



2014 Improving Youth Transitions Project

Executive Summary

The Improving Youth Transitions Project was developed earlier this year to support the efforts of the state’s Juvenile Court Improvement Program (JCIP) in ensuring that Oregon juvenile courts and Citizen Review Boards (CRB) understand and exercise their role in supporting teens through a successful transition from foster care.

As more and more youth elect to remain in foster care beyond age 18, it is imperative that the expansion of care does not become a simple delay of poor outcomes. Teens on track to exit foster care as adults face a host of unique and specific challenges as they begin to navigate the transition from living in a system to living on their own.

The barriers to their educational and economic success are well documented and, oftentimes, byproducts of the foster care experience itself. Judges and CRBs, however, have the opportunity to change this paradigm for the better. By asking the right questions, at the right times, and by setting the standard for youth engagement in their own cases, Judges and CRBs can be the drivers of better transition planning, and better outcomes for youth that leave the system at or after age 18.

The five questions below, based on findings from the court observations, stakeholder interviews, and youth focus groups, will provide immediate and practical solutions to the current challenges of teens and young adults trying to navigate the difficult transition through a complex legal system.

At every hearing or review that involves a teen 15 years of age or older, judges and CRBs should expand their inquiry by asking:

- Did our youth receive notice - why is he/she not present?
- Are you getting the help you need from your attorney ?
- Does our youth have permanent connections to supportive adults that will continue beyond foster care?
- What is the plan for post-foster care housing and financial stability?
- What is being done to help our youth learn daily living skills aside from ILP?