the future. A lot of us, I guess, being foster kids we’re going through a lot at the time. They were just more supportive. I’m pretty sure we had a class on mental health and everything, and taking care of yourself and stuff like that. They were letting us know that pretty much it’s normal for kids or people our age, really not even kids, but people our age to go through stuff.”

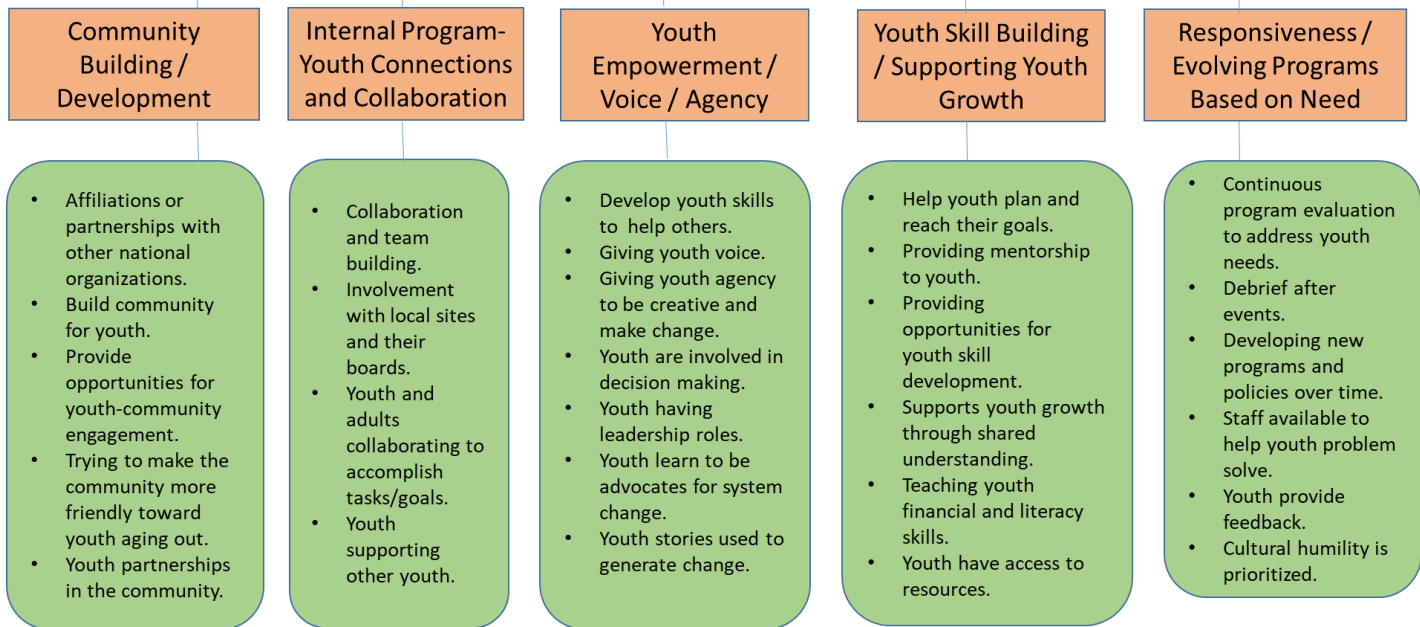
Among staff in Georgia, constantly evolving programs based on need emerged as a theme, though this sentiment was not exclusive to Georgia. This flexibility in programs and priorities expands both the number of youth engaged and the scope of youth involvement. One staff stated: “The variety of opportunities EmpowerMENT (Georgia Youth Opportunities Initiative) offers is great because not every young person has the same amount of time to dedicate to the change that they want to create. That has to make sense in the context of other aspects of their life. So I think that some of that flexibility that we have there, and fluidity maybe is beneficial.” This fluidity is connected to another theme that emerged among staff interviewed in New Mexico: collaborative problem solving. This problem solving occurs at both individual and organizational levels. According to one staff at NMCAN, “We’re continuously learning and continuously evaluating all aspects of our work, and then reflecting on ways to improve it or addressing challenges.” Collaborative problem solving was also described by a HI HOPES staff interviewee as “identifying problem areas or where the service gaps are and then just coming together as a team to figure out different ways we can help the issue.”

Among youth interviewees in New Mexico and staff interviewees in Tennessee, supporting youth as they grow and transition emerged as themes. This theme encompasses assisting young people

with high school completion and postsecondary access and success, facilitating financial literacy, helping youth plan and reach goals, providing resources for career development, connecting youth to needed resources, and providing mentorship.



How does authentic youth engagement operate in this site?  
Staff/ Professional Interview Themes



**c. What youth are missing from engagement opportunities?**

**Document Review**

*No relevant information identified through this source.*

**Secondary Data Analysis**

Demographic information regarding who is and is not authentically engaged in this site’s work based on secondary analyses of OPPS data can be gleaned from the tables in section 1.b above, which provide information on youth engagement in various activities by demographics.

## Surveys

### *Diversity of Engaged Youth*

Youth and staff/professionals provided ratings of how they felt about their site’s engagement of diverse youth.

<b>Youth and Staff Mean Ratings of Questions Regarding Diversity of Engaged Youth</b>										
The Jim Casey Initiative work in my site engages youth with different ...	Youth Mean Rating					Staff Mean Rating				
	All	GA	HI	NM	TN	All	GA	HI	NM	TN
a) skills and abilities (physical and mental)	3.6	3.6	3.8	3.6	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.4
b) races/ethnicities	3.7	3.6	3.9	4	3.3	3.9	3.9	4	4	3.8
c) cultures	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.9	3	3.7	4	4	3.8	3.2
d) socio-economic statuses	3.4	3.4	3.7	3.6	2.9	3.6	3.6	3.8	3.8	3.3
e) ages	3.5	3.7	3.8	3.5	2.9	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.6	3.5
f) sexual orientations	3.7	3.7	3.8	4	3.5	3.7	4	3.9	3.4	3.5
g) genders and gender expressions	3.6	3.5	3.9	4	3.1	3.6	3.9	3.8	3.4	3.3
h) geographies of where they live or come from (for example, urban, rural)	3.6	3.8	3.6	4	2.9	3.3	3.3	3.8	2.6	3.2
Adults involved with youth engagement are knowledgeable of the diversity of youth participants.	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.2	3.4	3.6	3.6	3.6	3
Adults involved with youth engagement respect the diversity of youth participants.	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.9	3.5	3.6	3.1	3.7	3.8	3.6
Efforts are made to make sure that youth can safely (emotionally, physically, mentally, culturally, spiritually) participate from their own unique perspective.	3.8	3.5	3.8	3.9	3.8	3.7	3.5	3.8	3.8	3.6

*Note.* These scales had a possible range of 1 (Never) to 4 (Always)

## Interviews

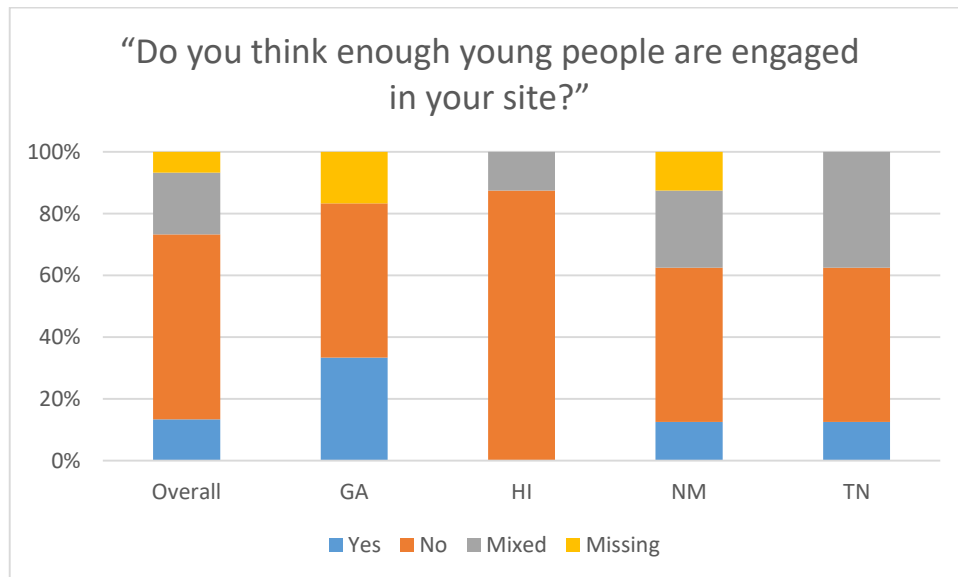
### *“Do you think enough young people are engaged in your site?”*

Across both youth and staff participants in all four sites, responses to the research question “Are enough young people engaged?” were primarily *no* (see bar chart below). Reasons commonly mentioned by participants who responded *no* or *mixed* included personal life circumstances and limited adult encouragement to participate in programs; many also said that it is simply difficult to advertise the programs to the youth. Personal life circumstances were discussed in reference to other responsibilities: “Whether it’s a resource thing, they can’t afford to take off work to come and do this, or they’re just not able to work up the courage” (Tennessee interviewee). Another cited reason for limited engagement suggested that no matter how many youth are engaged, there will always be a larger population who

are not reached. As one participant summarized, “I don’t think that there’s ever enough” (Tennessee interviewee). This was echoed at another site: “There’s probably always room to engage people more” (Hawai’i interviewee). Other concerns with general youth engagement were expressed, such as “That’s the hardest part that I noticed, is trying to get all of them engaged” (Hawai’i interviewee).

Retention is impacted by transportation, event capacity, and activity or event topic. Georgia and Hawai’i both mentioned limited capacity as impacting engagement. In describing limited capacity, one Georgia interviewee stated, “There are a lot of youth who become to know about EmpowerMENT because they’re already youth who have a certain amount of initiative or resourcefulness ... And it’s much harder to detect and engage, it’s naturally hard to detect and engage those who may be more at the margins of self-sufficiency” (Georgia interviewee). Limited capacity, including staffing challenges, may make it difficult to identify youth who are teetering with engagement to be encouraged to fully engage or participate in events. Limited engagement by some youth may also not be noticed as much depending on the size of the event. One Hawai’i participant shared: “We can only have four panelists, which I don’t think is enough because there are always more people that want to join, but there’s never enough space.” Restricting the size of the events and when they are held limits engagements. One respondent explained, “So even for partnerships, those are during school time. People in high school usually can’t come, so it doesn’t work with the youths’ schedule or ... for me, yeah, no.”

Many interviewees who responded *yes* or *mixed* when asked whether enough young people were engaged at their site did not elaborate on their response. One participant who responded “yes” described how they perceived youth engagement at events attended stating: “A lot of youth come to our meetings and don’t want to leave.”



***“Are certain groups of youth not included or under-represented?”***

Across both youth and staff interviewees in all four sites (New Mexico, Tennessee, Georgia and Hawai’i), responses to the research question, “Are certain groups of youth not included or under-represented?” were mixed, with the most common answer in most sites being “yes” (see bar chart below). Groups frequently missing from the demographics tend to be male youth, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and youth of color. Lack of male youth involvement, which has been recognized nationally by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (see 2018 Performance Measure Report on Opportunity Passport Participants), was mentioned across all sites, despite the male majority within the foster care system. One interviewee in Hawai’i observed: “We have more males in foster care overall, but when we look at the amount of males engaging in services, it’s significantly lower than females.” In New Mexico, an interviewee explained, “I think ... naturally there always seems to be this predisposition for having greater engagement among our young women, than our young men.” Greater engagement from females may be due to a lack of programs geared towards males. As one interviewee in Georgia stated, “I feel that the boys are kinda under-represented. I feel that there is not enough programs for our young men out here.”

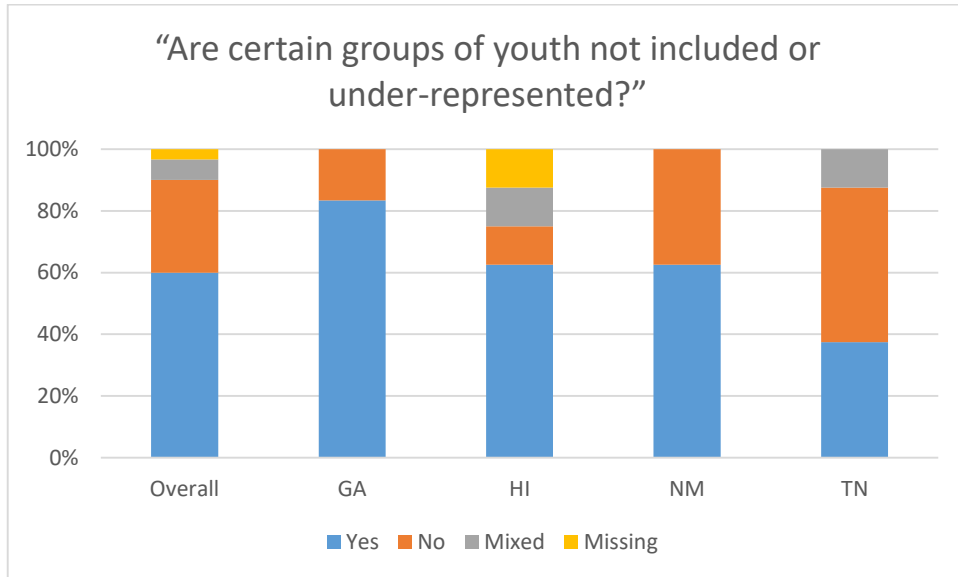
New Mexico, Tennessee, and Georgia brought up lack of engagement from youth of color. The main demographic reported as excluded in New Mexico were Native American youth. One interviewee stated, “I would like to see more Native young people. I mean, I’ve seen like two maybe in... I would say yeah, they’re underrepresented in our organization.” New Mexico interviewees also stated that black youth participation was “definitely missing.” Interviewees in Tennessee and Georgia reported a lack of representation of Latinx youth. Interviewees in Georgia also mentioned Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native youth as under-represented. One interviewee explained, “We don’t have a lot of racial and ethnic identities that are more of a minority in our state [...] in our advocacy group in specifically leadership roles.”

Youth and staff interviewed in New Mexico, Tennessee, and Georgia were concerned about the lack of involvement of LGBTQ+ youth. One interviewee in Georgia stated, “They’re not supported and valued when it comes down to certain events because it comes down to confidentiality. A lot of LGBTQ, they aren’t willing to say, ‘Well, yeah I am LGBTQ’ because of ... how they may be treated or what somebody at the group home may say.” Unique to New Mexico was a concern with the lack of participation of transgender and nonbinary youth. “I think that folks on the gender spectrum are definitely not necessarily represented here. There’s not a lot of folks that are openly [...] but there’s not a lot of trans folks for example, who are there even though there’s a lot of trans folks in our community.”

Specific to Hawai’i was concern about the lack of involvement of younger youth. One interviewee stated, “But the younger teens, maybe, I don’t think there’s anybody really working with them. Like, you know, the kids from 13 to 15 or 16.”

Many interviewees who responded *no* or *mixed* did not elaborate on their response. More detailed participant responses included: “I think it’s pretty inclusive of all people” (Tennessee interviewee), “I don’t see anybody underrepresented” (New Mexico interviewee), and “I think all of the young people that I’ve encountered, it’s a very diverse group. I mean they vary, females, males, all sorts of backgrounds. So I haven’t noticed that I’ve had more of one particular group. It’s pretty much always

been a mixture” (Tennessee interviewee). Overall, those who responded *no* to the research question perceived inclusion at various group meetings, events, and activities.



## **Research Question 2: What capacity do sites have/not have to implement activities related to authentic youth engagement?**

### **Document Review**

Accessing existing community resources, expanding and deepening community support, and cultivating community champions for young people transitioning from foster care are key in expanding the capacity of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. According to the 2018 Performance Measure Report on Opportunity Passport Participants, currently active sites reported \$86,381 in non-Jim Casey Initiative financial support leveraged in 2018, which is a 22 percent increase from 2007. The largest portion of leveraged funds was in the form of cash (51%), followed by leverage in the form of public policy (23%; pp. 20–22).

### **Secondary Data Analysis**

*No relevant information identified through this source.*



## Surveys

Staff were asked to reflect on their site's capacity to do youth engagement work. Their mean responses can be found in the following table.

<b>Staff Mean Ratings of Their Site's Capacity to Do Youth Engagement Work</b>					
In Jim Casey Initiative work in my site ...	<b>Staff Mean Rating</b>				
	<b>All</b>	<b>GA</b>	<b>HI</b>	<b>NM</b>	<b>TN</b>
1. youth engagement is supported by legislation, policy and/or practice guidelines.	3.5	4	3.3	3.2	3.4
2. a strategic plan for youth engagement has been developed as part of our site's Results and Equity plan.	3.6	3.4	4	3.2	3.5
3. the leaders that I work with understand and support youth engagement initiatives.	3.7	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.5
4. strategies have been developed for <i>recruiting</i> youth.	3.4	3.8	3.5	3.4	2.9
5. strategies have been developed for <i>retaining</i> youth.	3.4	3.7	3.7	3	3.2
6. there are dedicated staff resources to support youth engagement practice.	3.6	4	3.6	4	3.1
7. financial resources (e.g., stipends, food, budget, bus tickets) are in place to support the active involvement of youth.	3.6	3.9	3.8	3.4	3.2
8. there are processes in place to include youth voice in the Initiative's work (youth boards, etc.).	3.8	3.9	3.8	4	3.5
9. youth engagement reflects adolescent brain development.	3.6	3.8	3.8	3.6	3.3
10. there is a clear process for youth to share concerns.	3.6	3.8	3.5	3.6	3.4
11. staff are supported to learn more and develop their youth engagement skills.	3.5	3.4	3.7	3.6	3.2
12. clear information about how to participate in projects and initiatives is available to youth (emails, website, posters, etc.).	3.6	3.5	3.4	3.8	3.6
13. youths' contributions/achievements are celebrated and shared.	3.5	3.8	3.7	3.4	3.2
<b>Average Rating across 13 Site Capacity Items</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.3</b>
<i>Note.</i> These scales had a possible range of 1 (Never) to 4 (Always)					

## Interviews

When asked, “What capacities does your site have related to sufficiently engaging youth?” staff interviewees across sites consistently referenced staff buy-in and staff preparation and skills facilitating authentic youth engagement. Regarding staff preparation and skills, a staff in Hawai’i offered, “I believe we really have a great group statewide of [staff] that know their communities really well and are able to work with youth.” A staff member in Georgia expressed the importance of staff buy-in, stating, “The idea of the value of youth engagement, youth voice, is one that just resonates at the core of the site and within the people who run it.” Hawai’i staff brought up at least two aspects of capacity that were unique to their site: emphasis on partnerships and relationships within the community, and hiring youth who have experienced foster care to work on advocacy because, as one staff/professional explained, “they have so much to offer to an organization or an entity.”

Lack of adequate and consistent staffing and funding are perceived as capacity limitations across sites. A statement offered by a staff in Georgia conveys a common sentiment, “If I could wave a magic wand and ... round out the staffing a little bit more and round out the sustainability of funding, then that would be a real win.” Staff in Tennessee wish to engage youth beyond their current capacity: “I think that with more staff, with more financial resources, that we could reach a lot of youth. A lot more youth.” In addition to limitations in staffing and funding, staff in Georgia and Tennessee discussed differential prioritization of authentic youth engagement between departments as an inadequacy. Hawai’i was the only site to bring up limited social media reach as a lacking capacity, “I feel like we could better engage on social media ... if more young people were aware that we existed, liked us on social media, they would stay in the loop more, with what the services were. But we just haven’t got the website and social media following that would really make that happen.”

## Research Question 3: What successes and challenges/barriers to authentic youth engagement have Jim Casey Initiative sites experienced?

The findings for this research question are organized into two sections: (a) successes and (b) challenges.

### A. Successes related to authentic youth engagement

#### Document Review

Over 14,000 young people nationally have enrolled in Opportunity Passport. According to the 2018 Performance Measure Report on Opportunity Passport Participants, comparing data from Opportunity Passport participants to youth data from the National Youth in Transition Database, youth involved in the Opportunity Passport program have an advantage over their peers in the areas of educational success and economic security, housing stability, and pregnancy prevention and parenting support (p. 3).

Each of the four sites have documented successes that contribute to the vision of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative that all young people who have spent at least one day in foster care have the resources, relationships, and opportunities to achieve well-being and success. Legislative successes, including extending foster care, were documented in Georgia, Hawai'i, and Tennessee. The HI HOPES Initiative and NMCAN have led community change in progress toward race equity. Supporting financial capability for youth is another area of success across sites.

Notable successes for Hawai'i include extensive community collaboration and partnerships and educating the public on issues relevant to youth who have experienced foster care. Tennessee has also created important community collaborations toward authentic youth engagement including participation in the Tennessee Interagency Council on Homelessness and collaborative work to increase supports for pregnant and parenting young people. New Mexico has successfully implemented a mentoring program, and created a resource book for youth entering care — a product of youth–adult partnership.

#### Secondary Data Analysis

*No relevant information identified through this source.*

#### Surveys

Youth and staff were asked to rate the success of their site's various youth engagement efforts. Mean youth and staff ratings can be found in the following tables. The first table includes general engagement efforts, while the following tables cover each of the four elements of youth engagement: youth–adult partnerships, opportunities, preparation, and support.

<b>Youth and Staff Mean Ratings of the Success of Various Youth Engagement Efforts</b>										
	<b>Youth Mean Rating</b>					<b>Staff Mean Rating</b>				
	<b>All</b>	<b>GA</b>	<b>HI</b>	<b>NM</b>	<b>TN</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>GA</b>	<b>HI</b>	<b>NM</b>	<b>TN</b>
1. There is an effective process for recruiting youth to participate in the Initiative.	3.3	2.9	3.4	3.8	3.1	3.1	3.1	2.9	3.4	3.1
2. There is clear information available (through emails, website, posters, etc.) to youth about how to participate in projects and initiatives.	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.6	3	3.4	3.5	3.2	3.8	3.4
<i>Note.</i> These scales had a possible range of 1 (Never) to 4 (Always)										

Youth and Staff Mean Ratings of the Success of Youth–Adult Partnership Efforts										
	Youth Mean Rating					Staff Mean Rating				
	All	GA	HI	NM	TN	All	GA	HI	NM	TN
1. When working together on projects or activities, clear roles and responsibilities are set for <u>youth</u> .	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.4	3.3	3.6	3.6	3.2
2. When working together on projects or activities, clear roles and responsibilities are set for <u>adults</u> .	3.6	3.4	3.7	3.4	3.7	3.4	3.1	3.5	3.4	3.4
3. When working on projects or initiatives, youth and adults make decisions collaboratively.	3.7	3.7	3.8	3.4	3.7	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.4	2.9
4. <u>Youth</u> expand their skills and knowledge as a result of collaborating with <u>adults</u> .	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.3	3.6	3.6	3.4	3.8	3.8	3.5
5. <u>Adults</u> expand their skills and knowledge as a result of collaborating with <u>youth</u> .	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.1	3.8	3.8	3.5
6. Youth are provided opportunities to access training and skill-building workshops.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.8	3.5	3.7	3.5	3.8	3.4	3.8
7. Youth are coached on leadership skills they want to improve.	3.5	3.3	3.8	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.8	3.3
8. Youth have access to managers and leaders who can address their concerns.	3.6	3.4	3.8	3.6	3.5	3.8	3.7	3.8	4	3.6
9. Youth–adult partnerships contribute to policy and practice change.	3.5	3.4	3.6	3.3	3.6	3.5	3.6	3.9	4	2.6
10. Youths' contributions/achievements are celebrated.	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.8	3.6	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.3
<b>Average Rating across 10 Youth–Adult Partnership Items</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.3</b>
<i>Note.</i> These scales had a possible range of 1 (Never) to 4 (Always)										

<b>Youth Mean Ratings of the Success of Youth Opportunity Efforts</b>					
In the past 12 months, through the Jim Casey Initiative, my site has offered me opportunities to participate in the following activities (not if you actually participated, but if you were offered the opportunity to do so):	<b>Youth Mean Rating</b>				
	<b>All</b>	<b>GA</b>	<b>HI</b>	<b>NM</b>	<b>TN</b>
1. Self-advocacy	2.6	2.6	2.9	2.7	2.1
2. Leadership opportunities	3.1	3.3	3.5	3	2.4
3. Practice impact	2	1.6	2.3	2.7	1.8
4. Advocating for policy	2.6	2.6	2.8	3	2.1
<b>Average Rating across 4 Youth Opportunity Items</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.1</b>
<i>Note.</i> These scales had a possible range of 1 (Never) to 4 (5 or More Times).					

<b>Staff Mean Ratings of the Success of Youth Opportunity Efforts</b>					
Of the youth that have been engaged in your site's work in the past 12 months, about how many have been given opportunities to participate in the following activities (not how many actually participated, but how many were offered the opportunity to do so):	<b>Staff Mean Rating</b>				
	<b>All</b>	<b>GA</b>	<b>HI</b>	<b>NM</b>	<b>TN</b>
1. Self-advocacy	3.6	4	3.4	3.8	3.5
2. Leadership opportunities	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.8	2.9
3. Practice impact	2.6	3.2	2.6	2.8	2.3
4. Advocating for policy	2.9	3.5	2.9	3.6	2.1
<b>Average Rating across 4 Youth Opportunity Items</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>2.8</b>
<i>Note.</i> These scales had a possible range of 1 (None or Very Few) to 4 (Almost All or All).					

<b>Youth and Staff Mean Ratings of the Success of Youth Preparation Efforts</b>										
<b>When youth are involved in a Jim Casey Initiative activity, the adult(s) they are working with ...</b>	<b>Youth Mean Rating</b>					<b>Staff Mean Rating</b>				
	<b>All</b>	<b>GA</b>	<b>HI</b>	<b>NM</b>	<b>TN</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>GA</b>	<b>HI</b>	<b>NM</b>	<b>TN</b>
1. ... make it clear what the purpose of the project is.	3.6	3.9	3.7	3.3	3.4	3.8	3.7	3.9	4	3.6
2. ... make it clear what my role is.	3.6	3.9	3.6	3.3	3.5	3.7	3.6	3.7	4	3.6
3. ... let me know why I am a good fit for this task.	3.4	3.5	3.7	3.2	3.3	3.7	3.3	3.8	4	3.6
4. ... identify areas I can strengthen through participating in this task.	3.4	3.6	3.3	3.5	3.2	3.4	3.1	3.4	3.8	3.5
5. ... ask me how I am feeling about participating in the task.	3.7	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.4	3.8	3.9	3.7	4	3.6
6. ... let me know how I may benefit from participating.	3.6	3.8	3.5	3.3	3.5	3.8	3.7	3.9	4	3.7
7. ... make all of the arrangements for my participation.	3.4	3.3	3.8	3.5	3.2	3.1	3.2	3.2	3.6	2.9
8. ... pay for any costs associated with my participation.	3.6	3.6	3.9	3.5	3.2	3.7	3.8	3.9	3.6	3.5
9. ... provide me with any documents, information, technology, or other things I need to be successful.	3.6	3.9	3.8	3.2	3.3	3.7	3.6	3.8	4	3.5
10. ... help me prepare for my role in the activity (for example, my presentation).	3.7	3.9	3.9	3.3	3.5	3.8	3.8	4	4	3.6
11. ... help make sure I am participating in self-care.	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.5	3.3	3.5	3.2	3.6	3.8	3.6
12. ... are present at the activity to ensure everything is properly prepared and runs smoothly.	3.7	3.9	3.8	3.3	3.6	3.9	3.6	3.9	3.8	4
<b>Average Rating across 12 Youth Preparation Items</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>3.5</b>
<i>Note.</i> These scales had a possible range of 1 (Never) to 4 (Always).										

<b>Youth and Staff Mean Ratings of the Success of Youth Support Efforts</b>										
<b>When youth are involved in a Jim Casey Initiative activity, the adult(s) they are working with ...</b>	<b>Youth Mean Rating</b>					<b>Staff Mean Rating</b>				
	<b>All</b>	<b>GA</b>	<b>HI</b>	<b>NM</b>	<b>TN</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>GA</b>	<b>HI</b>	<b>NM</b>	<b>TN</b>
1. ... provide the right amount of physical/environmental support (for example, taking a youth to an event space in advance to check it out, informing them about the dress code).	3.7	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.8	3.6	3.7
2. ... provide the right amount of emotional support (for example, helping them process heavy content during an even, debriefing afterward).	3.6	3.8	3.5	3.3	3.5	3.8	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.9
3. ... provide the right amount of financial support (for example, travel stipends to accommodate youths' ability to do the work, honoraria).	3.4	3.3	3.8	3.5	3.2	3.7	3.9	4	3.2	3.4
4. ... offer the right amount of encouragement.	3.6	3.6	3.9	3.5	3.2	3.9	3.9	3.9	4	3.7
<b>Average Rating across 4 Youth Support Items</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.7</b>
<b>After youth are involved in a Jim Casey Initiative activity, the adult(s) they are working with ...</b>										
<b>After youth are involved in a Jim Casey Initiative activity, the adult(s) they are working with ...</b>	<b>Youth Mean Rating</b>					<b>Staff Mean Rating</b>				
5. ... check in with youth after the activity to debrief.	3.7	3.9	3.9	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.6	3.4
6. ... provide feedback on youths' performance in the activity.	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.5	3.3	3.7	3.8	3.9	3.4	3.5
7. ... ask youth for their feedback.	3.7	3.9	3.8	3.3	3.6	3.8	3.8	4	3.8	3.6
8. ... listen to youths' feedback for the staff.	3.7	3.9	4	3.3	3.5	3.9	3.9	4	3.8	3.8
9. ... respond to youths' feedback for the staff.	3.6	3.6	3.9	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.9	3.6	3.4
10. ... answer any questions youth have.	3.8	3.8	4	3.3	3.7	3.8	3.5	3.8	3.8	3.9
11. ... follow up to make sure youth continue to participate in self-care, if/as needed.	3.4	3.4	3.8	3.3	3.2	3.4	3.6	3.6	3.6	3
12. ... follow up on the next steps of the activity, if there are any.	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.4	3.4	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.6
<b>Average Rating across 8 Youth Support Items</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.5</b>
Note: These scales had a possible range of 1 (Never) to 4 (Always)										



## Interviews

### *“What successes have Jim Casey Initiative sites experienced regarding authentically engaging youth?”*

The themes for this question and their corresponding codes can be seen in the figures below. Across all four sites, NMCAN, Tennessee Department of Children Services, Georgia Youth Opportunities Initiative, and Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative, two themes emerged when youth and staff interviewees were asked to describe the successes of authentic youth engagement. The themes are (1) youth–adult connection and support and (2) youth empowerment, agency, and voice. Youth–adult connection and support was described as adults showing youth respect, adults showing youth support, and youth receiving helpful advice from adults. Youth perceive phone calls and check-ins from staff as a form of support. One youth interviewee gave an example of perceived staff support: “[staff] want [you] to succeed ... what that means, a few extra phone calls, a few weeks a month ... they’ve always been very professional, they’ve always modeled that, and they’ve always shown their care for us.” A youth interviewed at a different site spoke about their interactions with the staff, describing how they define support from staff: being able to “get in touch with [staff] if I have something going on” and receiving “helpful solutions to my problems.” Staff described their connection and support of youth as helping youth “find relational permanence where they have not found [relational permanence]” and “lifting up the young people’s priorities around practice and policy change, and then supporting them to the finish line on that.”

Youth empowerment, agency, and voice emerged as youth and staff interviewees described experiences participating in legislative change, youth using their story to create change, and youth connecting with each other. The staff are “passionate about what [they] do” and channel that passion to help the youth see how “[their] voice, [their] story” drive change. One youth interviewee summarizes the impact of advocacy by saying, “to actually have youth represented and have [us] advocating for other youth and just giving a voice, that was a big success.”

There were also differences between successes that emerged across program sites. NMCAN was the only site with the themes of (1) events and activities and (2) staff and organizational commitment. NMCAN interviewees discussed events that helped youth learn about the college application process. One student elaborated: “For me, what stood out was helping out with college because my family has never been [to] college.” Staff and organizational commitment refers to staff’s participation in training to continue to learn how to best support youth and administer program evaluation so events and activities stay current. The staff completed a process to “redefine and restructure the agency.” In that, youths’ voices were valued. As one youth explained, “I was an equal and in some ways I also felt they prioritized my voice.” The redefining and restructuring, as one staff interviewee said, was part of the program’s belief “in continuous quality improvement.” Another staff interviewee added, “as an organization we’re good at recognizing ... and trying to find ways for improvement.”

**What successes have Jim Casey Initiative sites experienced regarding authentically engaging youth?  
Youth Interview Themes**

**Youth empowerment, agency, and voice**

- Community activism
- Youth form meaningful connections with each other
- Youth share their experiences and ideas
- Youth share their story to help other youth

**Youth-adult connection and support**

- Adults support and respect youth
- Develop a strong connection with adults
- Receive helpful advice from advisors and mentors
- Staff is available to support youth
- Staff treat youth with respect and fairness

**Skill building and preparedness**

- Classes help youth develop life skills
- Practice public speaking
- Youth use training opportunities to improve skills

**What successes have Jim Casey Initiative sites experienced regarding authentically engaging youth?  
Staff/ Professional Interview Themes**

**Youth-adult connection and support**

- Adults are supportive towards youth
- Adults connect with youth through lived experiences
- Adults express passion for their work
- Adults respect youth
- Youth develop a strong relationship with adults

**Youth empowerment, agency, and voice**

- Adults want to hear youths' perspectives
- Community activism
- Having a chance to open up
- Teach youth about strategic sharing

**Community partnerships**

- Community involvement
- Engage local community members
- Work with other child welfare agencies

## **B. Challenges related to authentic youth engagement**

### **Document Review**

While all sites experienced significant successes in authentic youth engagement, they also encountered challenges. Challenges were documented by the Hawai'i, New Mexico, and Tennessee sites. Hawai'i and New Mexico both reported trouble getting youth to engage consistently and over time, with issues centering around youth's inability at times to meet their basic needs acting as barriers to sustained, long-term engagement. Hawai'i reported trouble getting youth to attend the two-day Youth Leadership Institute, despite offering compensation. Hawai'i also reported difficulties around disaggregating data for youth in care by race. New Mexico and Tennessee reported challenges around preparing youth for transition. New Mexico, in documenting their work-based learning pilot, reported the need for additional social-emotional preparation with youth prior to the work-based learning experience. For Tennessee, the biggest challenge was the lack of time in which to prepare youth in care for transition, considering that a large percentage of youth who age out in Tennessee entered care at age 17.

### **Secondary Data Analysis**

*No relevant information identified through this source.*

## Surveys

In addition to assessing their site's success in relation to various youth engagement efforts, youth and staff were also asked to rate whether a variety of potential barriers to youth engagement had been a challenge in their site.

<b>Youth and Staff Mean Ratings of Additional Potential Barriers to Youth Engagement</b>										
<b>How much has each of the following been a challenge or barrier to youth engagement in your Jim Casey Initiative site?</b>	<b>Youth Mean Rating</b>					<b>Staff Mean Rating</b>				
	<b>All</b>	<b>GA</b>	<b>HI</b>	<b>NM</b>	<b>TN</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>GA</b>	<b>HI</b>	<b>NM</b>	<b>TN</b>
1. Youth have ideas, but don't always know how to implement them.	2.4	2.2	2.1	3.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.4
2. Adults refuse to share decision making with youth.	1.7	1.4	1.7	2.6	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.4	1.5
3. Adults plan activities without involving youth.	1.7	1.6	1.5	2.6	1.5	1.8	1.5	1.6	1.8	2.1
4. Adults view youth as problems rather than resources.	1.7	1.5	1.7	2.4	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.4
5. Youth don't view themselves as change agents.	2.3	2.2	2.4	2.1	2.5	2.2	2.4	2.1	1.8	2.5
6. Adults don't view youth as change agents.	1.8	1.8	1.8	2.4	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.8	1.6	1.7
7. Youth are unwilling to get involved because they've never been invited to the table before.	2	1.8	2.1	2.1	2	1.8	1.7	2	1.6	1.9
8. Youth are unwilling to get involved because they've not developed trusting relationships with adults.	2.2	2.0	2.4	2	2.2	2	1.9	2.1	2.4	1.9
9. There is a lack of support for youth when they come to the table.	1.6	1.3	1.7	2.1	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
10. There is distrust between youth and adults.	2	1.9	2.1	2.1	1.8	1.8	1.7	2	2	1.5
11. There is a lack of transportation to meetings/activities.	2.2	1.8	2.3	2.6	2.3	2.7	1.9	2.4	2.4	3.6
12. Scheduling of meetings/activities is problematic.	1.9	1.7	2.1	2.3	1.5	2.3	1.8	2.3	2.2	2.8
13. Financial constraints make it challenging to authentically engage youth.	2.2	1.7	2.2	2.1	2.9	2.1	1.5	1.8	2.3	2.7
14. Cultural differences are not managed in a positive way.	1.3	1.2	1.3	2	1.1	1.3	1.1	1.3	1.8	1.1
<b>Average Rating across 14 Additional Barrier Items</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>2.1</b>
<i>Note.</i> These scales had a possible range of 1 (Never a Challenge) to 4 (Always a Challenge).										

## Interviews

### ***“What challenges/barriers to authentic youth engagement have Jim Casey Initiative sites experienced?”***

Across all four sites, NMCAN, Tennessee Department of Children Services, Georgia Youth Opportunities Initiative, and Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative, two themes emerged when youth and staff interviewees were asked to describe challenges of authentic youth engagement. The themes are (1) maintaining youth engagement and (2) resource and staff limitations. These themes and their corresponding codes can be seen in the figure below.

One youth said, “I think more youth involvement might be a lot of help. A wider area, more people. More voices.” This interviewee was speaking to the challenge of maintaining youth engagement as well as a consequence of the challenge. Maintaining youth engagement requires sites to find ways to engage current youth and increase the capacity for more youth to participate. One staff interviewee spoke to the challenge of consistent engagement by saying, “we grapple with ... unintentionally overlooking young people who are seemingly doing well on the surface when they still might be in crisis.” Another site described their challenge with the ebbs and flow of youth engagement as finding programs that would keep youth coming back. “We had our Christmas party, the room was overflowing with youth ... And then January, it was probably half the amount of youth, if not less.” The staff interviewee elaborated: When they asked a youth why youth engagement fluctuates the youth told them, “...well, that was boring. I don't wanna do that anymore.” The staff interviewee concluded, “So, it's an ongoing, monthly challenge or success.” Youth tend to engage to the extent the event topic matches their interest.

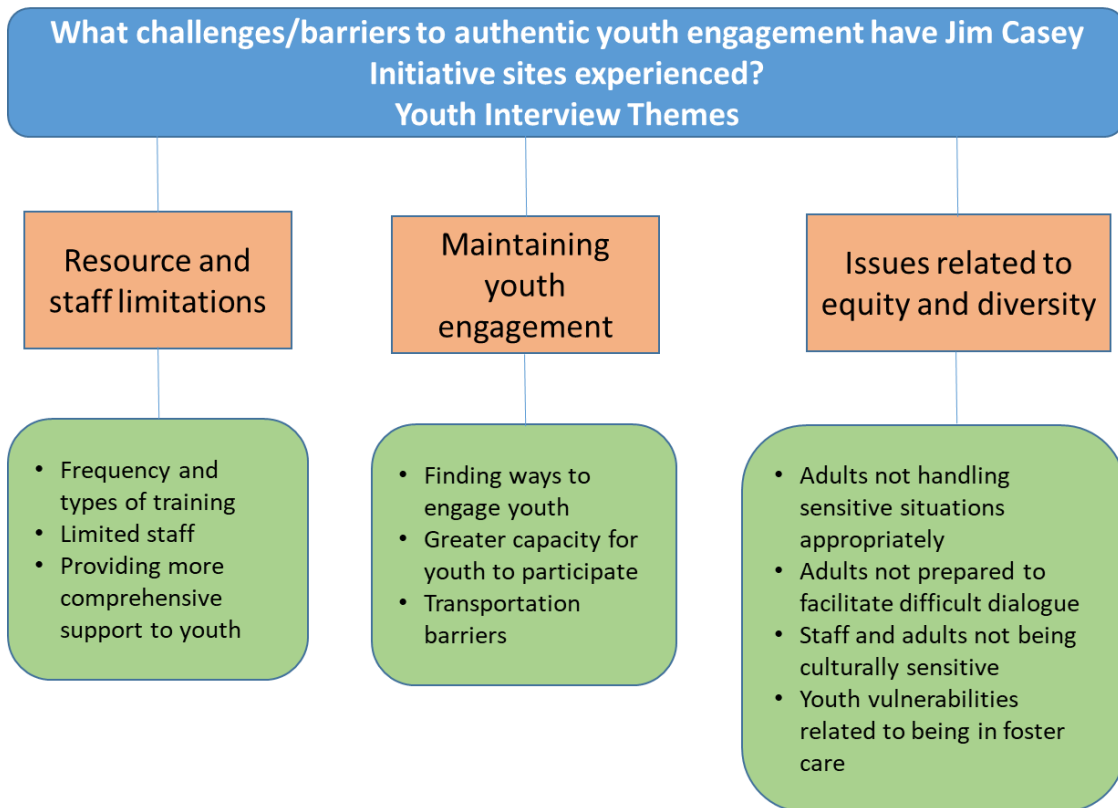
Beyond event or activity topic, there are also transportation barriers. As one staff member describes, “I could have all these great ideas and plans that I want to do, but I can't transport every child, can't take every child home.” Another staff said, “partly because of transportation” engagement can be difficult. A youth echoes another reason youth engagement is challenged is that, “transportation ... a lot of people who don't have a car ... need to use a shuttle bus.”

The theme of resource and staff limitations emerged from interviewees noticing limited staff at their sites, limited trainings, and challenges for staff to provide comprehensive support to youth. One staff said, “We're not mental health [trained] ... we are only trained to a certain extent. [The youth] come in and they're venting a whole lot and I feel like what they need is an on the spot therapist ...” In other words, the youth “come in with stuff and we aren't equipped to handle it.”

Youth and adult interviewees each identified a theme that did not emerge in the other group's interviews. Youth identified issues related to equity and diversity. From the youth's perspective, the challenges of equity and diversity included adults not being prepared to facilitate difficult dialogue and helping youth work through their vulnerabilities related to being in foster care. The challenge of staff not being equipped to engage in tough conversations, as one youth sees it, is “... that [youth] could even be, like, traumatized because that adult person didn't handle [the situation] correctly.”

Emerging from only the staff interviews was the challenge of staff turnover and burnout. Staff turnover and burnout included staff feeling they need to rescue youth and staff not feeling prepared to help youth work through trauma. As one staff member expressed, “it's going to take more training...”

because you have people that get overworked, overwhelmed, and so their morale goes down.” Youth will share their stories and some adults (staff and volunteers) “then immediately wanna rescue them ... we have to give a quick reminder that that’s not why they’re here.”



What challenges/barriers to authentic youth engagement have Jim Casey Initiative sites experienced?  
Staff/ Professional Interview Themes

Resource and staff limitations

- Communication practices
- Community partners needing more training
- Needing more staff to support youth
- Not being able to provide more comprehensive support to youth
- Training new staff and current staff of adult-youth partnerships

Maintaining youth engagement

- Adults not handling sensitive situations appropriately
- Engaging male youth
- Finding ways to engage youth
- Transportation barriers

## **Research Question 4: How does authentic youth engagement contribute to the achievement of Jim Casey Initiative results?**

The findings are organized into two sections: (a) how does authentic youth engagement contribute to youth transition-related outcomes? and (b) how does authentic youth engagement contribute to policy, practice, and other system-related results?

### **a. How does authentic youth engagement contribute to youth transition-related outcomes?**

#### **Document Review**

*No relevant information identified through this source.*

#### **Secondary Data Analysis**

The following table provides descriptive data on Opportunity Passport participants' transition-related outcomes. Decision points regarding computation or exclusion of response categories are included in the final column of these tables.



<b>Youth Transition-Related Outcomes</b>											
	<b>All Sites</b>		<b>GA</b>		<b>HI</b>		<b>NM</b>		<b>TN</b>		<b>Notes about How This Variable Was Calculated</b>
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	
<b>Education</b>											
<i>No current enrollment</i>	337	39.6%	81	34.3%	181	54.8%	17	34%	58	25.2%	These percentages reflect current enrollment status at time of survey completion.
<i>Secondary school</i>	277	32.6%	86	36.4%	57	17.3%	15	30%	119	51.7%	
<i>Community college</i>	101	11.9%	8	3.4%	57	17.3%	10	20%	26	11.3%	
<i>4-year college</i>	117	13.8%	58	24.6%	30	9.1%	7	14%	18	7.8%	
<i>Graduate school</i>	7	0.8%	2	.9%	3	0.9%	0	0%	2	0.9%	
<i>Vocational school</i>	11	1.3%	1	.4%	2	0.6%	1	2%	7	3%	
<b>Employment</b>											
<i>Current employment</i>	486	57.9%	144	61%	197	60.8%	25	51%	120	52%	
<i>No current employment</i>	354	42.1%	92	39%	127	39.2%	24	49%	111	48%	
<b>Permanence and Support</b>											
<i>Have family member that will always be there</i>	680	79.6%	186	78.2%	269	81.3%	40	80%	185	78.7%	
<i>Have other adult that will always be there</i>	632	74%	169	71%	255	77%	37	74%	171	72.8%	
<b>Housing</b>											
<i>Stable</i>	724	84.8%	208	87.4%	271	81.9%	40	80%	205	87.2%	
<i>Not stable</i>	130	15.2%	30	12.6%	60	18.1%	10	20%	30	12.8%	
<b>Physical and Mental Health</b>											
<i>Needed medical care, didn't seek</i>	195	22.8%	60	25.2%	82	24.8%	12	24%	41	17.5%	These figures represent the percent of respondents who believed they needed care in the last 6 months, but did not seek it.
<i>Needed mental health care, didn't seek</i>	195	22.8%	44	18.5%	88	26.6%	13	26%	50	21.3%	
<b>Financial Capability</b>											
<i>Covered last month expenses</i>	609	71.3%	166	69.8%	257	77.6%	35	70%	151	64.3%	
<i>Any savings</i>	540	63.2%	170	71.4%	217	65.6%	28	56%	125	53.2%	
<b>Social Capital</b>											
<i>Have adults who can help with life goals</i>	760	89%	208	87.4%	302	91.2%	44	88%	206	87.7%	
<i>Have peers who can help with life goals</i>	612	71.7%	164	68.9%	245	74%	37	74%	166	70.6%	

### **Engagement in Leadership and Advocacy Skills**

The following table shows youth responses regarding engagement in leadership and advocacy skills, overall and by various youth transition-related outcomes. Youth engaged in development and leadership advocacy skill development were significantly more likely to report numerous positive outcomes than youth not engaged in this way. These outcomes include current school enrollment of any kind, current employment, permanence in the form of a non-family adult, current savings, and current involvement of both adults and peers able to help the youth achieve their life goals.

<b>Youth Engaged in Development of Leadership and Advocacy Skills, Overall and by Transition-Related Outcomes</b>						
<b>Engaged in Development of Leadership and Advocacy Skills</b>	<b>% of Youth in Each Category Who are Engaged</b>					<b>Chi-square test of difference</b>
	<b>All Sites</b>	<b>GA</b>	<b>HI</b>	<b>NM</b>	<b>TN</b>	
Youth overall	38.2%	47.9%	29.6%	56%	36.6%	+
<b>Education</b>						
<i>Any current enrollment</i>	43.3%	52.9%	38%	54.6%	37.3%	+
<i>No current enrollment</i>	30.3%	38.3%	22.7%	58.8%	34.5%	
<i>Post-secondary enrollment</i>	44%	48.4%	36.8%	76.5%	39%	n.s.
<i>No post-secondary enrollment</i>	41%	62.5%	44.4%	0%	33.3%	
<b>Employment</b>						
<i>Current employment</i>	40.1%	49.3%	28.9%	68%	41.7%	+
<i>No current employment</i>	34.2%	45.7%	28.4%	41.7%	29.7%	
<b>Permanence and Support</b>						
<i>Have family member that will always be there</i>	37.9%	47.3%	29.7%	47.5%	38.4%	n.s.
<i>No family member that will always be there</i>	39.1%	50%	29%	90%	30%	
<i>Have other adult that will always be there</i>	41.1%	52.1%	31.8%	56.8%	40.1%	+
<i>No other adult that will always be there</i>	29.7%	37.7%	22.4%	53.9%	25%	
<b>Housing</b>						
<i>Stable</i>	38%	49%	29.5%	50%	35.6%	n.s.
<i>Not stable</i>	39.2%	40%	30%	80%	43.3%	
<b>Physical and Mental Health</b>						
<i>Needed medical care, didn't seek</i>	43.1%	48.3%	36.6%	50%	46.3%	n.s.
<i>Did not need medical care or needed and sought</i>	36.7%	47.8%	27.3%	57.9%	34.5%	
<i>Needed mental health care, didn't seek</i>	41%	47.7%	36.4%	53.9%	40%	n.s.
<i>Did not need mental health care or needed &amp; sought</i>	37.3%	47.9%	27.2%	56.8%	35.7%	
<b>Financial Capability</b>						
<i>Any savings</i>	41.3%	52.9%	32.7%	53.6%	37.6%	+
<i>No savings</i>	32.8%	35.3%	23.7%	59.1%	35.5%	
<i>Covered expenses</i>	39.1%	52.4%	30.7%	54.3%	35.1%	n.s.
<i>Did not cover expenses</i>	35.9%	37.5%	25.7%	60%	39.3%	
<b>Social Capital</b>						
<i>Have adults who can help with life goals</i>	39.5%	49.5%	30.8%	56.8%	38.4%	+
<i>No adults who can help with life goals</i>	27.7%	36.7%	17.2%	50%	24.1%	
<i>Have peers who can help with life goals</i>	41%	49.4%	33.5%	51.4%	41.6%	+
<i>No peers who can help with life goals</i>	31%	44.6%	18.6%	69.2%	24.6%	
Note. 'n.s.' = non-statistically significant difference, '+' = positive statistically significant difference, '-' = negative statistically significant difference						

### Engagement in Working on Transition-Related Outcome Areas

The following table shows youth responses regarding their engagement in transition-related outcome areas (“Outside of the work with your caseworker, within the past 6 months have you met or worked with staff or adults in the community on any of these: education, housing, transportation, physical and mental health, social capital, permanence, financial capability, or employment?”), overall and by various youth transition-related outcomes. Youth engaged in transition-related outcome areas were significantly more likely to report numerous positive outcomes than youth not engaged, including current school enrollment, permanence in the form of a non-family adult, current savings, having covered the last month’s expenses, and current supportive involvement of both adults and peers.

Youth Engaged in Transition-Related Outcome Areas, Overall and By Youth Transition-Related Outcomes						
Engaged in Transition-Related Outcome Areas	% of Youth in Each Category Who are Engaged					Chi-square test of difference
	All Sites	GA	HI	NM	TN	
Youth overall	35.4%	43.3%	29.9%	44%	33.2%	+
<b>Education</b>						
<i>Any current enrollment</i>	41.2%	45.9%	44.7%	42.4%	33.9%	+
<i>No current enrollment</i>	26.4%	38.3%	17.7%	47.1%	31%	
<i>Post-secondary enrollment</i>	43.1%	45.3%	43.7%	47.1%	36.6%	n.s.
<i>No post-secondary enrollment</i>	38.5%	50%	66.7%	0%	23.8%	
<b>Employment</b>						
<i>Current employment</i>	36.4%	47.9%	26.4%	48%	36.7%	n.s.
<i>No current employment</i>	33.3%	34.8%	39.2%	41.7%	29.7%	
<b>Permanence and Support</b>						
<i>Have family member that will always be there</i>	35.2%	44.1%	30.5%	40%	31.9%	n.s.
<i>No family member that will always be there</i>	36.2%	40.4%	27.4%	60%	38%	
<i>Have other adult that will always be there</i>	37.5%	46.2%	32.2%	46%	35.1%	+
<i>No other adult that will always be there</i>	29.3%	36.2%	22.4%	38.5%	28.1%	
<b>Housing</b>						
<i>Stable</i>	35.2%	43.3%	30.3%	37.5%	33.2%	n.s.
<i>Not stable</i>	36.2%	43.3%	28.3%	70%	33.3%	
<b>Physical and Mental Health</b>						
<i>Needed medical care, didn't seek</i>	38%	40%	34.2%	50%	39%	n.s.
<i>Did not need medical care or needed and sought</i>	34.6%	44.4%	28.5%	42.1%	32%	
<i>Needed mental health care, didn't seek</i>	36.4%	40.9%	33%	38.5%	38%	n.s.
<i>Did not need mental health care or needed and sought</i>	35.1%	43.8%	28.8%	46%	31.9%	
<b>Financial Capability</b>						
<i>Any savings</i>	38.9%	45.3%	31.8%	50%	40%	+
<i>No savings</i>	29.3%	38.2%	26.3%	36.4%	25.5%	
<i>Covered expenses</i>	37.6%	47.6%	30.4%	42.9%	37.8%	+
<i>Did not cover expenses</i>	29.8%	33.3%	28.4%	46.7%	25%	
<b>Social Capital</b>						
<i>Have adults who can help with life goals</i>	36.7%	44.2%	32.1%	43.2%	34.5%	+
<i>No adults who can help with life goals</i>	24.5%	36.7%	6.9%	50%	24.1%	
<i>Have peers who can help with life goals</i>	37.9%	45%	33.5%	46%	35.5%	+
<i>No peers who can help with life goals</i>	28.3%	39.2%	19.8%	38.5%	27.5%	

Note. 'n.s.' = non-statistically significant difference, '+' = positive statistically significant difference, '-' = negative statistically significant difference

### Youth Engagement in Evaluation

The following table shows youth responses regarding engagement in evaluation, overall and by various youth transition-related outcomes. Youth engaged in evaluation efforts were significantly more likely to report numerous positive outcomes than youth not engaged in this way. These outcomes include: current school enrollment of any kind, current employment, permanence in the form of a non-family adult, current savings, and current involvement of peers able to help the youth achieve their life goals. Of note, youth engaged in evaluation efforts were also significantly more likely to report having needed medical attention in the last six months and not seeking it.

Youth Engaged in Evaluation, Overall and by Youth Transition-Related Outcomes						
Engaged in Evaluation	% of Youth in Each Category Who are Engaged					Chi-square test of difference
	All Sites	GA	HI	NM	TN	
Youth Overall	21.3%	28.6%	19%	28%	15.7%	+
<b>Education</b>						
Any current enrollment	23.4%	30.6%	22.7%	30.3%	16.4%	+ Note: significant at p < .07
No current enrollment	18.1%	24.7%	16%	23.5%	13.8%	
Post-secondary enrollment	24.9%	34.4%	18.4%	35.3%	19.5%	n.s.
No post-secondary enrollment	15.4%	50%	11.1%	0%	4.8%	
<b>Employment</b>						
Current employment	23.7%	36.8%	16.8%	36%	16.7%	+
No current employment	17.8%	15.2%	21.3%	20.8%	15.3%	
<b>Permanence and Support</b>						
Have family member that will always be there	20.7%	29.6%	19.3%	20%	14.1%	n.s.
No family member that will always be there	23.6%	25%	17.7%	60%	22%	
Have other adult that will always be there	22.8%	29.6%	21.6%	27%	17%	+ Note: significant at p < .08
No other adult that will always be there	17.1%	26.1%	10.5%	30.8%	12.5%	
<b>Housing</b>						
Stable	21%	29.3%	19.2%	20%	15.1%	n.s.
Not stable	23.1%	23.3%	18.3%	60%	20%	
<b>Physical and Mental Health</b>						
Needed medical care, didn't seek	29.7%	38.3%	26.8%	33.3%	22%	+
Did not need medical care or needed and sought	18.8%	25.3%	16.5%	26.3%	14.4%	
Needed mental health care, didn't seek	22.1%	20.5%	25%	38.5%	14%	n.s.
Did not need mental health care or needed and sought	21.1%	30.4%	16.9%	24.3%	16.2%	
<b>Financial Capability</b>						
Any savings	24.1%	32.9%	19.5%	25%	18.4%	+
No savings	16.6%	17.7%	16.7%	31.8%	12.7%	
Covered expenses	22.8%	33.1%	20.3%	20%	17.9%	n.s.
Did not cover expenses	17.6%	18.1%	17.6%	46.7%	11.9%	
<b>Social Capital</b>						
Have adults who can help with life goals	22.1%	30.3%	20.5%	22.7%	16%	n.s.
No adults who can help with life goals	14.9%	16.7%	3.5%	67%	13.8%	
Have peers who can help with life goals	24.7%	32.3%	22.5%	27%	19.9%	+
No peers who can help with life goals	12.8%	20.3%	9.3%	30.8%	5.8%	

Note: 'n.s.' = non-statistically sig. difference, '+' = positive statistically sig. difference, '-' = negative statistically sig. difference

### Youth Engagement in Advocacy

The following table shows youth responses regarding youth engagement in advocacy, overall and by various youth transition-related outcomes. Youth engaged in advocacy efforts were significantly more likely to report numerous positive outcomes than youth not engaged in this way. These outcomes include: current school enrollment of any kind, permanence in the form of a non-family adult, current savings, having met the last month's expenses, and current involvement of both adults and peers able to help the youth achieve their life goals. Of note, youth engaged in advocacy efforts were also significantly more likely to report having needed medical attention in the last six months and not seeking it.

Youth Engaged in Advocacy, Overall and by Youth Transition-Related Outcomes						
Engaged in Advocacy	% of Youth in Each Category Who are Engaged					Chi-square test of difference
	All Sites	GA	HI	NM	TN	
Youth overall	23.4%	23.1%	20.9%	34%	25.1%	n.s.
<b>Education</b>						
Any current enrollment	26.9%	26.1%	27.3%	27.3%	27.1%	+
No current enrollment	18.1%	17.3%	15.5%	47.1%	19%	
Post-secondary enrollment	25.8%	29.7%	23%	29.4%	24.4%	n.s.
No post-secondary enrollment	25.6%	50%	33.3%	0%	14.3%	
<b>Employment</b>						
Current employment	22.6%	29.2%	16.8%	36%	21.7%	n.s.
No current employment	23.2%	13%	24.4%	29.2%	28.8%	
<b>Permanence and Support</b>						
Have family member that will always be there	23.1%	23.1%	21.9%	32.5%	22.7%	n.s.
No family member that will always be there	24.7%	23.1%	16.1%	40%	34%	
Have other adult that will always be there	26.1%	24.3%	24.7%	37.8%	27.5%	+
No other adult that will always be there	15.8%	20.3%	7.9%	23.1%	18.8%	
<b>Housing</b>						
Stable	23.8%	24%	21%	32.5%	25.4%	n.s.
Not stable	21.5%	16.7%	20%	40%	23.3%	
<b>Physical and Mental Health</b>						
Needed medical care, didn't seek	29.2%	26.7%	29.3%	25%	34.2%	+
Did not need medical care or needed and sought	21.7%	21.9%	18.1%	36.8%	23.2%	
Needed mental health care, didn't seek	27.7%	27.3%	26.1%	30.8%	30%	n.s.
Did not need mental health care or needed and sought	22.2%	22.2%	18.9%	35.1%	23.8%	
<b>Financial Capability</b>						
Any savings	25.7%	24.1%	21.2%	39.3%	32.8%	+
No savings	19.4%	20.6%	20.2%	27.3%	16.4%	
Covered expenses	25.3%	25.9%	21.8%	31.4%	29.1%	+
Did not cover expenses	18.8%	16.7%	17.6%	40%	17.9%	
<b>Social Capital</b>						
Have adults who can help with life goals	24.5%	24%	22.2%	34.1%	26.2%	+
No adults who can help with life goals	14.9%	16.7%	6.9%	33.3%	17.2%	
Have peers who can help with life goals	26.1%	26.2%	22.9%	35.1%	28.9%	+
No peers who can help with life goals	16.5%	16.2%	15.1%	30.8%	16%	
Note. 'n.s.' = non-statistically significant difference, '+' = positive statistically significant difference, '-' = negative statistically significant difference						

### Youth Connection to Resources and Activities

The following table shows the average number of resources or activities youth were connected to, by youth transition outcomes. Greater connection to resources or activities were associated with numerous positive youth outcomes, including current school enrollment of any kind, current employment, permanence in the form of a non-family adult, current savings, having covered the last month's expenses, and current involvement of both supportive adults and peers.

Average Number of Resources/Activities Connected To, by Youth Transition-Related Outcomes						
Resources/Activities Connected To	Average # Resources/Activities Connected To					T-Test/ANOVA
	All Sites	GA	HI	NM	TN	
Youth overall	1.9	2.3	1.7	2.3	1.8	+
<b>Education</b>						
<i>Any current enrollment</i>	2.2	2.4	2.2	2.4	1.9	+
<i>No current enrollment</i>	1.5	2.2	1.2	2.1	1.4	
<i>Post-secondary enrollment</i>	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.9	2.9	n.s.
<i>No post-secondary enrollment</i>	2.1	1.5	3.2	0	1.8	
<b>Employment</b>						
<i>Current employment</i>	2.1	2.6	1.7	3	2	+
<i>No current employment</i>	1.6	1.9	1.5	1.6	1.4	
<b>Permanence and Support</b>						
<i>Have family member that will always be there</i>	1.9	2.4	1.7	2.3	1.6	n.s.
<i>No family member that will always be there</i>	2.1	2.1	1.7	2.3	2.4	
<i>Have other adult that will always be there</i>	2.1	2.6	1.8	2.3	2	+
<i>No other adult that will always be there</i>	1.5	1.7	1.3	2.4	1.3	
<b>Housing</b>						
<i>Stable</i>	2	2.5	1.6	2.4	1.9	n.s.
<i>Not stable</i>	1.8	1.5	2.1	1.9	1.4	
<b>Physical and Mental Health</b>						
<i>Needed medical care, didn't seek</i>	2	2.4	1.8	1.9	1.7	n.s.
<i>Did not need medical care or needed and sought</i>	1.9	2.3	1.6	2.4	1.8	
<i>Needed mental health care, didn't seek</i>	1.9	1.7	2.0	2	2	n.s.
<i>Did not need mental health care or needed and sought</i>	1.9	2.5	1.5	2.4	1.8	
<b>Financial Capability</b>						
<i>Any savings</i>	2.2	2.7	1.9	2.8	1.8	+
<i>No savings</i>	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.6	1.8	
<i>Covered expenses</i>	2.1	2.7	1.7	2.5	1.9	+
<i>Did not cover expenses</i>	1.5	1.3	1.6	1.8	1.6	
<b>Social Capital</b>						
<i>Have adults who can help with life goals</i>	2	2.4	1.8	2.3	1.8	Note: sig at p < .06
<i>No adults who can help with life goals</i>	1.4	1.6	0.7	2.5	1.8	
<i>Have peers who can help with life goals</i>	2.1	2.7	1.8	2.3	2	+
<i>No peers who can help with life goals</i>	1.4	1.4	1.3	2.4	1.4	
Note. 'n.s.' = non-statistically significant difference, '+' = positive statistically significant difference, '-' = negative statistically significant difference						

## Surveys

*No relevant information identified through this source.*

## Interviews

### ***“How/why does authentically engaging youth help/not help youth as they transition from foster care to adulthood?”***

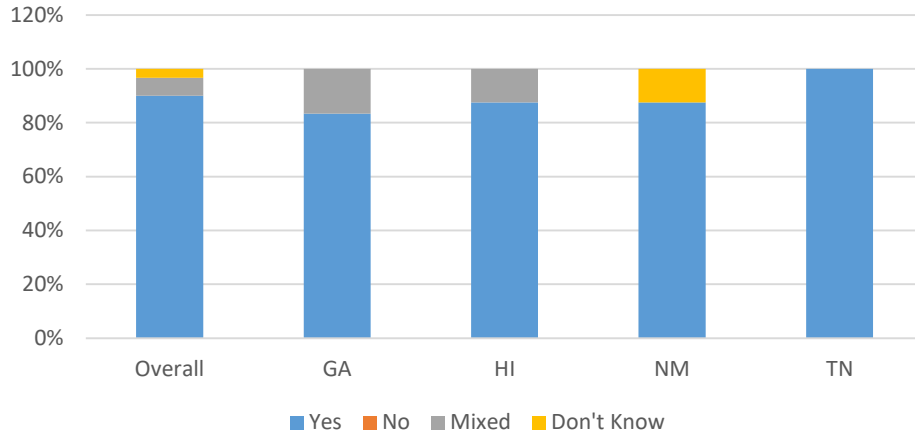
Most youth and staff interviewees agreed that authentically engaging youth helps youth transition from foster care to adulthood (see bar chart below). Across sites, interviewees described how classes and trainings offered at each site helped youth build confidence, life skills, and self-advocacy skills. The lessons learned from the classes and trainings offered helped youth “get ready for adulthood,” explained one youth. Examples of the classes were car mechanics, college preparation, and financial skills. The skills learned by participating in the classes helped youth gain more confidence in themselves. A youth who attended the car mechanics class reported that talking to “somebody who’s knowledgeable about the subject” helped them feel more confident.

Learning “about deductions on their paychecks ... [and] the difference between being a W2 employee versus being a 1099 employee” makes youth stronger “advocates for themselves.” A youth linked their learned money management skills to feeling more prepared to enter adulthood. As one youth explained, “They’ve taught me how to manage my money a little bit better, and just adulting and getting into the real world.” One youth interviewee described the greatest lesson learned was “advocating for myself ... it’s basically you advocate for yourself, or nothing happens ... I’ve learned how to advocate for myself and for other people.” Another youth interviewee benefited from “building more confidence, and just through telling my story, in telling my story ... I’ve been more healthy.”

Youth engagement and participation in authentic youth engagement activities helped youth develop social capital, and as a result, some found a job through their contacts. A staff member explained, “... because, of that social capital with our partners ... [youth have] gotten jobs,” built “their resumes,” and “... increased [their] confidence.” Support from adults and skill building have shown youth “that it’s possible” to navigate adulthood.

There were a few interviewees who did not know whether authentic youth engagement helped youth transition from foster care to adulthood. One staff/professional interviewee described their hesitation by acknowledging the benefits and draw backs of the advocacy focus at their site. They felt that youth develop the “ability to be self-advocates ... overcome, [and] beat the odds in a number of big and small ways.” Their concern was during the transition where youth may not explore different career opportunities. Instead, as the interviewee explains, maybe “we’ve created a path to a professional foster child. Some of these youth have gone on to be public speakers, or they’re consultants in various capacities.” Another site expressed concerns of whether there was sufficient engagement after an event. The example provided was “it’s just, take this class, and then I’ll talk to you in six months.” To them, authentic youth engagement that would help with transition into adulthood would be continuous engagement and collaboration.

“Do you think that authentically engaging youth in the Jim Casey Initiative helps youth as they transition from foster care to adulthood?”





## **b. How does authentic youth engagement contribute to policy, practice, and other system-related results?**

### **Document Review**

The HI HOPES Initiative, NMCAN, and the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services each included ways in which their site’s work is changed as a result of authentic youth engagement in their documentation. The HI HOPES Initiative reported that youth board members sharing their experiences and views plays a key role in impacting policy and public awareness, both of which contribute toward improvements for youth who have experienced foster care on the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative’s four indicators. Similarly, the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services reported that youth partners bring diversity and innovative thinking to policy and procedure. In Tennessee, youth also assist in program development and implementation and play an important role in creating buy-in. NMCAN also reported changes due to authentic youth engagement, including a race-equity framework focus and implementing a responsive, trauma-informed practice based on connecting youth to resources and helping them establish stability.

One key way in which authentic youth engagement contributes to the achievement of Jim Casey Initiative results across sites is through youth involvement in improving policy and practice. The 2018 Performance Measure Report on Opportunity Passport Participants reports policy and practice improvements related to authentic youth engagement at each site. Specifically, the 2018 report indicates that Georgia recently improved policy through extension of care. In Hawaii, the Foster Youth Bill of Rights is an important recent policy resulting from authentic youth engagement. In addition, Hawaii developed practices and procedures around the Foster Youth Bill of Rights, and worked with their Department of Human services to address barriers to Medicaid coverage for youth who have experienced foster care. In New Mexico, recent policy change provides employers a tax credit for employing youth in care, and implemented a program designed to increase access to bank accounts for youth. In Tennessee, a recent policy change resulting from authentic youth engagement increased the independent living allowance available to pregnant and parenting youth in extended foster care.

### **Secondary Data Analysis**

*No relevant information identified through this source.*

## Surveys

Youth and staff were asked to assess to what extent youth engagement contributes to several results that the Jim Casey Initiative is interested in, including policy, practice, and other system-related results.

<b>Youth and Staff Mean Ratings of How Authentic Youth Engagement Relates to Policy, Practice, and Other System-Related Results</b>										
Authentic youth engagement in Jim Casey Initiative activities contributes to important improvements in ...	Youth Mean Rating					Staff Mean Rating				
	All	GA	HI	NM	TN	All	GA	HI	NM	TN
youth leadership skills	3.2	2.7	3.8	3.6	3	*These items not asked to staff participants				
youth policy advocacy skills	3.2	3.1	3.8	3.3	2.8					
national policy	3.1	2.9	3.5	3.4	2.7	3.5	3.1	3.8	3.6	3.6
policy in participant's site	3.3	3	3.8	3.8	2.6	3.7	3.3	4	3.8	3.7
national practice	3.1	2.8	3.5	3.8	2.4	3.6	3.3	3.8	3.8	3.6
practice in participant's site	3.3	3.1	4	3.8	2.5	3.7	3.5	3.9	3.8	3.7

*Note.* These scales had a possible range of 1 (Not At All) to 4 (A Lot)

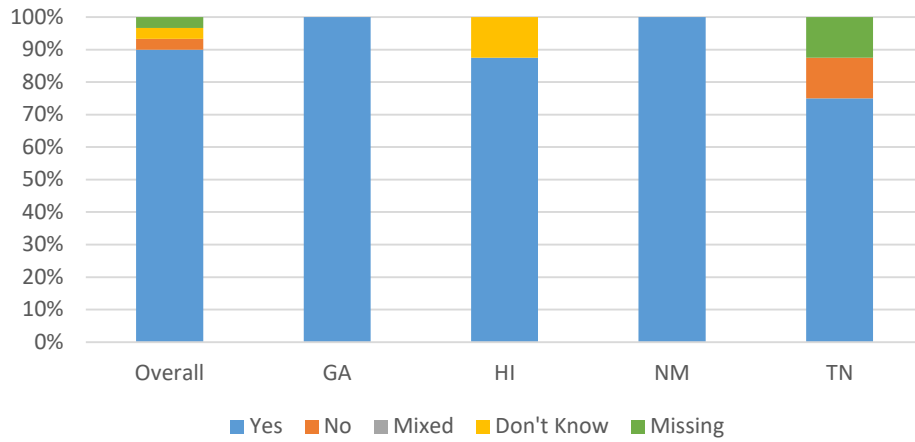
## Interviews

### *“How/why does authentically engaging youth help/not help improve policy and practice?”*

Most youth and staff interviewees from the four sites agreed that authentically engaging youth improves state-wide policy and practice (see bar chart below). Across the sites, youth engagement led to policy changes including: “... extending foster care,” working on “responsible and prudent parenting,” working on “the Foster Care Bill of Rights,” and “expanding Medicaid.” Staff interviewees referenced the weight of youth’s voice and engagement in creating change. Interviewees explained, youth were viewed as “instrumental” and put “... a face to the issue.” All these changes “would not have happened without the youth’s voice.” “I don’t think we have been able to make any policy or practice change without having young people side by side with us as partners,” one staff interviewee explained.

Staff and youth see the critical role youth voice and representation have on the legislatures and policymakers. Youth see their role as fighters for policy change and experts on the lived experience of youth in foster care. As one youth reflected, “we’re trying to fight for the policy and practice. Another youth shared, “... they asked me for some of my expert advice on the direction that we’re moving in foster care.” Many youth interviewees are willing to and want to share their stories and experiences to help future generations of youth in foster care. One youth concluded that it is “better to communicate ... with the individual youth” who come into “contact with the problems” the policies are trying to address.

“Do you think that authentically engaging youth in the Jim Casey Initiative helps to improve policy and practice?”



## Research Question 5: What are the lessons learned and recommended strategies and approaches for authentically engaging youth?

### Document Review

Three of the sites provided specific recommendations for others who wish to authentically engage youth through the documents submitted for review.

The HI HOPES Initiative provided the following recommendations for encouraging youth voice and authentic youth engagement: nearly continuous recruitment for board members as young people move on and off the board, quality processes for orientation of new board members and advisors, online leadership development, regular trainings on strategic sharing, recurring opportunities to make presentations and to participate in work groups, and consistent debriefings.

NMCAN prioritizes the following areas for policy intervention: normalizing the foster care experience, ensuring young people are prepared for and have access to opportunities, ensuring permanence, and providing high quality advocacy for young people. In addition, NMCAN recommends addressing barriers youth face to meeting their basic needs in order to sustain youth engagement. This site also reports learning from the work-based learning pilot that both participating youth and employers receive extensive training beforehand and ongoing support and coaching throughout.

The Tennessee Department of Children’s Services provided a document created by young people containing recommendations for adults who wish to authentically engage youth. The list of suggestions includes patience, honesty, respect, finding common interests, and meeting in places that are not “meeting rooms.” In addition to these suggestions, the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services recommends having a pregnant or parenting youth represented on the board to provide this perspective and engage other pregnant and parenting youth.

### Secondary Data Analysis

*No relevant information identified through this source.*

### Surveys

Youth and staff/professional participants were asked for their recommendations for strengthening youth engagement work both locally and nationally. The following table lists the questions that participants were asked and provides common themes that emerged across sites along with representative quotes participants provided.

**Youth and Staff/Professional Recommendations for Strengthening Youth Engagement Work Locally and Nationally**

Youth Questions and Responses	Staff Questions and Responses
<p><b>1. What recommendations would you give to staff about ways they can better engage youth in Jim Casey Initiative activities? What worked or did not work for you?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication strategies               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Some people don’t have access to the internet, so maybe giving someone a call rather than emailing about upcoming events.”</li> <li>○ “Keeps sites updated on nationwide conferences.”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Adult–youth relationships               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Keeping an open mind, not just hearing the youth.”</li> <li>○ “Building trust slowly and not rushing.”</li> <li>○ “Always be open to what the youth say even if it sounds farfetched.”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Creating opportunities for youth engagement               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “If there is a particularly difficult youth, I have noticed that after a while they give up on trying to correct that youth and just let them do their own thing.”</li> <li>○ “Let youth know that by participating in these events, these are the skills they are working on and can gain more knowledge in.”</li> <li>○ “Make sure the shy quite kids are in some manner discreetly or otherwise acknowledged.”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>1. What recommendations do you have for ways that staff can better engage youth in Jim Casey Initiative activities? What worked or did not work for you?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication strategies               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Be comfortable with texting the youth.”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Recruitment strategies               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Keep finding ways to recruit and retain across the state ... this is a significant challenge given our urban/rural divide and the simple geography of a state.”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Adult–youth relationships               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Continue to meet youth where they are.”</li> <li>○ “Check in periodically to examine the authenticity of our engagement, and our commitment to and understanding of youth adult partnerships.”</li> <li>○ “Listen to youth and value their ideas and opinions.”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Creating opportunities for youth engagement               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Trying to find ways to engage youth who don’t self-select for the BOD”</li> <li>○ “Being able to partner with other agencies in the community that also work with the same youth has served to be quite beneficial for engaging youth in our work.”</li> <li>○ “Involving the youth in planning for programs and activities before they are scheduled.”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>2. What recommendations do you have for ways that the <u>national Youth Engagement Team</u> can better support youth engagement? What worked or did not work for you?</b></p>	<p><b>2. What recommendations do you have for ways that the <u>national Youth Engagement Team</u> can better support your site’s authentic youth engagement work? What resources, information, or technical assistance have you received that was helpful?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult–youth support               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Knowing that my adult supporters would be there for me when I needed them.”</li> <li>○ “Just be there for others and they will be there for you.”</li> <li>○ “Talking about my goals and what I want.”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intentional connections with Jim Casey Initiative and other Jim Casey sites               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “I would love to see best practices from other sites on how they keep youth engaged despite the constant moving of our young people.”</li> <li>○ “The research and literature that comes from the survey information with AECF/JC is invaluable in our practices.”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “It would be very helpful if the site was informed of when a young fellow from that site is participating in a National effort.”</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. What recommendations do you have for ways that the <u>other national staff</u> can better support youth engagement? What worked or did not work for you?</b></p>	<p><b>3. What recommendations do you have for ways that the other Jim Casey Initiative <u>national staff</u> can better support your site’s authentic youth engagement work? What resources, information, or technical assistance have you received that was helpful?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Keeping sites up-to-date on policy and research changes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “More consistent contact to keep updates on policy and new data fresh in our brains.”</li> <li>○ “More updates on what is happening.”</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Youth develop self-advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “I feel that meeting with legislatures to promote new policies gave me a voice.”</li> <li>○ “They are right on track and great on involving youth.”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National support and exposure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Continuing that national exposure to other youth is important.”</li> <li>○ “Ensuring that the young fellows are connected to the state site work while also engaged in National work.”</li> <li>○ “Continue to provide support and financial support to the identified sites.”</li> <li>○ “Program managers and coordinators are not asked what works and what does not work.”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Interviews**

There were many similarities in recommendations across sites and between youth and staff interviewed. The thematic networks can be seen below. Across sites, both staff and youth made a variety of recommendations in relation to three theme areas: (1) building trust, relationships, and connections with youth, (2) being youth-centered and youth-empowering, and (3) facilitating improved adult/staff/program efforts.

The importance of building trusting relationships between youth and adults was a predominate theme. One youth in Georgia stressed the importance of these relationships in their own life, stating that the Georgia Youth Opportunities Initiative “... is like a family to me so most of the people who I’ve connected with is the staff there ... the interconnections of the relationship that I had with them ... kept me afloat as well as my personal passion for the work.” One youth at the HI HOPES Initiative explained, “... if you don’t have a relationship with that youth, they’re not gonna be able to trust that what you’re saying is gonna actually happen or be true or that you’re actually there for good intentions instead of bad intentions.” A HI HOPES Initiative staff built on this, stating, “... while maintaining professional boundaries, of course, you just want to be a person that they can trust, they can talk to.” One key way trusting relationships between youth and adults are built and maintained is through honesty and transparency. As one staff in Tennessee advised when asked for recommendations, “I would say just, they need to be genuine and they need to be honest ... honesty goes a long way, and transparency. Transparency like I was saying earlier, just letting them know this is what it is. Because not to be damaging to that young person, but just letting them know ‘This is the situation currently.’”

The second theme that emerged across sites in both youth and staff interviews is the importance of keeping youth front and center in the work. When asked for recommendations for improving authentic youth engagement efforts, youth at all sites emphasized the need for youth opportunities for self-determination and ensuring that youth voice is heard. One staff/professional at NMCAN discusses the importance of staff authentically engaging youth “being consistent, being enthusiastic, and intentionally engaging youth right from the start, spend[ing] the time getting to know them and listening to their voice, and helping them cultivate their own ideas.” At the HI HOPES Initiative, staff stressed the importance of continuous open dialog with youth to identify their needs, “I think it’s always good to ask for feedback ... asking the youth at events, in workshops, or the financial literacy class, asking them what their needs are. And then delivering something that’s in line with what their needs are. Being open to the constructive criticism from the youth, saying, ‘This was not helpful to me.’ Then shifting based on that feedback.” One specific recommendation relating to the youth-empowerment theme that arose across sites is facilitating opportunities for peer-to-peer mentoring and collaboration for youth. One youth in New Mexico explained the importance of peer-to-peer learning, “I just feel that there needs to be an expansion of shared knowledge amongst young people with each other. And there needs to be like dedicated spaces to that.” A youth in Georgia offered a similar recommendation when asked about what might facilitate successful transition for young people who experience foster care: “... maybe peer to peer relationships to help young people build successful outcomes and successful transition.”

The third theme that arose across sites regarding recommendations for those wishing to authentically engage youth is the importance of cultivating strong, skillful staff to do this work. One staff at the HI HOPES Initiative expressed the need for empathetic, trauma-conscious staff as the need for staff to “be able to understand what trauma and brain development really looks like, when you’re working with the young people, and engaging them .... They’ve got to care about the young people.” Staff across sites also recommended that adults authentically engaging youth should be committed to ongoing training and self-improvement, as well as building concrete skills around facets of engagement such as consistency and celebrating youth successes.

What recommendations do youth have for improving authentic youth engagement efforts?  
Common Themes from Youth Interviews

Trust, Relationships,  
and Connections

- Example common codes
- Build trust, relationships, connections with youth
  - Build sense of community
  - Show youth they're cared about

Self-Determination,  
Empowerment,  
and Youth Voice

- Example common codes
- Empower youth voices
  - Give youth room to advocate for themselves
  - Allow youth to engage where they are comfortable

Staff/ Programmatic  
Recommendations

- Example common codes
- Engaged, open-minded staff
  - Engage more youth in more programs
  - Greater transparency about organizational changes

What recommendations do youth have for improving authentic youth engagement efforts?  
Common Themes from Staff Interviews

Trust, Relationships,  
and Connections

- Example common codes
- Build trust, relationships, connections with youth
  - Listen to youth

Youth-Empowerment,  
Youth-Centered  
Practices

- Example common codes
- Allow youth to engage where they are comfortable
  - Ask youth what they need, don't assume
  - Focus on youths' goals, not program's
  - Treat youth as budding professionals

Adult Engagement  
and Support

- Sub-Themes
- Youth-adult connections
  - Adult engagement, investment
  - Increased staff training, capacity
  - Increased program capacity, infrastructure
  - Provide logistical supports to youth



In three out of four sites, staff/professional participants provided several recommendations for getting more underrepresented youth involved. One key strategy for engaging underrepresented groups, such as males, Latinx youth, youth who are parenting, LGBTQ youth, youth in kinship care, and youth who experience homelessness, is to implement peer-to-peer outreach strategies, providing compensation and facilitating opportunities for youth to learn from youth who they perceive as similar to themselves. One youth in New Mexico stated, “It would be cool if there was more discussions surrounding young people who are experiencing incarceration or homelessness because that is something that does come up very frequently, that’s also my lived experience.” In Hawai’i, one staff explained the importance of involved males to reach other males who experience care, “our young men reacted better to programs, and services, and opportunities where other young men were, or male leaders. And, it’s a very female dominant field.” Interviewees at all sites acknowledged the power of involving respected peers as a way to support engagement and youth attendance.

When asked what they envision expanding youth engagement in their site might look like in order to strengthen the Initiative’s work, participants recommended things such as allowing more opportunities for youth to learn from other youth, creating opportunities for more and a wider diversity of youth to engage, and employing more democratic practices with higher-quality communication. Regarding peer-to-peer learning, a youth interviewed at NMCAN explained, “I just feel that there needs to be an expansion of shared knowledge amongst young people with each other. And there needs to be like dedicated spaces to that.” Though the groups of youth reported as underrepresented varied between sites, the need to engage these underrepresented groups was expressed universally. One staff in Georgia illustrated this need, “I think it’s a little bit that the changing demographic kind of snuck up on us, in our child welfare system. I’m like, there is a growth in [the] Latin population ... So we haven’t had a targeted strategy towards recruiting [those youth].”

There was slight variation between sites regarding recommendations for authentically engaging more youth. In Georgia and Hawai’i, interviewees expressed the importance of creating opportunities for financial literacy learning. In New Mexico, increasing access to community resources was recommended. In Tennessee, ensuring that youth feel safe was stressed, as well as ensuring that staff develop skills related to authentic youth engagement, including skills around communication and investing in youth.

## Research Question 6: What are participants’ perceptions of the sustainability of activities related to authentic youth engagement?

### Document Review

*No relevant information identified through this source.*

### Secondary Data Analysis

*No relevant information identified through this source.*

### Surveys

Both youth and staff were asked to give their perspective on the sustainability of youth engagement activities in their site. The following table provides youth ratings of site sustainability.

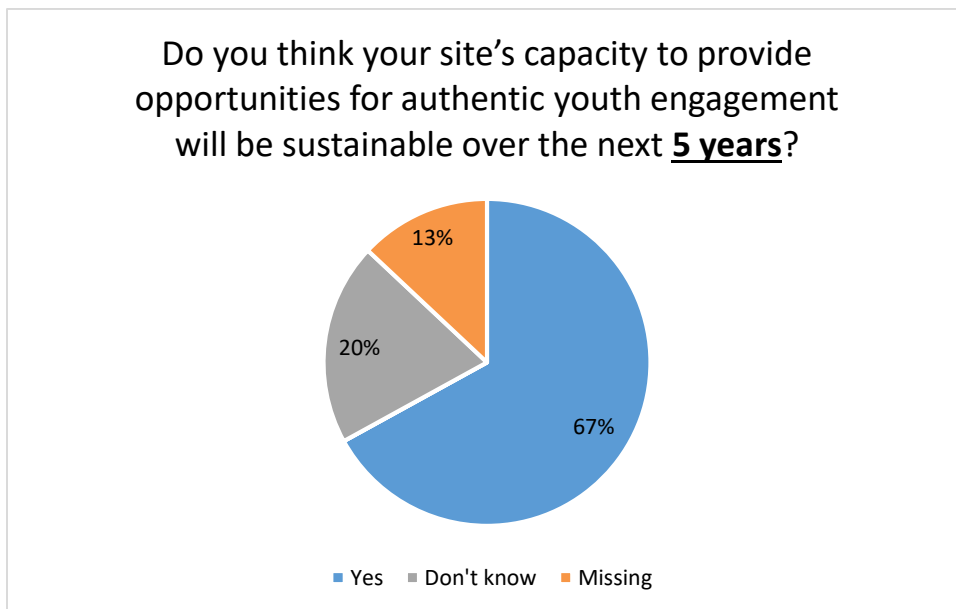
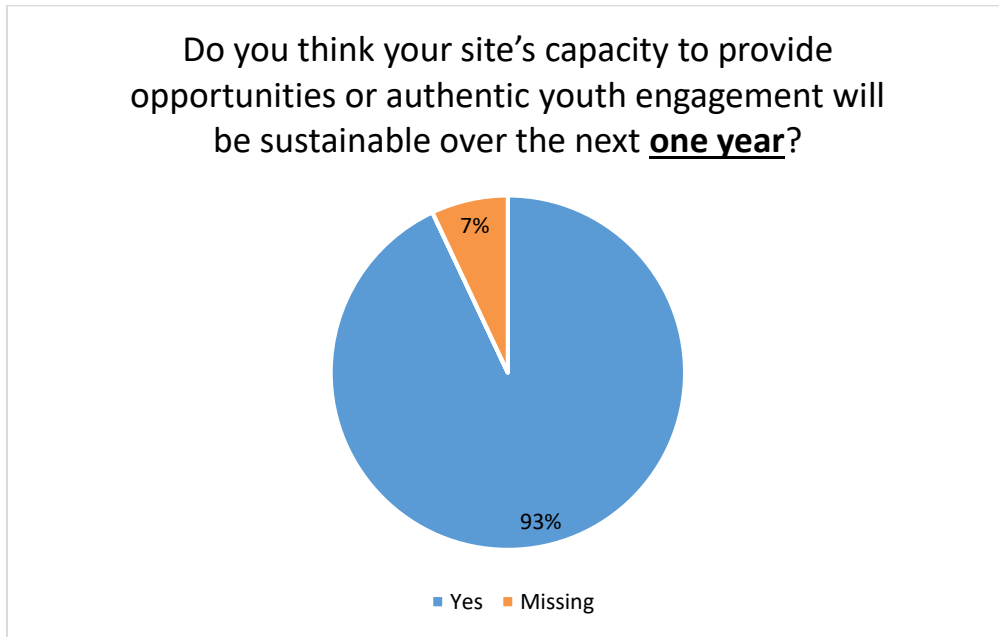
<b>Youth Mean Ratings of the Perceived Sustainability of Their Site’s Youth Engagement Work</b>					
I am confident that my site can continue engaging youth as it has so far in the following activities:	<b>Youth Mean Rating</b>				
	<b>All</b>	<b>GA</b>	<b>HI</b>	<b>NM</b>	<b>TN</b>
1. Youth leadership board	3.7	4	3.9	3	3.5
2. Community partnership board	3.8	4	3.8	3.8	3.5
3. Self-evaluation efforts	3.7	3.8	3.9	3.4	3.4
4. Developing a policy agenda	3.7	3.8	3.9	3.6	3.3
5. Influencing public will	3.6	3.9	3.9	3	3.3
6. Increasing opportunity and support in the community	3.7	3.8	3.9	3.6	3.6
7. Supporting youth with self-advocacy	3.8	4	4	3.6	3.5
<b>Average Rating across 7 Site Sustainability Items</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.4</b>
<i>Note. These scales had a possible range of 1 (Not At All) to 4 (A Lot).</i>					

The following table provides staff ratings of site sustainability.

<b>Staff Mean Ratings of the Perceived Sustainability of Their Site’s Youth Engagement Work</b>					
How sustainable would you say the following are in the Jim Casey Initiative work in your site in their current form?	<b>Staff Mean Rating</b>				
	<b>All</b>	<b>GA</b>	<b>HI</b>	<b>NM</b>	<b>TN</b>
1. The legislation, policy and/or practice guidelines that support youth engagement	3.3	3.6	3.6	3.2	2.9
2. The strategic plan for youth engagement as part of our site’s Results and Equity plan	3.4	3.3	3.7	3.2	3.3
3. The support of leaders that I work with	3.5	3.8	3.6	3.6	3.2
4. The strategies for <i>recruiting</i> youth	3.1	3.8	3.2	3.2	2.6
5. The strategies for <i>retaining</i> youth	3.2	3.8	3.6	3	2.6
6. The staff resources dedicated to supporting youth engagement practice	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.4	3.2
7. The financial resources (e.g., stipends, food, budget, bus tickets) available to support the active involvement of youth	3.2	3.7	3.2	3.2	2.9
8. The processes currently in place to include youth voice in the organization’s work (youth boards, etc.)	3.6	4	3.9	3.6	3.1
9. The youth-friendliness of current engagement efforts	3.8	3.9	4	3.8	3.4
10. The clear process for youth to share concerns	3.7	4	3.9	3.4	3.6
11. Staff support to learn more and develop their youth engagement skills	3.5	3.7	3.5	3.2	3.4
12. Availability of clear information for youth about how to participate in projects and initiatives (emails, website, posters, etc.)	3.6	4	3.3	3.6	3.5
13. The celebration of youths’ contributions/achievements	3.6	4	3.7	3.4	3.4
<b>Average Rating across 13 Site Sustainability Items</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.1</b>
<p><i>Note.</i> These scales had a possible range of 1 (Not At All Sustainable) to 4 (Easily Sustainable).  <i>Note.</i> Participants were only asked to respond to these items if they had said were sometimes, usually, or always present in their site (in the Research Question #2 Capacity section above).</p>					

## Interviews

Across sites, almost all staff interviewees expressed that they *do* perceive their site’s capacity to be sustainable over the next year. When asked about the sustainability over the next five years, most but slightly fewer indicated that they perceived their site’s capacity to be sustainable over this timeframe. The following pie chart provides descriptive statistics of the answers to these questions.



Confidence in sustainability across sites arises from sources including dedicated staff and perceptions of high program value and embeddedness in the community. As one staff in Georgia offered, “The value here is obvious, and apparent, and only increasing as people who are trying to do

work in different ways, whether it's policy and legislative or direct service, social services, legal services, the actual staff at the agency, there is now, to me, a very established embrace of Georgia EmpowerMENT in a clear and ongoing recognition of the value and need for them. So that reliance and dependence have been built. And in that way I don't think that anybody would let them fail. We'd certainly do all we could to make sure that it's sustained. So, in that way, I have confidence that it will continue at any interval of time." In a statement illustrative of the importance of dedicated leaders and staff, a staff interviewed in New Mexico stated, "We have great leadership that really thinks through that and we've developed positions within the organization thinking further out." In Georgia and Hawai'i, older youth engaging younger youth is perceived as an additional encouraging indicator of sustainability.

## Discussion

This study has provided support for the importance of authentic youth engagement in four Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative sites. The following shares some overall conclusions across sites regarding each of the six research questions.

### **Research Question 1. What does authentic youth engagement look like, and how does it operate in Jim Casey Initiative work within sites?**

Definitions of authentic youth engagement were consistent across sites, with focus on youth empowerment and the four component of authentic youth engagement: youth–adult partnerships, preparation, opportunities, and support. The ways in which sites operationalize authentic youth engagement was also consistent but contained variations in emphases across sites based on responsiveness to youths’ need. Youth leadership boards were the highest area of youth participation across sites, followed by self-advocacy. Male-identified youth, youth of color, and LGBTQ+ youth are perceived as under-represented in Jim Casey Initiative activities.

### **Research Question 2. What capacity do sites have/not have to implement activities related to authentic youth engagement?**

Staff surveys yielded high ratings of site capacity to do youth engagement work, with “processes in place to include youth voice” and “leaders who understand and support youth engagement initiatives” rated most highly among capacity items. Staff buy-in and staff preparation and skills were consistently cited as contributing to capacity at each site. Accessing existing community resources, expanding and deepening community support, and cultivating community champions for young people transitioning from foster care are key in expanding the capacity of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative.

### **Research Question 3. What successes and challenges/barriers to authentic youth engagement have Jim Casey Initiative sites experienced?**

Youth–adult partnerships were universally reported as successful across sites. In addition, youth empowerment, agency, and voice were seen as successes, benefitting both youth as they transition, and policy and practice. The number of youth engaged in Opportunity Passport™ and promising outcomes for OPPS participants is a notable success for the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative nationally. The most commonly discussed barriers to authentic youth engagement, beyond resource limitations, focused around challenges initiating and maintaining youth engagement consistently, particularly with youth who are having trouble meeting their basic needs.

### **Research Question 4. How does authentic youth engagement contribute to the achievement of Jim Casey Initiative results?**

Classes and trainings across sites are designed to build youth confidence, life skills, and self-advocacy skills to help youth transition to adulthood. Authentic youth engagement also contributes to changes in policy and practice that benefit youth, including extending foster care, addressing barriers to Medicaid coverage for youth who have experienced care, and increasing living allowance for pregnant and parenting youth.

### **Research Question 5. What are the lessons learned and recommended strategies and approaches for authentically engaging youth?**

The importance of nurturing, trusting relationships between youth and adults was emphasized as a recommendation to adults in authentically engaging youth. Keeping youth at the center of the work and ensuring that youth voice is heard are also critical. Staff and youth both stressed keeping an open mind to the ideas of young people. Sites also suggested expanding opportunities for youth through building community partnerships and educating community members on authentic youth engagement. A helpful logistic strategy reported was using multiple modes of communication to reach youth consistently, including email, social media, and texting.

### **Research Question 6. What are participants' perceptions of the sustainability of activities related to authentic youth engagement?**

Youth and staff perceptions of sustainability were high, with existing structure and buy-in from leadership cited as contributing to the sustainability of authentic youth engagement work over the next year, and then over the coming five years.

## **Implications**

These findings illuminate several points of success as well as provide several opportunities for improvement. In particular, Jim Casey Initiative sites may benefit from investing resources in some of the following areas that emerged as challenges in relation to authentic youth engagement:

- Engaging more youth and a larger diversity of youth (e.g., parenting youth, youth no longer in care, LGBTQ+ youth, youth of color, older youth, males, youth in kinship placements, youth with juvenile justice system involvement)
- Developing better strategies for recruiting youth and sustaining youths' engagement over the long-term, including, for example, culturally relevant practices
- Finding more ways for site staff and young people to cultivate trusting relationships and communication
- Supporting youth in implementing their ideas and seeing themselves as change agents
- Offering youth more opportunities to participate in activities that involve practice impact, self-advocacy, policy
- Bolstering and maintaining a strong staff through support, training, and self-care

- Better preparing staff to engage in youth–adult partnerships and to support youth, and making available the resources they need to do this work well
- Improving information sharing about upcoming opportunities
- Increasing availability of transportation to events and activities
- Finding ways to schedule activities that works better for everyone
- Finding new, creative ways to connect with and reach out to youth

## **Limitations**

Some limitations of this study applied to all sites. One included relatively small sample sizes from which to collect survey and interview data. Another is that this look at authentic youth engagement is from only one brief period of time (winter 2018/spring 2019). In regard to the OPPS data, participant data was only included from January 1 to June 30, 2018, at one time point. These conditions contribute to limited generalizability of the findings. The data collection measures (survey, interview protocol) were developed by the researcher in conjunction with Casey Foundation and Jim Casey Initiative staff; however, due to the short time frame of the study, there was not time to get feedback on the measures from sites or more broadly from other Jim Casey Initiative staff. Due to geographical limitations, all data collection had to be completed by phone or internet rather than in-person, which may have resulted in differences in the quality of the data collected. In addition, only four sites were involved in the study; had other or a larger number of other sites been involved, the findings may have differed. Finally, it should be noted that the nature and content of authentic engagement work varies across sites, so interpreting the meaning of cross-site comparisons should take into account these varying contexts.

## **Conclusion**

It is hoped that the findings from this study will lead to conversations within the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative about maintaining, strengthening, and expanding authentic youth engagement work.



## **Appendix**

1. List of documents included in document review
2. Table documenting contents by research questions
3. Jim Casey Opportunity Passport™ Participant Survey

*Appendix 1. List of documents included in document review*

National Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Documents Reviewed

1. 2018 Performance Measure Report on Opportunity Passport Participants
2. AECF Equity Guide 1 – Basics
3. AECF Equity Guide 2 – Historical Context CWS
4. AECF Equity Guide 3 – Discovering Self
5. AECF Equity Guide 4 – Sharing Power
6. Issue Brief #3 Authentic Youth Engagement: Youth–adult Partnerships
7. Orientation Briefing (AYE section)
8. Partnering for Results Slides
9. Policy Advocacy 101 Slides
10. Six Core Leadership Competencies
11. Strategic Sharing for Policy Advocacy Slides
12. Youth Engagement’s Contribution to the Initiative Slides

Georgia Documents Reviewed

1. Capitol day scavenger hunt
2. Driver’s license policy
3. EMP 2017 policy recommendation
4. Important logistics for Georgia EmpowerMENT Capitol tour 2017
5. Legislative advocacy MAAC EMP training 2016.12.28
6. Mind your health infographic
7. Opportunity passport
8. Prep and debrief circles
9. SB170 factsheet 2017
10. Youth town hall flyer Augusta 6.27.18

Hawai’i Documents Reviewed

1. 2013 Proposal narrative for DHS contract 12-6-2013
2. CP Hui and HI HOPES East Hawai’i meeting notes 2018.07.25
3. CP Hui and HI HOPES Kauai meeting notes 2018.07.11
4. CP Hui and HI HOPES Maui meeting notes 2018.07.10
5. CP Hui and HI HOPES Oahu meeting notes 2018.09.19
6. CP Hui and HI HOPES West Hawai’i meeting notes 2018.07.26
7. Funder 15HCF-77982 interrim report 2018.09.27
8. Funder 16ADVC-79049 Doc Buyers Fund interim report EPIC Ohana
9. Funder final report Seto Foundation 88644
10. Funder QAR.YAC.1037-FY18 Q4
11. Hawai’i 2019 results and equity plan 2018.09.17
12. HI HOPES Summit agenda 2016
13. HI HOPES Summit agenda 2017
14. HI HOPES Summit agenda 2018
15. OIF program 2016
16. OIF program 2017

17. OIF program 2018
18. Youth advocacy document 2016
19. Youth advocacy document 2017
20. Youth advocacy document 2018
21. Youth leadership institute agenda 2018 Oahu
22. Youth leadership institute youth curriculum-facilitator manual 2017

#### New Mexico Documents Reviewed

1. 2017 NM final report
2. 2018 NM mid-year report
3. Financial coach pre-service
4. Interview process and questions 2017
5. Membership in youth leaders 2018
6. NMCAN policy blueprint
7. NMCAN policy blueprint 2017
8. NMCAN work based learning pilot 2017
9. Strategic sharing slide deck
10. Youth in court book
11. Youth leaders orientation

#### Tennessee Documents Reviewed

1. Engagement prompts
2. Survey result: Is relationship with caseworker important?
3. Tips for caseworkers from youth
4. TN 2019-2021 plan
5. Ways to maintain stability of a Y4Y board
6. Operationalizing authentic youth engagement
7. Ladder of participation information sheet
8. Achieving AYE: Core values & guiding principles
9. AYE: Creating opportunities with preparation and support
10. YE Model
11. Youth engagement meeting 4/17/18

Appendix 2. Document Content by Research Question

**Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative  
Authentic Youth Engagement Document Review Table**

RQ/Sub RQ	Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Vision	Georgia	Hawai'i	New Mexico	Tennessee
<b>RQ1</b> Define AYE	<p><u>Young people are actively and authentically involved, motivated, and excited about an issue, process, event, or program.</u></p> <p><u>4 Components of Authentic Youth Engagement:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Youth–adult partnerships</li> <li>2. Preparation</li> <li>3. Opportunities</li> <li>4. Support</li> </ol> <p><u>Underpinnings of AYE:</u> apply adolescent brain science, commit to leadership and professional development, focus on preparing and supporting young leaders and adult partners, ensuring consistent leadership opportunities</p>	<p><i>No relevant information identified through document review</i></p>	<p>Youth possess a critical understanding to help improve systems and communities. “Youth engagement offers young people meaningful opportunities to take responsibility and leadership while working in partnership with caring adults who value, respect, and share power with them.” “Youth–adult partnerships are those in which each person is able to contribute his or her unique talents, skills, and knowledge...an honest exploration of power can be extremely helpful to any group seeking to achieve a more equitable balance of power.”</p>	<p><u>3 Pillars to engagement that heals:</u> 1) being trauma informed and responsive, 2) utilizing authentic youth engagement, 3) utilizing developmental coaching/mentoring even when applying prescriptive methods.</p> <p>Goal is <i>interdependence</i>: “for young people to be able to reach out and count on others for support when they do not yet have sufficient skill, energy, confidence, and/or time to manage their own tasks and experiences.”</p>	<p><u>Mission:</u> promote meaningful youth adult partnerships that support system and organizational change within the department while providing opportunities for youth to develop, master, and apply. <u>3 Pillars:</u> 1) system change and policy advocacy, 2) organizational culture change, 3) youth leadership &amp; prof. development</p>
<b>RQ1</b> How AYE operates	<p>Strategies focused on four key indicators:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Permanency</li> <li>2. Stable housing</li> <li>3. Educational success and economic security</li> </ol>	<p>Legislative advocacy is key: policy recommendation documents and info sheets for legislatures, training in legislative</p>	<p>Key strategies include a public will, policy, and practice campaign to promote normalcy, equity and inclusion efforts for Native Hawaiian children and youth, statewide financial capability opportunities, youth</p>	<p>Educational success and economic security for young adults are key: work based learning pilot, <i>Back on Track</i> program on bridging post-secondary supports, educating employers and</p>	<p>Legislative voice, youth boards, panels; Resource centers, homelessness prevention, services for pregnant and parenting youth;</p>

RQ/Sub RQ	Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Vision	Georgia	Hawai'i	New Mexico	Tennessee
	4. Pregnancy prevention and parenting support	advocacy and visit to Capital, "Youth Town Hall" meeting; Youth informed on relevant policies and services available to them	voice and engagement to improve supports for youth in care, and focus on data, accountability, and learning.	youth on tax credit, partnering with post-secondary institutions	Adopted policy and practices to increase financial capability and post-secondary attainment; Collaboration locally; Data collection
<b>RQ1</b> Prepare/train adults	Emphasize preparing adults to expect no more or no less from a young person, respect young people's time and responsibilities, treat young people as individuals, take time to explain, plan for young people's involvement, and recognize internal and external barriers to youth-adult partnerships.	Staff trained in effective preparation, support, and debriefing	<i>No relevant information identified through document review</i>	Staff trained in principles of AYE including 3 pillar approach, concept of interdependence, topics like boundaries, cultural humility, effective communication	Staff trained in benefits of successful Y-A engagement, engaging youth in conversation, young-people initiated shared decision making, adolescence brain development, preparation
<b>RQ2</b> Plans for capacity	Accessing existing community resources, expanding and deepening community support, and cultivating community champions for young people transitioning from foster care as strategies to expand capacity.	<i>No relevant information identified through document review</i>	<i>No relevant information identified through document review</i>	<i>No relevant information identified through document review</i>	<i>No relevant information identified through document review</i>
<b>RQ3</b> AYE successes	Over 14,000 young people enrolled in Opportunity Passport; Favorable outcomes in educational	Effective training/preparation for youth as legislative advocates	Progress toward race equity; Community collaboration and partnerships;	Progress toward race equity; Mentoring program; Youth engagement in Opportunity Passport;	Expanding ECF; Developed adolescences brain development training; Collaborative work to prevent

RQ/Sub RQ	Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Vision	Georgia	Hawai'i	New Mexico	Tennessee
	success, economic security, housing stability, and pregnancy prevention and parenting support compared to peers in National Youth in Transition Database		Legislative progress including extended care and medical coverage; Educating the public on issues relevant to youth in care	Production of resource book for youth navigating CWS	homelessness, collaborative work to increase support for pregnant/parenting young people; Supporting financial capability for youth (even in rural areas)
<b>RQ3</b> AYE challenges/barriers	Identity development for young people who have experienced foster care is often complex. Understanding one's place and role in racial and ethnic equity and inclusion work must begin with the journey of understanding oneself. Many young people who have been in foster care have experienced complex trauma and loss, which may surface in conversations about identity, culture and belonging.	<i>No relevant information identified through document review</i>	Trouble getting youth to 2-day Youth Leadership Institute due to time commitment and need for a supportive adult to attend part; Difficulties disaggregating data by race	Youth having trouble meeting their basic needs contributes to challenges in sustaining consistent, long-term engagement; Youth need social-emotional preparation prior to work-based learning	Youth entering care at age 17 (lack of time to prepare youth for transition)
<b>RQ4</b> Site's work different/changed as a result of AYE	Partnering with young people who have experience in the development, implementation and evaluation of policy and practices leads to significantly better and more equitable solutions.	<i>No relevant information identified through document review</i>	Youth board members share experiences and views, impacting policy and public awareness	Responsive, trauma-informed practice based on connecting youth to resources and helping them establish stability  Race equity framework focus	Youth bring diversity and innovative thinking to policy and procedure, assist in program development and implementation, and create buy-in

RQ/Sub RQ	Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Vision	Georgia	Hawai'i	New Mexico	Tennessee
<b>RQ5</b> Recommendations & lessons learned	Approaches should be rooted in adolescent brain research, employ best practice principles to authentically engage young people in the decisions that shape their lives, apply a racial and ethnic equity lens to reduce system-level disparities, leverage community partnerships to develop and align resources toward a shared result, use data and evaluation to assess progress to improve outcomes, build public will to create better policies that sustain enhancements over time.	<i>No relevant information identified through document review</i>	Recommended practices for encouraging youth voice and AYE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nearly continuous recruitment for board members as young people move on and off the board,</li> <li>- Improved processes for orientation of new board members and advisers,</li> <li>- Ongoing leadership development,</li> <li>- Regular trainings on strategic sharing,</li> <li>- Recurring opportunities to make presentations and to participate in work groups, and</li> <li>- Consistent debriefings.</li> </ul>	Address barriers to meeting basic needs to sustain youth engagement; Provide ongoing support to youth and employers in work-based learning project; Priority areas to target for policy intervention: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Normalizing foster care experience</li> <li>2) Ensuring young people are prepared and have access to opportunities</li> <li>3) Ensure permanence</li> <li>4) Providing high quality advocacy</li> </ol>	Youth recs for adults including patience, honesty, respect, finding common interests, and meeting in places that are not “meeting rooms”; Recs for youth board stability provided; Have pregnant/parenting youth represented on board
<b>RQ6</b> Sustainability	<i>No relevant information identified through document review</i>	<i>No relevant information identified through document review</i>	<i>No relevant information identified through document review</i>	<i>No relevant information identified through document review</i>	<i>No relevant information identified through document review</i>

## Appendix 3. Opportunity Passport™ Participant Survey<sup>6</sup>

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Welcome to the Opportunity Passport™ Participant Survey. The answers you provide will help us learn more about the experiences of young people in foster care across America.

Every effort will be made to protect the privacy of your answers. If you would like more info or want to find out about the results of the survey, please contact:  
jimcasesitesupport@childtrends.org.

### Personal Information

---

1. What is your date of birth?

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
Month / Day /Year



*Note: This survey is private; your name and answers will be separate. What you tell us will help us learn about gender identity.*

*Note: We ask about gender assigned at birth and gender identity because gender identity can change.*

2. What gender were you assigned at birth? *Mark one response.*

Male  Female

2a. What is your current gender identity? *Mark one response.*

- Male
- Female
- I am not sure yet
- I feel male sometimes and female at other times
- I feel neither male nor female (for example, agender)
- I would prefer not to answer this question



*Here racial group means the group you share genetic and physical features with. Your ethnic group refers to the group you share language, beliefs, and values with. We ask you to say if you are Hispanic or Latino because it is often considered an ethnic group of any race.*

3. Do you identify as Hispanic or Latino?

Yes, Hispanic or Latino  No, not Hispanic or Latino

3a. What is your racial background? *(Please check all that apply.)*

White

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<sup>6</sup> Modified March 2017





- Bisexual*
- I am not sure yet*
- Not listed above. Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_*
- I would prefer not to answer this question*

8a. Who are you sexually attracted to? *Mark one response.*

- Males*
- Females*
- Both*
- I am not sure yet*
- Neither*
- I would prefer not to answer this question*

8b. What is your marital status?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Single</i>                | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Separated</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Living with a partner</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Divorced</i>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Married</i>               | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Widowed</i>   |

9. How many children do you have?

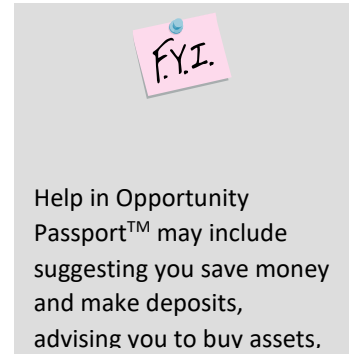
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>None (skip to #10)</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>3</i>         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>1</i>                  | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>4 or more</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>2</i>                  |   |

9a. If you have children, do any of these children currently live with you?

- |                                     |                                    |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Yes</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>No</i> |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|

10. Who has helped you the most with continuing participation in your Opportunity Passport™? (Please check one only)

- Foster parents
- Biological parents
- Adoptive parents
- Other family member (for example, aunt, grandmother, brother, sister, etc.)
- Another young person (for example, friend, roommate)
- Caseworker (includes case coordinator, case manager, social worker, Independent Living staff, Life Skills worker, Chafee worker, Transition Specialist)
- Teacher
- Someone at my job
- Someone on my Youth Board
- Someone on my Community Partnership Board
- Opportunity Passport™ staff
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Nobody helped me (skip to #11)



10a. How helpful has that assistance been to continuing your participation?

- Very helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Not very helpful
- Not helpful at all

11. Are you a member of the local Youth Leadership Board?

- Yes
- No

**Education**

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12. Are you currently enrolled in school?

- Yes
- No (skip to #13)

12a. What type of school are you currently enrolled in? (Please check all that apply)

- Junior high school or middle school
- High school
- Vocational school
- Community college
- College
- Graduate school
- GED class
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

12b. Are you in school full-time or part-time?

- Full-time
- Part-time

13. What is the highest grade you have completed at this time? (Do not include the year you are presently in)

- 6<sup>th</sup> grade or less
- 7<sup>th</sup> grade
- 8<sup>th</sup> grade

- 9<sup>th</sup> grade
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade
- 11<sup>th</sup> grade
- 12<sup>th</sup> grade
- Vocational Program (trade school, cosmetology, etc.)
- Certificate Program (post-secondary instruction that leads to certification, e.g. CNA/Certified Nursing Assistant)
- Some college
- Associates or 2-year college degree
- Bachelors or 4-year college degree
- Some Graduate School (school after receiving a bachelor's degree)
- Graduate degree (master's degree, Ph.D., etc.)

14. Have you received a high school diploma, a general equivalency diploma (GED), or any other high school equivalent diploma (e.g., HiSET)? (Please check one only)

- High school diploma
- GED/HiSET or other high school equivalent diploma
- None of the above (skip to #15)

14a. Have you participated in or attended any of the following? (Please check all that apply)

- Military
- Americorps
- Job Corps
- Peace Corps
- Vocational School (includes trade or technical school)
- None of the above

## ***Employment***

---

15. Are you currently participating in any of the following: (Please check all that apply)

- Work experience activity (for example, "job shadowing" – spending time with an employee at a workplace to see what their job is like, interviewing an employer or employee for a project or report) (skip to #16)
- Internship (working on a short-term basis for a company or organization in order to gain practical work experience, could be paid or unpaid) (skip to #16)
- Apprenticeship (learning a trade or art through a combination of paid on-the-job training and classes, usually under agreement or contract) (skip to #16)
- Pre-employment training (for example, developing a resume, training on work ethics, appropriate dress, or time management) (skip to #16)
- On-the-job training (for example, learning how to operate a cash register or a phone system, etc.) (skip to #16)
- Independent living classes (either paid or unpaid) (skip to #16)
- I am not currently participating in any of these activities (go to 15a)

15a. If you are not currently participating in these activities, have you ever participated in any of the following: (Please check all that apply)

- Work experience activity (for example, “job shadowing” – spending time with an employee at a workplace to see what their job is like, interviewing an employer or employee for a project or report)*
- Internship (working on a short-term basis for a company or organization in order to gain practical work experience, could be paid or unpaid)*
- Apprenticeship (learning a trade or art through a combination of paid on-the-job training and classes, usually under agreement or contract)*
- Pre-employment training (for example, developing a resume, training on work ethics, appropriate dress, or time management)*
- On-the-job training (for example, learning how to operate a cash register or a phone system, etc.)*
- Independent living classes (either paid or unpaid)*
- I have not participated in any of these activities*

16. How many paying jobs do you currently have (including participation on your local Youth Leadership Board)?

- None*       *1 (skip to #16b)*       *2 (skip to #16b)*       *3 or more (skip to #16b)*

16a. If none, have you ever had a paying job?

- Yes (skip to #16c)*       *No (skip to #16c)*

16b. Are you currently participating in the Youth Leadership Board as a paying job?

- Yes*       *No*

16c. Are you currently seeking employment (including looking for new or additional employment)?

- Yes*       *No*

16d. On average, how many hours do you work per week? (Please enter a number, for example 20 or 30.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Hours/Week

16e. Have you been working full-time (40 hours or more per week) without interruption (straight) for the past six months or longer?

- Yes*       *No*

16f. How many months or years have you been working without interruption (straight) at your current job?

**If less than 1 year**, enter the number of months you have been working:

*Opportunity Passport™ Participant Survey*

\_\_\_\_\_ Months  
(Enter a whole number, for example 3, 4, 5, etc.)

**If 1 year or more**, enter the number of years you have been working:

\_\_\_\_\_ Years  
(Enter a whole number, for example 1, 2, 3, etc.  
Round your answer, for example less than 1 and a half years would become 1 year; and 1 and a half years would become 2 years)

16g. What is your hourly pay? (Please enter a number, for example, 7.50 or 8.00.)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

17. Are you currently receiving Medicaid? (*You do not need to answer if you are currently in foster care. If you are in care, skip to #18*)  
 Yes                       No                       Don't Know

 Other names for Medicaid include HUSKY, Medi-Cal, TennCare, MaineCare, RIticare, and Title 19.

17b. Are you currently receiving any other form of public assistance (for example, Social Security, TANF, Disability, Unemployment, Food Stamps, WIC, EBT, or Section 8)? Please do not include supports that you are receiving because you were in foster care, such as transitional housing or room and board payments. (*You do not need to answer if you are currently in foster care.*)  
 Yes                       No                       Don't Know



22. Do you have an adult other than a family member that you will always be able to turn to for support?

- Yes  No (skip to #22P)

22a. If yes, which one adult would you turn to most often? (Please check one only)

- Foster parent
- Caseworker (includes case coordinator, case manager, social worker, Independent Living staff, Life Skills worker, Chafee worker, Transition Specialist)
- Teacher
- Someone from my church or faith-based community
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

22b. If you need it, what can you count on this person to do? If needed, I can count on him or her to... (Please check all that apply)

- Celebrate special events with me, such as my birthday, holidays, etc.
- Talk with me about my problems
- Help me feel good about myself
- Be trusted with my most private information
- Provide me with a place to live
- Help me find a job
- Help me if I am sick
- Celebrate my successes with me, such as school graduation, getting a new job, etc.
- Help me get into college, community college or vocational school
- Help me pay for some or all of my education
- Help me care for my children



Helping you get into school refers to free support like finding a college or school, help filling out forms, taking you to college

22P. Please think about adults in your life who support you in some way. If you need it, what can you count on these people to do? (Please check all that apply) (You do not need to answer this question if you answered “yes” to #21 or #22. If you answered “yes” to one of these questions, skip to #23)

- Celebrate special events with me, such as my birthday, holidays, etc.
- Talk with me about my problems
- Help me feel good about myself
- Be trusted with my most private information
- Provide me with a place to live
- Help me find a job
- Help me if I am sick
- Celebrate my successes with me, such as school graduation, getting a new job, etc.
- Help me get into college, community college or vocational school
- Help me pay for some or all of my education
- Help me care for my children



Helping you get into school refers to free support like finding a college or school, help filling out forms, taking you to college



## ***Housing***

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23. Where are you currently living? (Please check one only)
- Living Independently*** (by myself, with a friend, roommate, boyfriend, girlfriend, fiancé, husband, wife, etc.)
  - Living with Family*** (Birth parents, other relative such as aunt, brother or sister, Adoptive parents, legal guardian)
  - Living in a Foster Home***
  - Living in a Group Setting*** (Group home, Residential Care, or Residential Treatment Facility)
  - Living in a School Dormitory*** (Indian Boarding School or college dormitory)
  - Independent Living Program or Supervised Independent Living Program or Transitional Living Program***
  - Couch Surfing or Moving from House to House*** (because you don't have a place to stay)
  - Homeless*** (includes living in a homeless shelter)
  - Other*** (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

24. How many different places have you lived in the past twelve months? (Please enter a number, for example 3.)
- 

- 24a. If you have moved **in the past 6 months**, which of the following caused you to move? (Please check all that apply)

- I didn't move.*

**Employment or Education**

- New job*
- To look for work or lost job*
- To attend or leave college*
- Easier commute*

**Family/Relationship or Placement**

- Moved foster homes or other placement change*
- Conflict with others in apartment/home*
- Change in marital or relationship status*
- Death or health issue of a parent or family member*

**Housing or Neighborhood**

- Wanted a new or better home/apartment*
- Cheaper housing*
- Better neighborhood*

Foreclosure/eviction

**Other**

Felt the urge to move

Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

25. (BASELINE) Have you ever couch surfed or moved from house to house because you didn't have a place to stay? (You do not need to answer if you selected Couch Surfing in #23)

Yes

No

(FOLLOW-UP) In the past **six months**, have you couch surfed or moved from house to house because you didn't have a place to stay? (You do not need to answer if you selected Couch Surfing in #23)

Yes

No

26. (BASELINE) Have you ever slept in a homeless shelter or in a place where people weren't meant to sleep (for example, a car, the street) because you didn't have a place to stay? (You do not need to answer if you selected Homeless in #23)

Yes

No

(FOLLOW-UP) In the past **six months**, have you slept in a homeless shelter or in a place where people weren't meant to sleep (for example, a car, the street) because you didn't have a place to stay? (You do not need to answer if you selected Homeless in #23)


Yes

No

27. Do you pay for housing?

Yes


No (if No, skip to #29)

 If you are paying for some of your rent, you should say Yes.

28. Is your housing affordable?

Yes

No

 Affordable means you can pay for your housing and still have money for things like food, transportation, and utilities.

29. Do you feel safe inside your home?

Yes


No

30. Do you feel safe in the neighborhood where you live?

Yes

No

31. Do you feel that your housing situation is stable (for example, can you stay as long as you would like to and do you have control over whether you stay or have to leave – excluding reasons around your lease coming to an end)?  
 *Yes*  *No*
32. Do you have access to the transportation you need to get to school or work?  
 *Yes*  *No*
33. Do you have a valid driver’s license?  
 *Yes*  *No*  
 *I’m not old enough*
34. Do you own a motor vehicle (for example, car, van, truck, etc.)?  
 *Yes*  *No*
35. Do you have an Independent Living Plan that a caseworker or social worker helped you to prepare? (*You only need to answer this question if you are currently in foster care*)  
 *Yes*  *No (skip to #36)*

 An Independent Living Plan is a written life plan for goals like school, jobs, and housing.

- 35a. If yes, does it contain a housing plan that you believe will lead to safe, stable and affordable housing?  
 *Yes*  *No (skip to #36)*
- 35b. Did you participate in the development of this housing plan?  
 *Yes*  *No*

***Physical and Mental Health***

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36. Do you have health insurance? (*You do not need to answer if you are currently in foster care. If you are in care, skip to #37.*)  
 *Yes*  *No (skip to #37)*  *Don’t Know (skip to #37)*
- 36a. If yes, who pays for your health insurance? (Please check one only)  
 *Covered by my parents’ insurance*  
 *Covered by my spouse’s insurance*  
 *Covered by insurance provided by my employer*  
 *Covered by insurance provided by my school*  
 *I buy private insurance myself*  
 *I am covered by Medicaid (including HUSKY, Medi-Cal, TennCare, MaineCare, RIticare, and Title 19)*

- Other (please specify)* \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't Know*

36b. Does your health insurance have dental benefits, or do you have separate dental insurance?

- Health insurance has dental benefits*
- Separate dental insurance*
- I do not have dental insurance*
- Don't Know*

36c. Does your health insurance pay for you to get mental health services, like counseling and substance abuse treatment, if you needed it?

- Yes*
- No*
- Don't Know*

37. When did you last have a physical examination by a doctor or nurse?

- Less than a year ago*
- 1 to 2 years ago*
- More than 2 years ago*
- Never*
- Don't Know*

38. When did you last have a dental examination by a dentist or hygienist?

- Less than a year ago*
- 1 to 2 years ago*
- More than 2 years ago*
- Never*
- Don't Know*

39. Would you say that, **in general**, your physical health is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

- Excellent*
- Very good*
- Good*
- Fair*
- Poor*
- Don't Know*

39a. Has there been any time over the past six months when you thought you should get medical care but you did not?

- Yes*
- No (skip to #40)*

39b. What kept you from seeing a health professional when you really needed to (please check all that apply)?

- Didn't know who to go and see*
- Had no transportation*
- Had nobody to go with me*
- Parent or guardian would not go with me*
- Didn't want my parents or others to know*
- Difficult to make an appointment*
- Afraid of what the doctor would say or do*
- Thought the problem would go away*
- Didn't want to talk about the problem*
- Couldn't pay*
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_*
- Don't know*

40. Would you say that, **in general**, your mental and emotional health is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

- Excellent*
- Very good*
- Good*
- Fair*
- Poor*
- Don't Know*

40a. Has there been any time over the past six months when you thought you should see a mental health professional for a problem such as depression, substance abuse or anxiety, but did not?

- Yes*
- No (if No, skip to #41)*

40b. What kept you from seeing a mental health professional when you really needed to (please check all that apply)?

- Didn't know who to go and see*
- Had no transportation*
- Had nobody to go with me*
- Parent or guardian would not go with me*
- Didn't want my parents or others to know*
- Difficult to make an appointment*
- Afraid of what the doctor would say or do*
- Thought the problem would go away*
- Didn't want to talk about the problem*
- Couldn't pay*
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_*

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- Don't know*

**Financial Capability**

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41. Right now, do you have a bank, or credit union, account into which you can deposit and withdraw money?

- Yes  
 No (skip to #42)

41a. (If yes) What kind of account do you have? (Please check all that apply)

- Savings account  
 Checking account

**HELP: This is an account that you can use to manage money. This account is not in overdraft status or chex systems.**

42. In the past month did you have enough money to cover your expenses (e.g. rent, bills, food, transportation, school supplies, child care, school loans, etc.)?

- Yes  No

43. How did you cover your expenses? (Please check all that apply)

- Got money from a job or found additional work  
 Used money from student loans or scholarships  
 Got money that I do NOT have to repay from a family member or friend  
 Got money that I have to repay from a family member or friend  
 Got a loan from a bank or credit union  
 Got money from some other type of lender (e.g., payday loans, loan shark, pawn broker, etc.)  
 Got money from stipend, organization or agency (e.g., Opportunity Passport™, Independent Living classes, speaking engagements, community agency, etc.)  
 Used money that I saved for other purposes (savings can be money that you put away somewhere in your home, deposited in an account at a bank or credit union, etc.)  
 Sold some of my possessions  
 Used my credit cards  
 Overdrew my bank account (“go negative”)  
 Used government resources (e.g., welfare, TANF, WIC, SNAP, state funds, food stamps, etc.)  
 I did not cover my expenses

44. What would you do if you had an emergency and needed \$500 dollars? (Please check all that apply)

- Get money from a job or find additional work  
 Use money from student loans or scholarships  
 Get money from a family member or friend  
 Get a loan from a bank or credit union  
 Get money from some other type of lender (e.g., payday loans, loan shark, pawn broker, etc.)

**HELP: Usually people need about \$500 in hard times. Try to imagine what you would do if you needed \$500 in an emergency.**

- Get money from stipend, organization or agency (e.g., Opportunity Passport™, Independent Living classes, speaking engagements, community agency, etc.)*
- Use money that I saved for other purposes (savings can be money that you put away somewhere in your home, deposited in an account at a bank or credit union, etc.)*
- Sell some of my possessions*
- Use my credit cards*
- Overdraw my bank account (go negative)*
- Use government resources (e.g., welfare, child support, TANF, WIC, SNAP, state funds, food stamps, etc.)*
- I would not know what to do*

45. Do you currently have any savings (savings can be money that you put away somewhere in your home, deposited in an account at a bank or credit union, asked a family member or friend to keep for you, etc.)?

- Yes*  *No*

46. Do you currently owe money?

- Yes*  *No (skip to #47)*

46a. (If yes) Who do you owe money to? (Please check all that apply)

- Family member or friend (e.g., foster parent; adoptive parent; biological parent; sibling; extended family member like a cousin, grandparent, or aunt, significant other, etc.)*
- Credit cards*
- Student loans*
- Home mortgage*
- Bank or credit loan*
- Car or other motor vehicle loan*
- Student obligations (e.g., PELL grant, parking fees, activity fees, library fees, housing, etc.)*
- Bank account (e.g., chex systems, overdraft fees, etc.)*
- Child support*
- Other type of lender (e.g., payday loans, loan shark, pawn broker, etc.)*
- Medical expenses (e.g., insurance, hospital, doctor, co-pay bills, etc.)*
- Court related costs (e.g., restitution, fees, etc.)*
- Employer*



## Social Capital

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**Please think about your life goals when answering the following questions.** (Examples of life goals could be: to own a business, have a family, build or expand professional networks, earn a degree, sign a lease for an apartment, own a home, get a driver's license, become financially independent, establish a healthy peer network.)

A **peer** is someone who is around your age.

47. What **adults** do you have in your life **right now** who can help you go after your life goals? (Please check all that apply)
- Someone in my family** (for example, birth parent, adoptive parent, adult sibling, extended family member, legal guardian, self-identified family, etc.)
  - Someone from school** (for example, teacher, principal, coach, school counselor, etc.)
  - Someone from work** (for example, boss, supervisor, older co-worker)
  - Someone from my neighborhood or community** (for example, older neighbor, pastor, friend's parents, mentor, church, community organization, etc.)
  - Someone from the child welfare system** (for example, foster parent, group home staff, case worker, CASA, GAL, Opportunity Passport™ staff, life coach, etc.)
  - I don't have any adults who can help me go after my life goals right now.** (skip to #48)
- 47a. And which of those **adults** will **still** be there to help you go after your life goals in the **next few years**? (Please check all that apply)
- Someone in my family** (for example, birth parent, adoptive parent, adult sibling, extended family member, legal guardian, self-identified family, etc.)
  - Someone from school** (for example, teacher, principal, coach, school counselor, etc.)
  - Someone from work** (for example, boss, supervisor, older co-worker)
  - Someone from my neighborhood or community** (for example, older neighbor, pastor, friend's parents, mentor, church, community organization, etc.)
  - Someone from the child welfare system** (for example, foster parent, group home staff, case worker, CASA, GAL, Opportunity Passport™ staff, life coach, etc.)
  - I don't have any adults who will still be there to help me go after my life goals in the next few years.**
  - I don't know**

48. What **adults** have you **asked for and received help from** in going after your life goals?  
(Please check all that apply)

- Someone in my family** (for example, birth parent, adoptive parent, adult sibling, extended family member, legal guardian, self-identified family, etc.)
- Someone from school** (for example, teacher, principal, coach, school counselor, etc.)
- Someone from work** (for example, boss, supervisor, older co-worker)
- Someone from my neighborhood or community** (for example, older neighbor, pastor, friend’s parents, mentor, church, community organization, etc.)
- Someone from the child welfare system** (for example, foster parent, group home staff, case worker, CASA, GAL, Opportunity Passport™ staff, life coach, etc.)
- I have not asked for and received help from any adults in going after my life goals.** (skip to #49)

48a. Do you recall a time in the past 6 months when one of the adults in the list above **came to you for help and you helped them?**

- Yes
- No (skip to #49)

48b. How did you help them? (Please check all that apply)

- I provided practical support** (for example, volunteered, helped someone move)
- I provided financial support** (for example, loaned or gave money, bought something for them that they needed)
- I provided personal/emotional support** (for example, allowed someone to vent, listened and advised/shared perspectives, was honest, used “tough love”—keeping it real, helped make decisions)
- I helped provide support through my leadership** (for example, engaged other youth, served in a leadership role, helped other young people become leaders, partnered in providing training/technical assistance)
- Other, please specify:** \_\_\_\_\_

49. Do you have any **peers** in your life **right now** who can help you go after your life goals?

- Yes
- No (skip to #50)

**HELP: A peer is someone who is around your age.**

49a. Will any of those peers **still** be there to help you go after your life goals in the **next few years?**

- Yes
- No
- I don’t know

50. Have you ever asked for and received help from any of your **peers** in going after your life goals?

- Yes
- No (skip to Other)

50a. Do you recall a time in the past 6 months when one of those peers **came to you for help and you helped them?**

- Yes
- No (skip to Other)

50b. How did you help them? (Please check all that apply)

- I provided practical support** (for example, volunteered, helped someone move)
- I provided financial support** (for example, loaned or gave money, bought something for them that they needed)
- I provided personal/emotional support** (for example, allowed someone to vent, listened and advised/shared perspectives, was honest, used “tough love”—keeping it real, helped make decisions)
- I helped provide support through my leadership** (for example, engaged other youth, served in a leadership roles, helped other young people become leaders, partnered in providing training/technical assistance)
- I provided educational support** (for example, tutored, shared information about supports)
- I provided job/career support** (for example, helped someone to network)
- Other, please specify:** \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Youth Engagement***

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***Youth engagement*** is the meaningful participation and consistent involvement of a young person with an adult in an activity. These are activities that are not organized by your caseworker. Below are some questions designed to understand this engagement better.

51. Have you attended a training, or received help from staff or adults in the community, to support your leadership and advocacy skills (for example, deciding what policies and practices to advocate for, preparing for meetings with legislatures, planning for educating or training on foster care awareness, planning for participation in panels, providing feedback on laws and/or programs in your state, etc.)?

- Yes
- No

52a. Outside of the work with your caseworker, within the past 6 months have you met or worked with staff or adults in the community on any of these: education, housing, transportation, physical and mental health, social capital, permanence, financial capability, or employment?

- Yes
- No, staff asked me but I declined (skip to #53a)
- No (skip to #53a)

52b. If yes, in what way did you work with adults? (Please check one only)

- You came up with ideas and had **more** say than the adults in making decisions
- You came up with ideas and had an **equal** say with the adults in making decisions
- You came up with ideas and had **some** say with the adults in making decisions
- You came up with ideas and you **did not** have any say in making decisions
- You were asked to give **feedback** on adults' ideas and were not involved in making decisions
- You had **no** role

53a. Outside of the work with your caseworker, in the past 6 months have you met with staff or adults in the community about evaluation (for example, talking about and sharing data with others, reflecting on the data, analyzing the information, etc.)?

- Yes
- No, staff asked me but I declined (skip to #54a)
- No (skip to #54a)

53b. If yes, in what way did you work with adults? (Please check one only)

- You came up with ideas and had **more** say than the adults in how the data and information will be used
- You came up with ideas and had an **equal** say with adults in how the data and information will be used
- You came up with ideas and had **some** say with adults in how the data will be used
- You came up with ideas and you **did not** have any say in how the data will be used
- You were asked to give **feedback** on adults' ideas and were not involved in how the data will be used
- You had **no** role

54a. Outside of the work with your caseworker, in the past 6 months did you meet or work with staff or adults in the community in advocating for young people (for example, deciding what policies and practices to advocate for, preparing for meetings with legislatures, planning for educating or training on foster care awareness, planning for participation in panels, providing feedback on laws and/or programs in your state, etc.)?

- Yes
- No, staff asked me but I declined (skip to #55)
- No, I was not asked and did not participate (skip to #55)

54b. If yes, in what way did you work with adults? (Please check one only)

- You came up with ideas and had **more** say than the adults in making decisions
- You came up with ideas and had an **equal** say with the adults in making decisions
- You came up with ideas and had **some** say with the adults in making decisions
- You came up with ideas and you **did not** have any say in making decisions
- You were asked to give **feedback** on adults' ideas and were not involved in making decisions
- You had **no** role

55. Outside of the work with your caseworker, in the past 6 months, what resources/activities were you connected to in your community by staff or adults in the community? (Please check all that apply)

- Events/conferences
- Lifestyle training
- Employment
- Public speaking opportunities
- Financial literacy
- Educational
- College help/scholarships (financial aid, loans, applications)
- Tutoring
- Housing
- Medical
- Mental health
- Mentoring
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- I asked and no one helped
- I didn't ask
- None

56. In the past 6 months, in what ways did staff contact you? (Please check all that apply)

- Email
- Text
- Phone calls
- In-person meetings
- Social Media
- Video calls (Facetime, Skype, Oovoo)
- Bulletins/postings
- No one contacted me

***Other***

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Is there anything else that you would like to tell us?

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***Thank you for taking the survey! The answers you gave will help your community make decisions about creating opportunities for young people leaving foster care. Remember, follow-up surveys are in April and October - don't forget to take your next one!***