**Bradley County, Tennessee’s Foster Future**

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**Abstract**

Tennessee Foster’s Future aims to support youth transitioning out of foster care in Bradley County with additional support they need to transition to living independently. A mixed methods needs assessment will be completed via focus groups with foster youth and surveys of foster parents, school faculty and staff and social workers. The qualitative portion will focus on what success in transition looks like to foster youth and their foster parents. The quantitative portion will utilize the Casey Life Skills Assessment to measure youth’s independent living skills (Casey Family Programs, 2023). Depending on what is found by the needs assessment this program proposal will be adjusted accordingly. Until found otherwise this proposal aims to partner with Bradley High School to provide case management and psychoeducation classes in five core areas: post-secondary education planning, sexual health education, financial management, employment preparation, and housing navigation. By engaging 50 youth in each of these classes and building rapport with the social workers the goal is to increase rates of housing stability, stable employment, highschool graduation and attendance at secondary education institutions, and reduce rates of pregnancy. Evaluation tools will include follow-up questionnaires covering each of the mentioned subject areas, graduation and college attendance rates, employment information, and pregnancy status.

**Background of the Problem**

This program addresses the lack of support for foster teens who are aging out of the foster care system. According to the National Foster Youth Institute, 23,000 children age out of foster care every year. When youth reach the age of 18, 20% of the children who were in foster care will become instantly homeless (National Foster Youth Institute, 2017). There is a gap in care and coverage for teens within the system who have limited to no opportunities to learn life skills to help them support themselves outside of foster care.

***Social Issue***

The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, in their 2022 report, detailed a need for services such as financial management classes, high school equivalency prep, post-secondary education planning, sexual health education, and assistance with finding housing and employment to be made available for transitioning youth who live in underserved rural regions of the state. Creative strategies and technology can be utilized to ensure that youth who do not live close to an existing resource center can still access needed psychoeducational programs and have help navigating adulthood. Another gap in current services aside from location is immigration status. 4% of youth who declined extended foster care services in Tennessee being undocumented was the reason for not accepting services. Only 44% of youth aging out from foster care in the Tennessee Valley accepted extended foster care services (Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, 2022).

***Target Population***

The group that this program seeks to work with is teenagers ages 16 to 24 in Bradley County, TN, who are aging out of the foster care system. They will currently be a part of the foster care system or be coming to an age where they will be required to live on their own. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, only 7.6% of the estimated 110,616 people in Bradley County speak a non-English language at home (United States Census Bureau, n.d.). Therefore, English will be the language in which our services are offered to begin. In the state of Tennessee, there are 9,227 children in the foster care system, according to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Children’s Bureau. 21.4% of these children are 16 and older (calculated with data from the DHHS). However, only 6.3% of the children adopted in 2021 were 16 or older. Across all the foster children in Tennessee, the three largest racial categories are white, Black, and two or more races (United States Children’s Bureau, n.d.). Further inquiry is required to determine the number of foster children in Bradley County.

***Current Service Programs***

Within Hamilton County, there are only a few resources available to support foster youth in transition for those residing in both Hamilton and Bradley counties. For example, there is the River City Youth Collective by Partnership for Families, Children, and Adults. This is a program that helps find housing for at-risk youth along with giving educational classes for life skills (2023). Additionally, Youth Villages LifeSet is a program that offers case management to youth ages 16-24 to support the development of life skills, vocational skills, housing, and transitional support. (Youth Villages, 2023) Within Bradley County, the only available resource for foster youth in transition would be the “Expansion of Foster Care Services,” provided by Kidcentral TN. These resources exist to support families and youth who require a community provider to connect them to housing, and employment, if the youth are enrolled in higher education or graduated with the equivalent of a high school diploma (2018).

***Targeted Need***

This proposed program will focus on providing psychoeducational classes for foster and at-risk youth in Bradley County, TN. The classes and resources in this potential program will aid them in being better prepared to support themselves when they age out of the system and begin life on their own. The program will meet the needs of this group, as there are few resources available for this population in Bradley County, as shown above. Classes will be available in person at Bradley County schools.

**Uniqueness of the Program**

The proposed program is a group of psychoeducational classes targeted at youth aging out of the foster care system in Bradley County, Tennessee. The program will function out of a Bradley County high school, where it is most likely to reach foster youth and be a convenient and known space for them to engage in the classes the program provides after school. Material and classes will be administered by local professionals and online programming. The class topics that this program will focus on are financial management, post-secondary education planning, sexual health education, housing navigation, and employment. This program seeks to give transitioning foster youth the tools and resources they need to be successful in adulthood.

***Comparison to Other Programs***

The program the researchers propose is unique primarily in its location. While programs addressing the needs of youth aging out of foster care are widespread, the programs have a harder time reaching rural communities. Most of the resources targeting youth aging out of foster care are centralized in Chattanooga and primarily serve Hamilton County. By opening up a resource center in Bradley County, a neighbor of Hamilton County, this new program development would reach youth who live too far away from the psychoeducational services they need. Pulling from the approaches shown to be effective in Hamilton County, LifeSet by Youth Villages (Youth Villages, 2023) and River City Youth Collective (Partnership for Families, Children, and Adults, 2023), this program will collaborate with those agencies to best serve the youth in Bradley County.

***This Program’s Uniqueness***

In southeastern Tennessee, Bradley County struggles to provide adequate services because, as previously stated, much of the local care targeting current and former foster youth is located in Hamilton County. This program will be unique because it will provide classes for youth aging out of foster care in Bradley County. Financial management sessions will assist in finding and establishing savings accounts and creating realistic budgets. This program will seek to educate youth on topics such as navigating college courses, how to find scholarships, and how to apply for financial aid. The program will not be able to provide case management services, as required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to apply for Housing Preference Vouchers (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2023), but it will teach students what factors to consider when looking for a home, how to review a lease, and what a move-in process could look like. Classes on sexual education will provide information regarding teen pregnancy rates, health precautions including socioeconomic status and awareness of sexually transmitted infections. Finally, employment training will not only focus on finding jobs and creating resumes, but will include topics such as workplace etiquette and professional communication.

**Literature Review**

This literature review explores the challenges that foster youth face when transitioning out of the foster care system. It focuses on five sections: financial management, post-secondary education planning, housing navigation, sexual health education, and employment.

***Financial Management***

Lack of knowledge about money management, financial resources, and emotional support when tackling financial issues are barriers that youth exiting foster care face in developing financial capability. Financial capability is defined as having the necessary knowledge, emotional ability, and access to services and resources to pursue financial well-being. Financial well-being is feeling secure financially in the future, with making decisions and meeting financial obligations (Youth.gov, n.d.) Studies show that barely half of youth aging out of foster care had a checking or savings account at age 21 compared to 80% of their similarly aged peers (Salazar, et al., 2021) A student financial wellness survey polling 63,751 undergraduate students in the United States found that youth transitioning out of foster care were largely unaware of whether or not their state (63%) or institution (69%) had any aid opportunities available to them (Fletcher et al., 2022). In addition to the educational issues that youth face, there are a number of emotional issues that can derail their efforts to improve their financial capabilities. A composite of case studies from a Canadian case worker details how trauma and anxiety can drastically affect the perspective youth aging out of the foster care system have toward money (Keller, 2023). Financial management classes need to not only address the educational gaps, but also the emotional baggage participants bring to this topic.

***Post-Secondary Education***

Youth transitioning out of the foster care system face many obstacles, including post-secondary education, which is impacted by the foster youth’s financial resources. According to Kirk and colleagues and Miller and colleagues, many foster youth and alumni desire to attend post-secondary education, but few enroll, and those who do enroll face numerous challenges, such as academic financing and general support. Foster youth and alumni often have limited financial resources and familial/mentor support that would help them attend and complete higher education (Kirk et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2019). Due to a lack of financial resources and general external supports such as guidance, stability, and mentorship, approximately 3% to 4% of individuals who were previously in the foster care system earn a bachelor's degree, while a range of 2% to 6% attain an associate's degree (National Foster Youth Institute, 2021). While post-secondary educational enrollment and completion is a clear issue among this population, there are ways to increase the opportunities and success of foster youth, such as pre-college support programs, liaisons, and recruitment programs.

***Housing Navigation***

Housing instability is another known barrier for foster youth (Greeno et al., 2018), affecting their ability to remain in school and to keep a job, among other impacts (Jones, 2019). In a study by Greeno and colleagues, 100% of the 291 youth surveyed reported that they had stayed with relatives or friends after leaving foster care, for lack of a place to live (2018). The impact of housing instability and homelessness can range from inability to pay for bills, food, and healthcare, to exposure to mold and vermin, and poor health outcomes (Healthy People 2030, n.d.). These impacts can be especially severe for those transitioning out of foster care. CNBC News reported that 45% of parents in the general population surveyed provided some form of financial support to their child who is 18 years of age or older (Deckler, 2023). Of course, former foster youth still experience the impacts of homelessness and housing instability as outlined above, but they do not have the familial support that many young adults can lean on. Of the youth surveyed by Greeno and colleagues, only 42% of former foster youth reported having been prepared to transition out of care with skills for living alone and navigating housing (2018).

***Sexual Health Education***

Sexual education has been an ongoing topic of discussion within society as to how young adolescents gain this information. Data extracted from the National Youth in Transition Database shows that over 40% of females had given birth at least once by the age of 21 (United States Children’s Bureau, 2023). In recent years there has been a decline in teen birth rates, however, in 2020, 76 percent of all teen births occurred between the ages of 18 and 19 (Office of Population Affairs, n.d.). Sexual education already has a minimal presence within the foster care system and has more of an impact than is known to the general public. Another study that extracted data from the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services states that teens in foster care still experience higher rates of teen pregnancy and childbearing at 60% compared to peers in the general population (Tennessee Department of Children’s Services, n.d.-b). When comparing the rates of teen pregnancy within the foster system and the general public, it is at an alarmingly higher rate due to the lack of information being readily available. In an article published by The Imprint, within a survey done in 2018 by the American Journal of Sexuality Education, out of the 270 participants, 53.5% were unaware of a condom's effectiveness in reducing sexually transmitted infection (Fitzgerald, 2023). These examples are a part of the bigger picture of sexual health education which is one of the primary focuses of the program. Sexual education continues to be a growing concern with how its presentation is to be dealt with in young adolescents and can impact those coming out of the program to stabilize themselves within the workplace and independence.

***Employment Preparation***

Additionally, foster youth may struggle to obtain employment as they age out of the foster care system (Brisson et al., 2022; Verulava & Dangadze, 2021). Youth aging out of the foster care system are less likely to have the soft skills or overall support to obtain employment (Brisson et al., 2022; Liu, 2020; Zinn & Courtney, 2017). Unfortunately, foster youth do not often have support in their lives that ensures a smooth transition into adulthood. Therefore, youth show a reliance on transitional support for needs pertaining to employment, education, and housing (Armstrong-Heimsoth et al., 2021). Employment is a major obstacle for transitional and foster youth across multiple studies (Armstrong-Heimsoth et al., 2021; Brisson, et al., 2022; Liu, 2020; Verulava & Dangadze, 2021; Zinn & Courtney, 2017). With only 51% of foster youth employed by the age of 21, a significant amount of foster youth are struggling with unemployment (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2020).

**Evidence-Based Practices**

While the literature has shown transitioning foster youth face many obstacles, some programs and initiatives have worked and increased the likelihood of success for youth aging out of foster care.

***Financial Management***

Various programs have addressed financial literacy among youth aging out of foster care such as Opportunity Passport by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and LifeSet by Youth Villages. The key approach of the Opportunity Passport is a matched savings account, where youth in and aging out of foster care can put money to then be doubled if it is used for an asset that is approved. Per a study of 1,077 youth involved in this initiative, the majority of youth used these funds for housing, a vehicle, or education. 46% of youth who purchased an asset went on to purchase a second asset through the program (“The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative,” 2009). Per a randomized study gathering data from 1300, LifeSet was one of the few transitional programs shown to increase youth’s earnings, housing stability, economic well-being, and some outcomes in regard to health and safety. LifeSet significantly increased the number of youth who received help with their finances, in areas such as budgeting and money management, opening a checking or savings account, and securing state cash assistance or SNAP funding. LifeSet was shown to increase youth’s rates of employment and formal earnings, and overall increased youth’s economic well-being. Economic well-being was measured by an economic hardships scale including items such as phone or electricity service being shut off due to lack of funds, and delaying paying a bill to buy food (Valentine et al., 2015).

***Post-Secondary Education***

In addition to financial literacy programs, studies show that meeting the unique needs of foster youth through pre-college support programs, liaisons, and recruitment programs increases the likelihood of the individuals attending and being successful in college, therefore setting them up to be more successful in the remainder of their lives (Bustillos et al., 2022; Geiger et al., 2016; Jackson et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2019). According to Bustillos and colleagues, a foster care liaison for college is someone who makes first contact with prospective or curious students and gives them resources and support that will aid them in reaching their goals. Additionally, they help provide a connection for students who have questions about resources for foster youth or post-secondary education (Bustillos et al., 2022). College recruitment groups/programs targeted toward foster youth can also provide many benefits and much information. These groups help foster youth and alumni learn about financial support available to them, such as waivers, scholarships, and financial aid (Geiger et al., 2016). Additionally, they can share on-campus resources and support that would increase the likelihood of success for the youth should they decide to attend one of those universities (Geiger et al., 2016). Finally, foster youth benefit from pre-college support classes that cover college readiness, employee and leadership skills, and relationship skills (Jackson et al., 2019). Academic financing and the logistics of applying for post-secondary educational institutions are also important aspects and topics for pre-college support classes. (Jackson et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2019). These classes help foster youth who want to attend post-secondary education have a better idea of their resources and support, both before and during college, which sets them up for greater success.

***Housing Navigation***

An additional difficulty faced by youth transitioning out of the foster care system is locating stable housing. According to data from the National Low Income Housing Coalition, there is a shortage of 7 million affordable homes. In Tennessee, there are estimated to be only 41 affordable and available rental homes per 100 extremely low-income households that rent (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2023). These statistics alone can be startling, but among these data are youth who have or are preparing to transition out of foster care and will be living without its support structure. To address this issue, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has created the Foster Youth to Independence program that allows Housing Preference Vouchers (HPVs) to be accessed by Public Child Welfare Agencies (PCWAs) and Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) (Office of Public and Indian Housing, 2023). This program assists 18-24 year olds who have transitioned out of the foster care system or will do so within 90 days and youth 16 and older who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. These HPVs may be used for three years and are available if applied for by PCWAs and PHAs (Office of Public and Indian Housing, 2023). Despite this development of resources, there may be a lack of practical availability for youth as PCWAs and PHAs may not be equipped to apply for and provide the required comprehensive care to foster youth. In a review by Jones, the author noted that the results of two longitudinal studies showed that, while youth who remained in foster care until the age of 19 experienced a lower chance of becoming homeless compared to those who left foster care at 18, by age 23, there were no observable differences between those who had left foster care later and those who left at 18 (2019). This indicates that, despite measures within the foster care system to allow youth to remain in care longer, this did not have long-term impacts on their ability to avoid homelessness at a more successful rate than those who left foster care earlier.

***Sexual Health Education***

Sexual education is often an intimidating issue for parents to approach. There have been attempts at creating resources to accommodate any family and students’ needs within the general public and foster care youth to help ease this process. There is foster parent training that provides online training catalogs which include how to be trauma-informed such as Preparing for Adulthood that youth and foster parents can access (Tennessee Department of Children’s Services, n.d.-a). While online training is available for understanding issues such as sexual education within foster care, Tennessee as a state has a different approach to sexual health education. According to Tennessee Code Title 49. Education 49-6-1302, if a county's pregnancy rate exceeds 19.5 pregnancies per 1,000 females ages 15-17, they are required to develop and implement a family life education program (Tennessee code title 49. Education § 49-6-1302, 2020). Although this is a positive implementation of a law to ensure some kind of pregnancy program is established when the issue arises, it is just as important to continue adapting education programs as to prevent future issues needing a certain threshold to implement mandated programs to reduce high pregnancy rates.

***Employment Preparation***

As youth age out of the foster care system, they will face barriers in obtaining employment (Brisson et al., 2022). Currently, only 57% of foster youth are employed by the age of 21. Additionally, only 51% of indigenous foster youth will secure employment (Annie E, Casey Foundation, 2023). The employment outcomes for youth under the age of 21 may vary. A survey of 118 foster youth at the age of 19 reports that only 23% of youth were able to obtain full-time employment, while 27% of youth reported part-time employment (National Youth in Transition Database, 2023). Programs to support transitional youth can include independent living programs or employment assistance programs (Brisson et al, 2022; Liu, 2020; Zinn & Courtney, 2017). Independent living programs are “grants to states and tribes to help youth in foster care achieve self-sufficiency in areas such as education, employment, financial management, housing, emotional support, and social networks,” (Liu, 2020). Overall, to support foster youth in the employment challenges they experience, research has been conducted to understand what needs to occur to further advance employment. Studies show that by extending foster care services and improving access to post-secondary education, foster youth are more likely to obtain employment (Brisson et al, 2022; Liu, 2020; Zinn & Courtney, 2017). When foster youth can access supportive programs such as independent living programs, they are more likely to obtain both housing and employment. In a sample size of 5,633 participants, foster youth with independent living support or secondary education support are more likely to be employed (Liu, 2020). In addition to the need for extended support, education on soft skills and personal empowerment is necessary to secure foster youth employment (Brisson et al, 2022; Liu, 2020; Zinn & Courtney, 2017). The implications of the literature highlight the need for employment programs to further support foster youth in transition.

***Impact of Literature on the Project Plan***

A review of the literature has shown that financial management, post-secondary education, housing assistance, sexual health education and employment preparation are areas in which foster youth aging out of foster care need additional support. The literature that has been reviewed shows that there are gaps within the amount of resources that are readily available which is where the main focus will be. Accessibility is a major concern and providing resources that cover a wide range of options and opportunities can improve individuals' ability to handle any issues that they need assistance the most in.

**Problem Statement**

Financial management, employment preparation, housing assistance, sexual health education, and post-secondary education planning are needed for aging foster youth from the literature. However, it is not known the primary obstacles to success foster youth in Bradley County face upon aging out of the foster system, and that is the reason why it is important to explore the obstacles and factors of success available for transitional foster youth in Bradley County, Tennessee.

**Needs Assessment Research Plan**

Before the proposed program can be implemented, the researchers must conduct a needs assessment to determine what the foster youth, soon to be aging out of the foster care system, in Bradley County need to be successful. To conduct this assessment, the researchers will identify relevant variables, develop a methodology to assess the community, and conduct research to answer the questions of the needs assessment. Then, the researchers will proceed to develop a program that has been informed by the needs of the community.

The information for this needs assessment will be compiled from both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative sources of data include focus groups with foster youth ages 16-24 and their foster parents. Quantitative sources of data include a survey distributed to foster youth ages 16-24 in Bradley County, Tennessee, their foster parents, and teachers and case workers that work with the foster youth.

**Need for the Program**

Gaps in services will be evidenced by themes of need in the qualitative and quantitative need assessments for more financial management, housing navigation, post-secondary education planning, sexual health education, and employment preparation. This program will fill gaps in education among youth aging out of the child welfare system in those five key areas.

**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this needs assessment is to discover what factors determine successful transitions for youth aging out of the foster care system in Bradley County, Tennessee.

**Research Question**

What factors determine success as foster youth transition into adulthood, and what do foster youth additionally need to have successful transitions in Bradley County, Tennessee?

**Research Hypotheses**

***Null Hypothesis (H0)***

There is no significant relationship between the independent variables (financial management classes, a financial management counselor, sexual health education classes, housing navigation case management, housing assistance, IDA account through Opportunity Passport, employment classes, and post-secondary education planning classes) and successful transition out of foster care, which includes housing stability, financial well-being, reduced pregnancy rates, graduating high school or obtaining a GED, attending a post-secondary educational institution, and obtaining stable and quality employment among foster youth aging out of the system.

***Alternate Hypothesis (H1)***

There is a significant relationship between at least one of the independent variables (financial management classes, a financial management counselor, sexual health education classes, housing navigation case management, housing assistance, IDA account through Opportunity Passport, employment classes, and post-secondary education planning classes) and successful transition out of foster care, which includes housing stability, financial well-being, reduced pregnancy rates, graduating high school or obtaining a GED, attending a post-secondary educational institution, and obtaining stable and quality employment among foster youth aging out of the system.

**Research Variables**

There are a lot of variables that could be chosen to study and focus on that relate to youth aging out of foster care. The following quantitative variables and qualitative concepts were chosen after a careful review of the literature regarding life skills youth need as they are transitioning to adulthood.

***Quantitative Variables***

The independent variables for the quantitative assessment are financial management classes, a financial management counselor, sexual health education classes, housing navigation case management, housing assistance, IDA account through Opportunity Passport, employment classes, and post-secondary education planning classes. The dependent variable is successful transition out of foster care. Successful transition is broken down into the following dependent variables: housing stability, financial well-being, reduced pregnancy rates, graduating high school or obtaining a GED, attending a post-secondary educational institution, and obtaining stable and quality employment.

***Qualitative Concepts***

The concepts to be studied in the qualitative portion of the needs assessment are the current needs and the prioritization of those needs and supports available to and which supports are most influential to youth aging out of foster care in Bradley County.

***Controlled and Extraneous Variables***

Controlled variables for both the quantitative and qualitative assessment include age, years in foster care, relationship with birth family, quality of relationship with foster family, education level, gender/sex, race/ethnicity, and comprehensive case management.Extraneous variables for this assessment include availability of housing vouchers and the number of case managers in the system.

**Methodology**

Using a mixed methods approach for this needs assessment will create a deeper and more holistic understanding of the answer to the research question. The complementary pairing of the statistical information from the quantitative method and the depth and context of the qualitative approach will increase the study’s validity and give the researchers a fuller perspective to enhance the results and next steps. The researchers will prepare consent forms for both adults and minors partaking in the qualitative focus groups (see Appendix A and B) to be given to foster youth and their parents, case managers, and teachers, as this is a solid method to gain a higher number of responses and see general trends in what is or was helpful for a successful transition (Blackstone, 2012). Focus groups with foster youth and alumni will be the best method for eliciting detailed and lengthy information from participants, as a successful transition out of foster care is a profoundly complex and subjective topic that can be impacted by numerous variables and concepts (Blackstone, 2012). The researchers chose to do focus groups with foster youth to explore their priorities as well as the most important factors to their success and what their needs are as well as the potential to provide a sense of community and support to the participants. A consent form will be distributed for participants to sign prior to attending the focus groups (see Appendix A). Researchers facilitating the focus groups will utilize an interview guide for both groups after gaining the appropriate participant approval (see Appendix C).

The quantitative method for collecting data includes utilizing two separate surveys with attached consent forms. One survey for adults and one survey for minors based on the consent forms embedded into the surveys (See Appendix D and E). The researchers chose to survey parents or guardians of foster youth, foster youth and alumni , case managers, and teachers, because they felt that this would be the most convenient way for them to be able to contribute their knowledge and experiences.

**Population and Sampling Plan**

This cross-sectional study is researching youth who are aging out of the foster care system in Bradley County, Tennessee. The sample for this study includes foster youth and their foster parents in Bradley County, Tennessee, Bradley County high school teachers, and case managers who work with foster youth. Inclusion criteria for the foster youth are that they must be between the ages of 16 and 24, and they and their parents must live in Bradley County, Tennessee. Inclusion criteria for professionals that will be surveyed include teachers and case managers who work directly with foster youth who live in Bradley County, Tennessee.

This study will use non-probability sampling to select participants. The sample will be selected through voluntary response sampling, as individuals will be volunteering and choosing themselves if they wish to participate in the focus group or take the survey. They will have the opportunity to self-select by contacting the researchers to sign up for the focus group or following the QR code to complete the online survey.

***Recruitment***

To recruit participants for the focus group, the researchers will create a flier to place around Bradley County high schools and email to the parents of the foster youth. This flier will include the following information: the purpose of the study, time commitments/expectations for being involved in the focus group, contact information, incentives, and a method to sign up. This flier will additionally include a QR code to a survey if participants wish to share their ideas that way. To recruit professionals for the survey, the researchers will contact school administrators and case management services and ask them to distribute the flier to their employees. This survey will also include the study’s purpose, time commitments/expectations for the survey, incentives, contact information, and the link to the survey.

***Site Permission***

First and foremost the school principal, administration, teaching staff, and student support staff would be able to provide permission to conduct research on school grounds with students. Foster youth, parents, guardians, and case managers would be able to provide permission to use sites as well. Additionally, if necessary, contacting the school board and superintendent would provide access to the whole school district as a site. Other sources of information may include referring to census data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau, and public health records provided by the Bradley County Health Department. To gain permission from families, schools, medical practitioners, and case managers, the distribution of consent forms would be necessary to access any confidential data from participants. Data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bradley County Health Department are considered public resources and therefore would not require any specific usage permissions.

**Data Collection and Analysis Plan**

Flyers will be distributed among Bradley County high schools for participants which include foster teens to opt in for a survey and focus group. All identifiers of those who participate in the survey will be kept confidential as well as the focus groups. All personal identifiers will be transferred to code to protect any sensitive information being exposed. Researchers will be the only ones able to view the identifiers and results from the survey as well as those who chose to be in the focus group. All information will be kept on password-protected devices and be viewed by the researchers only. The researchers will obtain consent if audio or video recordings are made. Identifying information will be removed from the final research report. Data will also be kept after the research period for one year, then be deleted from all devices.

***Qualitative Data Analysis***

In the qualitative analysis, Taguette software version 1.4.1 (Rampin & Rampin, 2021) will be used to store and manage the analysis of the qualitative data. All interview transcripts will be uploaded to Taguette after they are cleaned and de-identified. The recorded data will be transcribed and subjected to thematic coding using grounded theory (Tie et al., 2019). This process will involve coding in an emergent manner to identify recurring themes and patterns in the narratives related to the needs of youth transitioning out of foster care in Bradley County, TN. The resulting themes will provide insight into the experiences and challenges faced by these youth during their transition.

***Quantitative Data Analysis***

For quantitative data analysis, frequencies and descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations will be calculated to summarize the distribution of responses from the 2021 Casey Life Skills Short Assessment Version 1.4. (Casey Family Programs, 2023). This assessment includes demographic questions, and survey questions regarding sexual safety knowledge, financial management skills, job searching skills, and their knowledge of their permanency plan which is a component of housing security. Consent will be obtained through a digital consent form that is embedded in the Google form survey that will precede the survey questions. The analysis will provide a quantitative overview of key aspects related to the needs of youth transitioning out of foster care in Bradley County, facilitating the identification of trends and patterns in the data.

**Research Outcome Expectations**

The researchers anticipate that the study results will show that housing, employment, financial stability, academic success, and reduced pregnancy rates predict success amongst foster youth in Bradley County, Tennessee, as well as what needs Bradley County has in relation to successful youth transition. In terms of this needs assessment, academic success implies graduating from high school or obtaining a GED, and the ability to attend a post-secondary educational institution. Housing, employment, and financial stability would refer to foster youth’s ability to receive access to and have the resources to maintain housing, employment, and finances.

**Ethical Considerations**

As the researchers will be conducting a needs assessment in Bradley County involving teachers, caseworkers, parents of foster youth, and foster youth themselves, it is important that the researchers prioritize ethical considerations throughout the process of the assessment. CITI certification was required from each researcher to ensure ethical conduct (see Appendix F). Prior to conducting a needs assessment, approval from the Institutional Review Board at Southern Adventist University was obtained through the completion of an IRB form (see Appendix G). Due to the sensitive nature of involving minors, the researchers have undergone ethics training and will obtain approval for the assessment from Southern Adventist University’s Institutional Review Board. Further, the survey participants will be required to read and acknowledge an informed consent form before proceeding with the questions. The focus group participants will also be given an informed consent form to sign, or, for those under the age of eighteen, will have an informed consent form given to their parents or guardians.

The informed consent forms, provided for the participants of both the quantitative and qualitative research, will outline the purpose of the needs assessment, along with the procedures that will be used to gather data. Participants will be informed of the risks and benefits of their participation. There are no predicted risks for those taking the survey. For those in the focus groups, there is a risk that confidential information may be repeated outside the group and that emotional discomfort may occur from topics discussed. However, the researchers believe that the benefits of this needs assessment outweigh those risks. Benefits include a sense of community for focus group members, a sense of community involvement and altruism for those participating in the survey, and, pending the results of the assessment, the creation of programs to benefit foster youth as they transition into independence and adulthood. Confidentiality will be assured for the survey and focus group participants. Names will not be distributed in findings and results, but will be coded into alphanumeric identifiers. In the focus groups, participants must agree to confidentiality before participating. The data gathered will be stored on the researchers' password-protected computers throughout the process. While some de-identified and clean data may be transferred to other computers for analysis, the data will be transferred back to the researchers' computers and will be erased from the others. Finally, all participants will be informed that their participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time without consequence.

**Program Proposal**

**Program Goals and Objectives**

The activities in this program include five psychoeducational classes covering different topics that are relevant to foster youth. Each of the five classes has a set of goals, objectives, and expected outcomes.

***Financial Management***

**Scope of Activity.** The financial classes will be provided throughout the school year. Social workers will utilize the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC)'s Money Smart financial education program to provide general money management course material as needed, the emotional regulation skills to manage anxiety related to finances, and will also provide youth with opportunity passport programming.

**Desired Results.**If 50 youth attend the financial management classes, at least 40 youth will continue to participate in financial management classes and have opened a checking account and or started opportunity passport programming.

**Intermediate Outcomes.** If 40 youth participate in financial management classes and have the opportunity to set up an IDA account through opportunity passport programming, at least 35 youth will track that their finances have been managed over time, have increased credit scores, and have no overdrawn accounts.

**End Outcomes*.*** If 35 youth aging out of the foster system have opened a checking account and or an individual development account and tracked their finances over time at least 30 youth aging out of the foster system will increase their rates of stable financial wellness as demonstrated by an increase in confidence and competence about financial knowledge on the Casey Lifeskills assessment financial questions.

***Post-Secondary Education Planning***

**Scope of Activity.** The post-secondary education classes include a class provided every month of the school year, which will cover various topics such as obtaining a GED, applying for post-secondary education, applying for scholarships, and other pertinent information regarding educational success. The classes will be instructed by a nearby university’s enrollment counselor and the high school’s guidance counselor, and they will be attended by 50 foster youth that are transitioning out of the foster care system.

**Desired Results.** If 50 youth attend the monthly post-secondary education classes, at least 40 youth will be informed on resources for higher education and on completing high school. They will be equipped with the knowledge needed to graduate, obtain a GED, and attend a post-secondary educational institution.

**Intermediate Outcomes.** If 40 individuals are equipped with the aforementioned educational knowledge, at least 35 foster youth will graduate high school or obtain a GED, and they will be in the process of looking for or enrolling in higher education following their completion of high school.

**End Outcomes.** If the short term and medium term outcomes are achieved, it is expected that an increased rate of attending post-secondary education will be able to be seen in at least 30 of the participants.

***Housing Navigation***

**Scope of Activity.** The housing navigation classes will include a monthly class throughout the school year that informs youth about topics such as applying for housing, reading and understanding a lease, what landlords expect from tenants, how to transition into new housing, housing assistance available in Bradley County, and tenant rights in Tennessee and Bradley County. These classes will be taught by a social worker trained in housing navigation and an additional social worker assistance to navigate the number of students. The classes will be attended by 50 youth who are aging out of the foster care system.

**Desired Results.** The first desired results are that 40 youth receive resources from the classes that improve their access to housing and increase their ability to maintain housing stability and that these youth apply for one apartment. These resources include access to housing assistance, connections to housing navigators, and handbooks describing their rights as tenants. This will allow the youth to begin the process of securing housing for themselves.

**Intermediate Outcomes.** Within the time that the program is occurring, 35 youth who have recently aged out of the foster system will have obtained independent housing. The assistance provided in education and resources will have assisted these youth in navigating their application processes, signing the lease, and moving into their new home.

**End Outcomes.** The final result of the housing navigation classes is that 30 youth will have maintained housing stability. This will be evidenced through these youth having lived through an entire lease term (six months to one year,) in one location. This level of permanency will have been achieved through a thorough understanding of the lease and through maintaining the standards that landlords desire. This experience will allow youth to accomplish further successes in housing as they continue to grow and learn as young adults.

***Sexual Health Education***

**Scope of Activity.** The sexual health education classes will be held every month throughout the school year which will help students assess their knowledge of sex ed, and educate them on teen pregnancy rates, knowledge of STIs and pregnancy prevention methods which involve informing them how to have safe sex, protection and other resources.

**Desired Results.** The desired result from these classes is that 40 or more students will either improve or gain more knowledge of sexual health and be properly informed of what actions should be taken and how to keep themselves as protected as possible.

**Intermediate Outcomes.** If there are 40 students who attend the classes, there should be at least 35 youth who report higher scores on the sex ed questionnaires that are held and the rest will continue growing their knowledge with future classes.

**End Outcomes.** If the short-term and medium-term outcomes are achieved, then 30 students will report having increased knowledge of sexual health which results in lower pregnancy rates within the county.

***Employment Preparation***

**Scope of Activity.** The employment education class, provided for the entirety of the school year, will cover topics that educate youth on topics such as soft skills, how to interview, and resume building. The class will also support students in how to find jobs and resources available for job searching. The classes will be taught by a social worker, and each class will occur after school hours on the campus. It will be attended by 50 foster youth who are enrolled in Bradley County High Schools and are soon to transition out of the foster care system.

**Desired Results.** The desired result is that at least 40 of the 50 students will be educated on soft skills necessary to obtain job security and resources. Between the development of soft skills, job resources, and resume building, students will be empowered to secure a job after their post-secondary education.

**Intermediate Outcomes.** If there are at least 40 students educated on how to gain employment, at least 35 of those students will secure two interviews after their post-secondary education, while the other students will be seeking other opportunities in other branches of life.

**End Outcomes.** If short-term and medium-term outcomes are achieved, then there will be an increased rate of 30 more employed students at their post-secondary educational point of life, all with long-term positions spanning at least over one year.

**Stakeholder Analysis**

The stakeholders of this program include foster youth, parents and guardians, school staff, case managers, the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, foster care transition program staff, and grant holders. To best understand stakeholders of the program, a power-interest grid was created (see Appendix H). This allows the program developers to review how to approach each stakeholder based off of the impact they would have within the program. Similarly, an analysis table was made and functioned as a resource to understand the interest and need each stakeholder would have when working with the program (see Appendix I).

***Foster Youth***

The foster youth, ages 16 to 24, live in Bradley County, Tennessee. These individuals are either in the process of transitioning out of foster care or are transitioning soon. Therefore, they could benefit from this program which provides them with resources, skills, and knowledge that will aid them in having a successful transition and adult life.

**Access.** Foster youth are highly influential to the success of the project and have a high interest in it, so they will be accessed through meetings and interviews where they will be able to share their thoughts, experiences, and ideas regarding the planning and implementation of the program.

**Engagement Methods.** Bradley County foster youth will receive emails with updated information regarding the project every week. Additionally, the liaison will personally connect with the youth to keep them involved and engaged throughout the planning and implementation process of the program.

***Parents and Guardians***

Parents and Guardians are any legal caretakers or are in the process of registering, of the foster youth within Bradley County Tennessee. This group holds the important responsibility of providing a safe environment for the growth of the teen in regards to acquiring academic knowledge and life skills.

**Access.**These parents and legal guardians are essential to the development of foster teens coming out of the foster program being the main source of stability. They will be heavily involved with the progress of the program and are provided an opportunity to adjust or seek out more resources and information for their specific needs.

**Engagement Methods.** Parents and legal guardians will receive emails and consistent updates on the project's progress every week. Contact information of the project members will be provided in case any clarifications or additional resources are needed. They will be allowed in meetings to voice their opinions in larger coordinated gatherings regarding foster youth needs or any other implementation that they would want for the program in the future.

***School Staff***

School staff are any faculty or staff who are working with children in Bradley County Schools including School Social Workers, Teachers, and Administration. They work with adolescents in transition and would be interested in furthering the success of their schools and students.

**Access.** School staff will first be accessed by organizing meetings with the school administration. Emails will be distributed throughout school staff to introduce the program and announce another meeting in which all school staff may meet with the program directors to ask questions about the program and how to be involved.

**Engagement Methods.** School staff such as social workers, teachers, and school counselors will engage in referring students to the program as necessary and collaborating in small group work with students. School administration will work with program directors to secure time and places to host the program, along with ensuring that the program is functioning well within school policy. All staff will be consistently updated via email.

It is critical to have engagement from a variety of school faculty and staff ranging from school principals to teachers to social workers offer a unique perspective on how to support foster youth in transition. Additionally, considering that the program will be designed to be within schools, it is extremely important to have the support of school staff to be able to operate in schools.

***Case Managers***

Case managers are identified as those who work with current foster youth, usually through the Department of Human Services. Some case managers may also be employed by local agencies in Bradley County. As expressed in their title, these professionals work with current foster youth, their biological families, and their foster families. Case managers assist foster youth in navigating their placements, education, and obtaining local services.

**Access.** Case managers will initially be accessed through organization email threads when distributing surveys. The researchers will connect with local agencies that hire case managers and the Department of Human Services to obtain these email addresses. After the needs assessment is conducted, case managers will continue to be accessed by emails and meetings to explain the program and elicit referrals. The opinion of the case managers will influence the project as they contribute to referrals to the program and support in the community. Still, the program will obtain participants through the school system, so it is not entirely reliant on the opinion of the social workers.

**Engagement Methods.** Because case managers are interested in the successful outcomes of foster youth, they are motivated by the care required to ensure that foster youth achieve a level of success in their lives. Therefore, it is important that the researchers on this project actively engage with case managers. Case managers will be engaged through email updates. Through the email updates, the researchers will encourage feedback and offer to facilitate meetings for those who wish to learn more.

***Youth Transitions Advisory Council (A Part of the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth)***

The Youth Transitions Advisory Council is a subcommittee of the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. They were created to assist the Department of Children’s Services with developing extension of foster care services to support youth aging out of the child welfare and juvenile justice system. This committee annually compiles a report of programs serving youth in transition out of the foster care system in Tennessee, the numbers of youth receiving services, and reports on what the current areas of need are in this demographic.

**Access.**Youth Transitions Advisory Council will initially be accessed by calling the director of the council Cory Bradfield. Once contact is established, communication will be maintained through quarterly emails from the program director to the director of the council coinciding with their meeting times which happen 3-4 times a year.

**Engagement Methods.** To engage the Tennessee Commission on Youth and Children, the team will compose an outcomes report to be shared with the Youth Transitions Advisory Council annually. The project director will share this with the council every year in time to be included in their annual October report.

***Foster Youth Transition Program Staff From Neighboring Programs***

Bradley County is close to Hamilton County which is home to several one stop shop resource centers for youth aging out of foster care: River City Youth Collective (Partnership for Families, Children, and Adults, 2023), and Youth Villages LifeSet program (Youth Villages, 2023). Staff and leadership will be communicated with to ensure collaboration in serving youth in transition in Bradley County.

**Access.**Staff of nearby agencies serving youth in transitions out of foster care will be accessed via email and phone calls initially as the program is launched so they are aware of this program.

**Engagement Methods.** To engage neighboring agencies, a team member will find a contact person and inquire how the program could potentially partner with their agency to fill service gaps and not be in competition with them.

***Grant Holders***

The grant holders consist of those who are funding the program.

**Access.** Grant holders for this project will be accessed through grant applications and subsequent meetings. These meetings will keep the grantors updated on the progress and performance of the project.

**Engagement Methods.** To engage the grant holders in this project, the project director and implementation staff will meet with representatives from the grantor’s agency for on-site visits and will engage in regular correspondence with them to provide financial and programmatic reports.

***Potential Opposition***

Other agencies in the nearby counties that serve youth transitioning out of foster care could be afraid of potential competition for grant money or clients. This can be addressed by contacting and communicating with them early on in the program planning process to let them know the geographic boundaries of the area served and what services can be provided to youth in Bradley County to foster collaboration and communication instead of competition and distrust.

School staff may also be apprehensive about this program taking away from their school day. It is possible that students may get pulled out of classes from time to time to work with the program. This may lead to schools developing a fear of an outside program establishing itself within a school, potentially taking away from the school day.

Additionally, case managers may fear that the program will not be successful and that it will waste time and resources in the community. They would likely expect, or hope, that the project be well-researched and found to be a legitimate need in the community and that the program offers evidence-based interventions. If these expectations are not met, they could spread poor reports throughout the community and impact the impression people have of this program.

**SWOT Analysis**

An analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) that could

impact this program is crucial to its success. This analysis will allow the program developers to anticipate and be equipped with tools to confront challenges.

***Strengths***

This program has numerous strengths that will aid in its success. It has a team of social workers who are knowledgeable about resources in the community, and some of them have prior and current experience working with youth in the foster care system. Additionally, this organization has connections with foster parents, school staff, and case managers who all work with foster children and have a direct perspective on transitioning out of foster care and needs pertaining to successful transition. The financial strengths and resources that this program has is grant funding through the Bradley County school district. This program has a well-developed budget, created in conjunction with the researchers and Bradley County schools, funded by the grant holders that will allow it to provide the foster youth with adequate resources and assistance throughout the program’s implementation. Additionally, the program will be taking place at Bradley County high schools, which provides easy access to reach foster youth in that school system, provides a location to meet with foster youth, and overall contributes to making the program a success.

***Weaknesses***

Some weaknesses this program has are not yet having a board in place, as the team is still in the board selection process. While a building to rent office space and provide services out of has been selected, office equipment and facilities are still needed in order to be fully functional. Financial resources such as flexible funding and cash balance are needed in order to cover gaps for unexpected costs that the grant might not cover. Although the founding members are experienced child welfare professionals and are not in need specifically of orientation training, an initial training program needs to be developed for new hires. Continuing education and program model refreshers are needed to ensure continuing staff competency. Products of intellectual property such as marketing materials, a brand, logo, and website are needed. Buy in from Bradley County High School is also needed. This is a new program and there might need to be a pilot before widespread buy-in can take place. Administration support and an understanding of the differences in roles between counselors and social workers is critical to ensure school support. Buy in is also needed from the school system to support youth who have graduated high school and are no longer in their system but still need support in transitioning into adulthood.

***Opportunities***

One opportunity that the program can take advantage of is that Tennessee is ranked number one within the nation on efficiency of foster kids moving into a new home (Minzter 2023). With the state being proficient in securing homes for children within the foster care system, reaching out and providing resources that serve as a foundation of learning to foster children who may not have had the opportunity to learn before works in both parties favor. Within a report from the Economic Development, Bradley County, as of August 2023, has an unemployment rate of 3.6% (Economic Indicators 2023). This unemployment rate affects all residents of the county and would be an opportunity for foster youth to gain skills and resources that enhance their ability to secure income coming out of the foster system. Tennessee Governor Bill Lee alongside other colleagues, have announced that Wind River Custom Homes is to be expanding their company with the goal of creating an influx of new gobs and enlarging the housing industry (Tipton 2023). This recent development will provide a large market for workers and new housing for newly created homeowners that the program would also seek to create.

***Threats***

Threats to the program primarily revolve around securing funding. The program's viability hinges on its ability to secure necessary financial support. Funding obstacles may occur in various forms, with one major concern being the difficulty in obtaining grants. If the program heavily relies on grant funding and there are only a few grants available for the program or population, it may force the program to temporarily halt its operations until alternative funding sources can be identified. Another funding-related issue is the existing allocation of resources in Bradley County. Currently, funding in Bradley County is favored toward school counselors rather than school social workers. Although a grant has been recently awarded to address the mental health needs of students, it is predominantly for school counselors (Mosley, S., & Mosley, A. S., 2023). This poses a significant threat to the program, given its reliance on the involvement of all school staff, including social workers. If social workers in schools are underfunded, it would jeopardize the sustainability of our program.

An additional threat is the possibility of the program being unable to cover all needs, resulting in insufficient coverage. Factors such as transportation gaps, medical issues, and challenges related to job security, housing, or food may reduce participation in the program, ultimately compromising its long-term success.

Lastly, the sociopolitical environment in Bradley County introduces additional risks. As a predominantly Republican county with limited democratic representation on local and state levels (Ballotpedia, 2023), introducing an external social service program into the schools, which requires funding, permissions, and advocates for change, could potentially clash with the local culture. The program must explore strategies to integrate into the unique culture of Bradley County, aiming for acceptance rather than rejection among the county's residents.

***SWOT Analysis in Practice***

The strengths of this program will be used to achieve the goals that have been outlined. The team of social workers will contribute their knowledge and collaborative experience to ensure that the program runs well and addresses what is necessary for foster youth. The inclusion of caseworkers, parents, and school staff will ensure that each individual is informed about the care that the foster youth is receiving, allowing this group of people to best support the youth and one another. These strengths can be utilized to create a model to be used in the recreation of this program in other districts.  
 Many of the weaknesses of this program rest within preparation. Choosing the board, gathering basic office supplies and intellectual property, and developing an initial program training will require time and effort on the part of the developers. To ensure that these will be accomplished, the researchers will delegate to one another the tasks. A biweekly check-in will allow researchers to confirm with one another. To obtain flexible funding, the developers can host a fundraiser. Finally, the team must outline continued education opportunities to ensure the continued success of the program.

In Hamilton County, a grant was recently received to provide more funding for school social workers and counselors. If the researchers are careful in applying for funding, some of this money may be allocated to the program. Of course, there are still threats to this program. Threats against funding can be defended by the utilization of evidence-based practices and by providing detailed reports to grant holders to show progress. This can also provide evidence for the inclusion of social workers in schools, as opposed to only school counselors. Although access to the program could be difficult for some, the researchers are confident that having the program within the school system will help to mitigate this challenge. Finally, in accordance with the sociopolitical climate of Bradley County, this program will be presented as one that allows foster youth to transition into society as successful, stable contributors to the local economy and community.

**Program Evaluation Plan**

The evaluation of the program is a crucial aspect of understanding how well the program proceeds both during and after its implementation. Our main data collection plan for the intermediate outcomes is the participatory evaluation. This method involves collaboratively working with the participants to improve the quality of the activities. The main instrument for the sexual health education activities will be conducting questionnaires to gauge their knowledge of the subject prior to starting the activity. The majority of the other activities will include phone surveys as a primary source of collecting data from the participants. For our housing activities, phone surveys will be conducted twice a year to determine what number of youth have maintained housing. Education activities will primarily be using phone surveys to determine if there has been an increased rate of attending post-secondary educational institutions among 60% of the foster youth who attended the classes. Employment activities will also use the previously mentioned method of phone surveys one year after the completed attendance of the classes to assess how many youth have been able to maintain long-term employment. Finances will conduct phone surveys to determine financial wellness via a financial wellness survey as well. The measuring of immediate outcomes aligns with the overall evaluation plan by assessing the effectiveness of each activity that is being held. Between the intermediate goals and final outcome, there is room for adjustment and adaptation so that the latter half of the project has input from the participants that would benefit them before it concludes.

The data source for measuring outputs will be participant attendance records and feedback forms collected during the classes taught within the schools. To keep track of participant attendance and feedback, a standardized attendance sheet to record the number of participants in each class will be utilized. Additionally, there will be distributed a participant feedback form designed to gather qualitative insights on the perceived value and impact of the activities. The data collected through attendance records and feedback forms directly align with the overall evaluation plan, which aims to assess the effectiveness and reach of the classes designed to support foster youth in transition. These metrics function as realistic outputs to measure against the predetermined goals. Data will be collected before and after each class, to review the attendance and feedback of those in the classes. This will provide quantitative and qualitative data to review outputs. For the attendance records, a designated staff member will be responsible for maintaining an attendance sheet that participants will sign upon arrival. Then participants will be given a feedback form at the end of the class to gather additional insights on the class and to assess the activities of the classes themselves. These activities are created with the goal of furthering the prospect of foster students to secure skills and resources that will create a desirable future for themselves. These activities will be needing support and resources being taken from various outlets which will be described in the next section.

**Proposed Program Resources**

Resources are essential to program implementation and success. This program proposal outlines various human and material resources that are required to conduct psychoeducational classes for foster youth soon to age out of the foster care system.

**Human Resources**

The inputs for this programming include a variety of human resources and support. This program will primarily depend on agencies in Bradley County to contract social workers annually to facilitate classes, and a program director based in the Bradley County high school system who will facilitate scheduling classes, organizing class instructors, and case management with the youth to promote attendance of the classes. School staff and faculty will also assist as needed and instructors for the classes will be volunteers. The program director will collaborate closely with Bradley County high schools’ faculty and staff in referring students and providing educational support. They will also collaborate with foster parents and guardians to promote housing stability, stable employment, and financial well-being. These collaborations will be routine and as needed, with time commitments with staff and parents ranging from less than an hour to upwards of 2 hours. The program director will utilize an office in the school building to do casework and paperwork and a classroom for psychoeducational classes with the youth.

The social workers will participate in a week-long orientation and training. This training will have 10 sections in total each lasting 3.5 hours, one before and one after lunch for the whole week. First an introduction which will broadly go over issues faced by youth transitioning out of foster care as an introduction of the cultural, social, emotional issues that the population often face. A training section will also be completed on each of our program targets (financial well-being, housing stability and navigation, sexual health education, employment preparation, and educational goals), a session over our assessment and evaluation tools, a Bradley County school system orientation, a session how to case manage and involving family and friend contacts to help support the youth, and a documentation system training. Monthly 2 hours training refreshing those concepts and more as needed will be required after initial training is finished.

**Material Resources**

As with any program implementation process, this program will require many material resources to aid in bringing about success. First, this program will require a sizable classroom in a Bradley County High School for the classes to be held in. This room will need a projector and adaptors for the social workers' computers, a whiteboard, desks for participants, and a table for materials. The program will also need to have access to a printer, paper, and ink. For activities, the researchers must provide the program with pens and pencils for the participants to write with. Especially for the financial management classes, the researchers will be obtaining approximately 25 laptops or small computers that participants may use within the workshops to complete tasks such as setting up an IDA account. Finally, each social worker in charge of a particular workshop must consolidate and provide the curriculum required to successfully facilitate their class.

**Proposed Sustainability Plan**

This program will be sustainable because it does not require tremendous amounts of materials or resources to implement. Once the original curriculum is established, it can be reused and updated as needed. The researchers on this project will ensure that evaluative methods will be implemented throughout the process to allow for accurate and worthwhile replication each school year. One method to ensure sustainability was the development of a logic model which plans out how the inputs, outputs, and outcomes of the program will be evaluated (see Appendix J). Given that there is a consistent population of youth transitioning out of foster care, this program will regularly be beneficial for these young people. In the future, this program will be carried out by social workers who come from local agencies that support foster youth. The researchers will create contracts with these agencies and ask that they require one to two social workers each, for a total of ten social workers who are capable and willing to present the curriculum to the target population. To further support and develop the program, additional grants will be applied for through Bradley County Schools.

**Limitations**

A general limitation of this proposal is the psychoeducational emphasis of the program design as opposed to an intensive case-management approach. Case management is very time intensive and requires a great extent of personalization based on each individual client’s strengths and needs. This proposal outlines a great start of psychoeducational classes which provide a framework in which social workers and youth aging out of foster care can forge meaningful relationships that provide the necessary social, educational, and therapeutic support. This limitation is necessary as the program begins as staff target integrating this program in the school system, building up a curriculum and a reputation in the community. Case management is integrated as a part of the program proposal as staff and volunteers communicate continually with the youth enrolled in the program, but the educational classes are the main components of this program proposal. The gap in resources is not only a lack of knowledge but a lack of social support in navigating internal and external barriers to well-being in the five target areas.

**Conclusion**

As foster youth inevitably age out of the foster care system, there is the risk that youth may transition into homelessness, financial insecurity, unemployment, parenthood, and/or not pursue secondary education unless proper support is provided. These needs are understood to include financial management classes, assistance in housing and employment, academic support, and sexual health education. That is why this program has been developed to meet the needs of foster youth facing transition out of the foster care system specifically in Bradley County, Tennessee. Considering that there are few resources available for foster youth in Bradley County, the relevance of this program greatly increases. This program will focus on providing classes on financial management, post-secondary education, housing assistance, sexual health education, and employment preparation to educate youth on the resources that are available. Despite being unable to provide case management, youth in the program will be able to grow in skills that will allow them to successfully navigate adulthood.

Overall, the goal of the program would be to increase the successful transition for foster youth in Bradley County. This would be possible by conducting a needs assessment to understand the youth of the county and by engaging with the stakeholders of Bradley County as well. By using a mixed methods approach, the answer to the needs of Bradley County foster youth would be able to be found. The plan to utilize resources such as flyers and stakeholders such as school administrators and case managers would allow for thorough research to be conducted in order to understand the level of need in the county. Qualitative data would be gathered through focus groups while the quantitative data would come from surveys available through a QR code on the flyers. The stakeholders, who were identified as the foster youth, parents or guardians, school staff, case managers, grant holders, and additional local programs, would be able to offer support by ensuring that the goals of the program are in line with the needs of the community.

The most secure way to ensure that the program is fulfilling the goals and needs designed to address is through proper evaluation. The scope of activity will be reviewed throughout the longevity of each class within the program. Desired results, intermediate outcomes, and end outcomes will be evaluated by means of attendance records in classes, a review of how many students are engaging in each class, how many are fulfilling the immediate goals of the program, and then contacting youth after the conclusion of the classes to evaluate the long-term success of the youth who were in the program. By remaining diligent in providing training for volunteers and material resources, the program will be well organized for sustainability. Through diligent work to understand the literature, the needs assessment, community needs, and evaluation, the program will be able to support the success of the Bradley County foster youth in transition.

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**Appendix A**

**Focus Group Consent Form**

**Foster Youth Transitions in Bradley County**

Researchers: Sarah Cole, Isabella Eklund, Rafael Encarnacion, Morgan Garcia, Laura Gibbs

Faculty Advisor: Laura Racovita PhD, MSW, School of Social Work

Southern Adventist University

**Introduction**

We invite you to participate in a focus group about discovering what factors contribute to successful transitions for youth aging out of the foster care system in Bradley County Tennessee. We are masters graduate social workers at Southern Adventist University. This study is a requirement to complete our degree. This form explains how the focus group will be conducted. If you have any questions, our contact information is listed at the end of the consent form.

**Who Can Participate In this Study**

You can participate in this study if you meet the following requirements:

a) Currently within the foster care system

b) You have recently aged out of the foster care system.

c) You are a teacher, administrator, school social worker or counselor within Bradley County High Schools

d) case manager

e) guardian of a child in foster care

**Study Procedures**

You will participate in a focus group with the researchers. The group will be facilitated by researchers utilizing an interview guide. Questions will pertain to your experience with the foster care system, and what supports are available in Bradley County. It will last approximately 25-40 minutes and will be audio-recorded and then transcribed into a written format.

**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You can stop at any time without any penalty. You can decline to answer a question if you choose.

**Possible Risks and Discomforts of Participation**

We believe that there are minimal risks or discomforts, though you might find it emotionally upsetting to talk about your transitional needs and experiences within the foster care system. In the case that these discomforts are triggered, you may contact 988, the National Suicide and Mental Health 24-hour crisis line, or speak to the school social worker at your school.

**Costs**

There will not be any costs to you for your participation.

**Confidentiality and Use of Results**

The results from this study will not be shared except in aggregate form and/or by using a pseudonym that you do not identify who you are. Your research records will be kept confidential and secure. Your survey results will be kept in password-protected computer files that only the five researchers working on this study will have access to. The recordings will be deleted a year after the interview takes place and the transcriptions from the recordings will be kept for one year after research has been conducted. The focus group transcript will be shared with Dr. Laura Racovita as the supervising professor, however, all identifying information and details will be removed from the data.

The only exception to confidentiality is if we have reason to believe that someone is at risk of elder abuse, child abuse, or neglect; or you may be at risk of immediate harm to yourself or others. We are required by law to report such incidences to welfare or law enforcement agencies.

**Contact Information**

If you have questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Southern’s IRB chair, Dr. Robert Overstreet at robertoverstreet@southern.edu or the researchers and supervising professor.

Sarah Cole at sarahcole@southern.edu

Isabella Eklund at ieklund@southern.edu

Rafael Encarnacion at encarnacionantony@southern.edu

Morgan Garcia at morgangarcia@southern.edu

Laura Gibbs at gibbs@southern.edu

You may contact the supervising professor, Laura Racovita by calling (423)-236-2638 or at racovita@southern.edu

**CONSENT**

By signing you are consenting to be a participant in the focus group. As a reminder, you can withdraw your consent at any time. Be sure that we have answered any questions that you have about the study and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact us if you think of a question later.

Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B**

**Focus Group Consent Form (Minors)**

**Foster Youth Transitions in Bradley County**

Researchers : Sarah Cole, Isabella Eklund, Rafael Encarnacion, Morgan Garcia, Laura Gibbs Faculty Advisor: Laura Racovita PhD, MSW, School of Social Work

Southern Adventist University

**Introduction**

We invite you to participate in a focus group about discovering what factors contribute to successful transitions for youth aging out of the foster care system in Bradley County Tennessee. We are masters graduate social workers at Southern Adventist University. This study is a requirement to complete our degree. This form explains how the focus group will be conducted. If you have any questions, our contact information is listed at the end of the consent form.

**Who Can Participate In this Study**

You can participate in this study if you meet the following requirements:

a) Currently within the foster care system

b) Under the age of 18

**Study Procedures**

You will participate in a focus group with the researchers. The group will be facilitated by researchers utilizing an interview guide. Questions will pertain to your experience with the foster care system, and what supports are available in Bradley County. It will last approximately 25-40 minutes and will be audio-recorded and then transcribed into a written format.

**Voluntary Participation**

With the approval of the foster youth’s parent/guardian, participation in this research study is voluntary. You can stop at any time without any penalty. You can decline to answer a question if you choose.

**Possible Risks and Discomforts of Participation**

We believe that there are minimal risks or discomforts, though you might find it emotionally upsetting to talk about your transitional needs and experiences within the foster care system. In the case that these discomforts are triggered, you may contact 988, the National Suicide and Mental Health 24-hour crisis line or speak to the school social worker at your school.

**Costs**

There will not be any costs to you for your participation.

**Confidentiality and Use of Results**

The results from this study will not be shared except in aggregate form and/or by using a pseudonym that you do not identify who you are. Your research records will be kept confidential and secure. Your interview recording and transcripts will be kept in password-protected computer files that only the five researchers working on this study will have access to. The recordings will be deleted a year after the interview takes place and the transcriptions from the recordings will be kept for one year after research has been conducted. The focus group transcript will be shared with Dr. Laura Racovita as the supervising professor, however, all identifying information and details will be removed from the data.

The only exception to confidentiality is if we have reason to believe that someone is at risk of elder abuse, child abuse, or neglect; or you may be at risk of immediate harm to yourself or others. We are required by law to report such incidences to welfare or law enforcement agencies.

**Contact Information**

If you have questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Southern’s IRB chair, Dr. Robert Overstreet at robertoverstreet@southern.edu or the researchers and supervising professor.

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Rafael Encarnacion at encarnacionantony@southern.edu

Morgan Garcia at morgangarcia@southern.edu

Sara Cole at sarahcole@southern.edu

Laura Gibbs at gibbs@southern.edu

You may contact the supervising professor, Laura Racovita by calling (423)-236-2638 or at racovita@southern.edu

**CONSENT**

By signing below, you are agreeing to be in the focus group. We will give you a copy of this document for your records. As a reminder you can withdraw your consent at any time. Be sure that we have answered any questions that you have about the study and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact us if you think of a question later.

Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix C**

**Interview Guide for Focus Group**

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ . Thank you for taking time to do this interview. The purpose of this interview is to explore how you feel about transitional needs while aging out of the foster care system in Bradley County. We will be asking questions pertaining to the foster care system, resources available for transition, and what you would like to see established in Bradley County.

Before we begin, I must gain your consent to participate based on the information that I am about to share about the study. Here is a printed copy of the consent form.

**Consent Form Information**

* To participate, you must be currently within the foster care system, recently aged out of the foster care system or you are a teacher, administrator, case manager, or guardian of a child in foster care.
* Your participation is voluntary, so you can decline to answer any question and end the interview at any time.
* This interview should take about 25-40 minutes and will be recorded.
* Your information will be kept secure in password-protected computer files for safety and confidentiality. All names or identifying information about yourself and anyone will be replaced and will never be shared in any report of the results for this study.
* Any risk to participating in this study is very low. You may find answering questions about your mental well-being upsetting. If this occurs, you can contact the 24-hour national crisis hotline at 988.

Do you consent to participate in this interview?

Do I have your permission to record this interview for the purposes of this study?

Do you have any questions I can answer before we begin?

**[Interview Start]**

I would like you to tell me about your perspective of how the transitional needs of foster youth are being met in Bradley County, Tennessee.

1. What is your relation to foster youth in your life, and can you tell me about what your relationship with them is like?
   1. Good things
   2. Challenges
   3. Length of relationship
2. How would you describe your experience with the foster care system in Bradley County and what would make it better?

Probes (if needed)

* 1. What aspects or areas, if any, do you feel like the needs of foster care youth in transition are met in Bradley County?  
     (More specific probes if needed: Jobs? Education? Housing? Security? Other?)
  2. What aspects or areas, if any, do you feel the needs of foster care youth in transition are not met in Bradley County?
  3. What does needs met or unmet mean to you?

1. What do you feel has been most helpful in making the transition or preparation for transition out of foster care a success for the foster youth in your life? What has hindered their successful transition?
   1. Family?
   2. Friends?
   3. School?
   4. The foster care system?
   5. Any other supports or hindrances?
2. What are plans for the future that you believe foster youth should have?
3. Educational aspirations?
4. Career aspirations?
5. Housing aspirations?
6. Financial aspirations?
7. Relationship aspirations?

3. How would you define success in relation to the needs of foster youth?

1. What does academic success look like?
2. Career success?
3. Housing success?
4. Educational success?
5. Financial success?

Before we conclude, do you have anything else that you would like to share?

**Closing:** Thank you for participating. I appreciate your time. If you would like to view the report summary of the study, you can tell me now and I will notify you when the study results are released using the contact information previously shared.

**Appendix D**

**Survey: Foster Youth Transitions in Bradley County**

**Survey Consent Form**

**Foster Youth Transitions in Bradley County**

Researchers: Sarah Cole, Isabella Eklund, Rafael Encarnacion, Morgan Garcia, Laura Gibbs

Faculty Advisor: Laura Racovita PhD, MSW, School of Social Work

Southern Adventist University

**Introduction**

We invite you to participate in a research study about discovering what factors contribute to successful transitions for youth aging out of the foster care system in Bradley County Tennessee. We are masters graduate social workers at Southern Adventist University. This study is a requirement to complete our degree. This form explains how the study will be conducted. If you have any questions, our contact information is listed at the end of the consent form.

**Who Can Participate In this Study**

You can participate in this study if you meet the following requirements:

a) Currently within the foster care system

b) You have recently aged out of the foster care system.

c) You are a teacher, administrator, school social worker or counselor within Bradley County High Schools

d) case manager

e) guardian of a child in foster care

**Study Procedures**

You will complete a survey brought to you by the researchers on Google Forms. It takes approximately 10 minutes to fill out. All answers will remain entirely anonymous, questions will pertain to your experience with the foster care system, and what supports are available for foster youth in transition in Bradley County.

**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You can stop at any time without any penalty. You can decline to answer a question if you choose.

**Possible Risks and Discomforts of Participation**

We believe that there are minimal risks or discomforts, though you might find it emotionally upsetting to talk about your transitional needs and experiences within the foster care system. In the case that these discomforts are triggered, you may contact 988, the National Suicide and Mental Health 24-hour crisis line, or speak to the school social worker at your school.

**Costs**

There will not be any costs to you for your participation.

**Confidentiality and Use of Results**

The results from this study will not be shared except in aggregate form and/or by using a pseudonym that you do not identify who you are. Your research records will be kept confidential and secure. Your survey results will be kept in password-protected computer files that only the five researchers working on this study will have access to. The recordings will be deleted a year after the interview takes place and the transcriptions from the recordings will be kept for one year after research has been conducted. The focus group transcript will be shared with Dr. Laura Racovita as the supervising professor, however, all identifying information and details will be removed from the data.

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**Contact Information**

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Morgan Garcia at morgangarcia@southern.edu

Laura Gibbs at gibbs@southern.edu

You may contact our supervising professor, Laura Racovita by calling (423)-236-2638 or at racovita@southern.edu

**CONSENT**

By continuing, you are consenting to be a participant in the survey. As a reminder, you can withdraw your consent at any time. Be sure that we have answered any questions that you have about the study and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact us if you think of a question later.

By continuing, you are consenting to be a participant in the survey. As a reminder, you can withdraw your consent at any time. Be sure that we have answered any questions that you have about the study and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact us if you think of a question later.

I understand my rights as a participant and choose to complete this survey

Casey Life Skills Assessment

If you are not foster youth respond to each question based upon your understanding of foster youth in your life

1. I know how to access information on the internet safely.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

2. I understand why it is important to read and understand the food labels to see calories, serving size, fat, sugar, and salt for healthy eating.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

3. I know how to use a washer, dryer and detergent to clean my clothes.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

4. I know how to positively manage my mental health when I am having a difficult day.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

5. I know where to get reliable information about safe sex and pregnancy.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

6. I know how to be respectful of people with different beliefs, opinions, and cultures.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

7. I know how to identify if my relationships show signs of any emotional, physical, and mental abuse.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

8. I plan for bills and other expenses that I must pay for regularly (e.g., car and/or health insurance, cell phone, eating out, rent, video games).

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

9. I know how to safely use public transportation (or rideshare services such as Uber/Lyft) to get to where I need to go.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

10. I know who to ask to get documents I need for work (e.g., social security card, birth certificate, state ID, or work permit).

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

11. I know how to use a planner, calendar, or phone to plan and keep track of important dates and assignments.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

12. I know how to use reliable online platforms to find information about job training opportunities.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

13. I know where to find advice about how to choose an education program.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

14. I know how to share my views on news and politics responsibly.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

15. I know how to research information to improve my own understanding of a topic.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

16. I know my permanency goal (e.g., adoption, guardianship, independence, and return to home).

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

17. I understand if I am eligible for extended foster care in my state after I am 18 years old.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

18. I believe I have a support system that will help me succeed.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

19. Most days, I feel proud of the way I am leading my life.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

Demographics

20. Birthdate

1. Date

21. Gender Identity

1. Female
2. Male
3. Transgender Male
4. Transgender Female
5. Two-Spirit
6. Non-binary
7. Other:

22. Sexual Orientation

1. Gay
2. Lesbian
3. Queer
4. Bisexual
5. Asexual
6. Questioning
7. Pansexual
8. Heterosexual/Straight
9. Prefer not to say
10. Other:

23. Preferred Pronoun

1. She, Her Hers
2. He, Him, His
3. Ze, Hir
4. They, Them, Theirs
5. Other:

24. Race or Ethnicity

1. African American/Black
2. American Indian/Alaska Native
3. Biracial
4. Middle Eastern
5. Latinx/Hispanic
6. Northeastern Asian
7. Southeastern Asian
8. Pacific Island or Native Hawaiian
9. White
10. Other:

25. Latinx/Hispanic

* 1. Not Hispanic/Latinx
  2. Afro-Latinx
  3. White-Latinx
  4. Indigenous-Latinx
  5. Other

26. Religious/Spiritual Affiliation

1. Christian
2. Jewish
3. Muslim
4. Buddhist
5. Hindu
6. Baha'i
7. Atheist
8. Agnostic
9. No Religious/Spiritual Affiliation
10. Other:

27. Primary Language

1. English
2. Spanish
3. French
4. Chinese
5. Japanese
6. Russian
7. Sign Language
8. Other:

28. Secondary Language

1. None
2. English
3. Spanish
4. French
5. Chinese
6. Japanese
7. Russian
8. Sign Language
9. Other:

29. Do you have a documented disability?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Prefer not to say

**Appendix E**

**Survey: Foster Youth Transitions in Bradley County**

**Survey Consent Form**

**Foster Youth Transitions in Bradley County**

Researchers: Sarah Cole, Isabella Eklund, Rafael Encarnacion, Morgan Garcia, Laura Gibbs

Faculty Advisor: Laura Racovita PhD, MSW, School of Social Work

Southern Adventist University

**Introduction**

We invite you to participate in a research study about discovering what factors contribute to successful transitions for youth aging out of the foster care system in Bradley County Tennessee. We are masters graduate social workers at Southern Adventist University. This study is a requirement to complete our degree. This form explains how the study will be conducted. If you have any questions, our contact information is listed at the end of the consent form.

**Who Can Participate In this Study**

You can participate in this study if you meet the following requirements:

a) Currently within the foster care system

b) Under the age of 18

**Study Procedures**

You will complete a survey brought to you by the researchers on Google Forms. It takes approximately 10 minutes to fill out. All answers will remain entirely anonymous, questions will pertain to your experience with the foster care system, and what supports are available for foster youth in transition in Bradley County.

**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You can stop at any time without any penalty. You can decline to answer a question if you choose.

**Possible Risks and Discomforts of Participation**

We believe that there are minimal risks or discomforts, though you might find it emotionally upsetting to talk about your transitional needs and experiences within the foster care system. In the case that these discomforts are triggered, you may contact 988, the National Suicide and Mental Health 24-hour crisis line, or speak to the school social worker at your school.

**Costs**

There will not be any costs to you for your participation.

**Confidentiality and Use of Results**

The results from this study will not be shared except in aggregate form and/or by using a pseudonym that you do not identify who you are. Your research records will be kept confidential and secure. Your survey results will be kept in password-protected computer files that only the five researchers working on this study will have access to. The recordings will be deleted a year after the interview takes place and the transcriptions from the recordings will be kept for one year after research has been conducted. The focus group transcript will be shared with Dr. Laura Racovita as the supervising professor, however, all identifying information and details will be removed from the data.

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Isabella Eklund at ieklund@southern.edu

Rafael Encarnacion at encarnacionantony@southern.edu

Morgan Garcia at morgangarcia@southern.edu

Laura Gibbs at gibbs@southern.edu

You may contact our supervising professor, Laura Racovita by calling (423)-236-2638 or at [racovita@southern.edu](mailto:racovita@southern.edu)

**CONSENT**

By continuing, you are consenting to be a participant in the survey. As a reminder, you can withdraw your consent at any time. Be sure that we have answered any questions that you have about the study and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact us if you think of a question later.

By continuing, you are consenting to be a participant in the survey. As a reminder, you can withdraw your consent at any time. Be sure that we have answered any questions that you have about the study and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact us if you think of a question later.

I understand my rights as a participant and choose to complete this survey

Casey Life Skills Assessment

If you are not foster youth respond to each question based upon your understanding of foster youth in your life

1. I know how to access information on the internet safely.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

2. I understand why it is important to read and understand the food labels to see calories, serving size, fat, sugar, and salt for healthy eating.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

3. I know how to use a washer, dryer and detergent to clean my clothes.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

4. I know how to positively manage my mental health when I am having a difficult day.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

5. I know where to get reliable information about safe sex and pregnancy.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

6. I know how to be respectful of people with different beliefs, opinions, and cultures.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

7. I know how to identify if my relationships show signs of any emotional, physical, and mental abuse.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

8. I plan for bills and other expenses that I must pay for regularly (e.g., car and/or health insurance, cell phone, eating out, rent, video games).

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

9. I know how to safely use public transportation (or rideshare services such as Uber/Lyft) to get to where I need to go.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

10. I know who to ask to get documents I need for work (e.g., social security card, birth certificate, state ID, or work permit).

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

11. I know how to use a planner, calendar, or phone to plan and keep track of important dates and assignments.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

12. I know how to use reliable online platforms to find information about job training opportunities.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

13. I know where to find advice about how to choose an education program.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

14. I know how to share my views on news and politics responsibly.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

15. I know how to research information to improve my own understanding of a topic.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

16. I know my permanency goal (e.g., adoption, guardianship, independence, and return to home).

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

17. I understand if I am eligible for extended foster care in my state after I am 18 years old.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

18. I believe I have a support system that will help me succeed.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

19. Most days, I feel proud of the way I am leading my life.

1. Yes
2. Mostly yes
3. Somewhat
4. Mostly no
5. No

Demographics

20. Birthdate

1. Date

21. Gender Identity

1. Female
2. Male
3. Transgender Male
4. Transgender Female
5. Two-Spirit
6. Non-binary
7. Other:

22. Sexual Orientation

1. Gay
2. Lesbian
3. Queer
4. Bisexual
5. Asexual
6. Questioning
7. Pansexual
8. Heterosexual/Straight
9. Prefer not to say
10. Other:

23. Preferred Pronoun

1. She, Her Hers
2. He, Him, His
3. Ze, Hir
4. They, Them, Theirs
5. Other:

24. Race or Ethnicity

1. African American/Black
2. American Indian/Alaska Native
3. Biracial
4. Middle Eastern
5. Latinx/Hispanic
6. Northeastern Asian
7. Southeastern Asian
8. Pacific Island or Native Hawaiian
9. White
10. Other:

25. Latinx/Hispanic

* 1. Not Hispanic/Latinx
  2. Afro-Latinx
  3. White-Latinx
  4. Indigenous-Latinx
  5. Other

26. Religious/Spiritual Affiliation

1. Christian
2. Jewish
3. Muslim
4. Buddhist
5. Hindu
6. Baha'i
7. Atheist
8. Agnostic
9. No Religious/Spiritual Affiliation
10. Other:

27. Primary Language

1. English
2. Spanish
3. French
4. Chinese
5. Japanese
6. Russian
7. Sign Language
8. Other:

28. Secondary Language

1. None
2. English
3. Spanish
4. French
5. Chinese
6. Japanese
7. Russian
8. Sign Language
9. Other:

29. Do you have a documented disability?

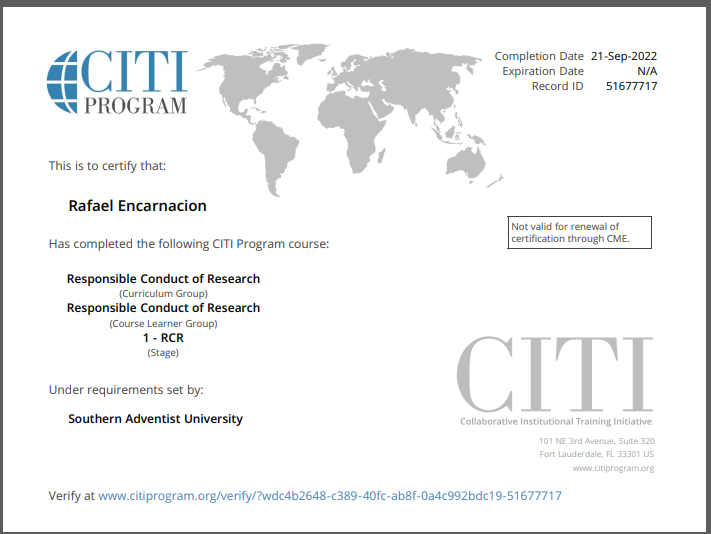
1. Yes
2. No
3. Prefer not to say

**Appendix F**

**Team CITI Program Certificates**









**Appendix G**

**IRB Form**



| IRB Tracking # | **2022-2023-**Reserved for IRB Committee |
| --- | --- |
| Date of Approval: | Reserved for IRB Committee |
| Research Request: | **☐** **Exempt** **☐** **Full Review**  **☐** **Expedited ☐** **Animal/Plant** |
| Type of Research (Check all that apply) | **☐ DNP Scholarly Project ☐ Applying for ARC Funding**  **X Grad. Student Research ☐ Funded Faculty Research**  **☐ Undergrad. Student Research ☐ General Faculty Research**  **☐ Thesis** |

**RESEARCH APPROVAL**

Not Required for

Literature Review or Academic Exercise

| **1. Research Principle Investigator** | |
| --- | --- |
| 1.1. **Title:** | Bradley County, Tennessee’s Foster Future |

| | 1.2.Principal Investigator: | | --- | | | [**CITI Training1**](https://www.southern.edu/administration/cte/IRB/IRB-Forms.html#!) | | Email Address: | | Phone #: | School/Department: | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Morgan Garcia | | **X** Yes  **☐** No | | morgangarcia@southern.edu | | 909-844-2248 | School of Social Work | |
| | Co-Investigator: | | --- | | | **X** Yes  **☐** No | | Email Address: | | Phone #: | Faculty Supervisor: | |
| Laura Gibbs | | gibbs@southern.edu | | 828-702-9855 | Dr. [Laura Racovita](mailto:racovita@southern.edu) | |
| | Co-Investigator: | | --- | | | **X** Yes  **☐** No | | Email Address: | | Phone #: | Starting Date: | |
| Isabella Eklund | | ieklund@southern.edu | | 240-707-0466 | 1/23/24 | |
| | Co-Investigator: | | --- | | | **X** Yes  **☐** No | | Email Address: | | Phone #: | Estimated Completion Date: | |
| Sarah Cole | | sarahcole@southern.edu | | 240-360-0376 | 3/23/24 | |
| More Co-investigators. List their names, emails, phone numbers, and CITI training completion | | | | [Rafael Encarnacionencarnacionantony@southern.edu](mailto:encarnacionantony@southern.edu) 404-542-1952 has completed CITI Training | | | | |
| 1.3. **Is this research being done with any institutions, individuals, or organizations not affiliated with SAU?**  *If yes, please provide information of authorized officials below* | | | | | | | | **☐** Yes  **X** No |
| Name of Institution: |  | | | | | | | |
| Address: | | | City: | | State: | | ZIP Code: | |
| Street | | | City | | Choose | | ZIP Code | |
| Contact Name: | | | Position: | | Email Address: | | Phone #: | |
| Full Name | | | Position Title | | Email Address | | Phone Number | |
| External Funding Agency: | | | | | Identification # *(if applicable)*: | | Grant Submission Deadline *(if any)*: | |
| Name of Agency | | | | | Identification # | | Date | |
| 1.4. **Application Checklist. Attach (insert or paste) all Checked Items to Section #9 (*Check all that apply)*** | | | | | | | | |
| Research Instruments: | | | ☐ tests X surveys ☐ questionnaires ☐ protocols  X other forms else used to collect data | | | | | |
| X Informed consent documents | | | | | | | | |
| X Permissions from applicable authorities *(such as principals of schools, teachers of classrooms, etc. to conduct your research at their facilities on their Letterhead)* | | | | | | | | |
| X Recruiting materials and text of E-mail or Web-based solicitations | | | | | | | | |
| X All **Links** and/or **QR Codes** must be attached as copies | | | | | | | | |
| **SUBMIT** via[**irb@southern.edu**](mailto:irb@southern.edu)  **X** *Signed by the faculty advisor, then scanned and submitted*  **☐** *Submitted directly by the faculty advisor (no signature required)* | | | | | | | | |
| **you cannot begin your research until it has been officially approved by the IRB** | | | | | | | | |

| **2. Research Project Description** | |
| --- | --- |
| 2.1. **Background and Rationale for the Study** | |
| *This section should present the context of the work by explaining the relation of the proposed research to previous investigations in the field. Include citations for relevant research.* | |
| The social problem that we are addressing is foster teens that are aging out of the foster care system. According to the National Foster Youth Institute, 23,000 children age out of foster care every year. When youth reach age 18, 20% of the children who were in foster care will become instantly homeless (National Foster Youth Institute, 2017).We believe that there is a gap in care and coverage for teens within the system that have limited to no opportunities to learn life skills to help them support themselves outside of foster care.  The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth in their 2022 report detailed a need for services such as financial management classes, high school equivalency prep, post-secondary education planning, sexual health education, and assistance with finding housing and employment to be made available for transitioning youth who live in underserved rural regions of the state. Creative strategies and technology can be utilized to ensure that youth who do not live close to an existing resource center can still access needed psychoeducational programs and have help navigating adulthood. Another gap in current services aside from location is immigration status. 4% of youth who declined extended foster care services in TN being undocumented was the reason for not accepting services. Only 44% of youth aging out from foster care in the TN Valley accepted extended foster care services (Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, 2022).  This literature review explores the challenges that foster youth face when transitioning out of the foster care system. It focuses on five sections: financial management, post-secondary education planning, housing navigation, sexual health education, and employment.  **Financial Management**  Lack of knowledge about money management, financial resources, and emotional support when tackling financial issues are barriers that youth exiting foster care face in developing financial capability. Financial capability is defined as having the necessary knowledge, emotional ability, and access to services and resources to pursue financial well-being. Financial well-being is feeling secure financially in the future, with making decisions, and meeting financial obligations (Youth.gov., n.d.). Studies show that barely half of youth aging out of foster care had a checking or savings account at age 21 compared to 80% of their similarly aged peers (Salazar, et al., 2021) A student financial wellness survey polling 63,751 undergraduate students in the United States found that youth transitioning out of foster care were largely unaware of whether or not their state (63%) or institution (69%) had any aid opportunities available to them (Fletcher et al., 2022). In addition to the educational issues that youth face, there are a number of emotional issues that can derail their efforts to improve their financial capabilities. A composite of case studies from a Canadian case worker details how trauma and anxiety can drastically affect the perspective youth aging out of the foster care system have towards money (Keller, 2023). Financial management classes need to not only address the educational gaps, but also the emotional baggage participants bring to this topic.  **Post-Secondary Education**  Youth transitioning out of the foster care system face many obstacles, including post-secondary education, which is impacted by the foster youth’s financial resources. According to Kirk and colleagues and Miller and colleagues, many foster youth and alumni desire to attend post-secondary education, but few enroll, and those who do enroll face numerous challenges, such as academic financing and general support. Foster youth and alumni often have limited financial resources and familial/mentor supports that would help them attend and successfully complete higher education (Kirk, et al., 2013; Miller, et al., 2019). Due to a lack of financial resources and general external supports such as guidance, stability, and mentorship, approximately 3% to 4% of individuals who were previously in the foster care system earn a bachelor's degree, while a range of 2% to 6% attain an associate's degree (National Foster Youth Institute, 2021). While post-secondary educational enrollment and completion is a clear issue among this population, there are ways to increase the opportunities and success of foster youth, such as pre-college support programs, liaisons, and recruitment programs.  **Housing Assistance**  Housing instability is another known barrier for foster youth (Greeno et al., 2018), affecting their ability to remain in school and to keep a job, among other impacts (Jones, 2019). In a study by Greeno and colleagues, 100% of the 291 youth surveyed reported that they had stayed with relatives or friends after leaving foster care, for lack of their own place to live (2018). The impact of housing instability and homelessness can range from inability to pay for bills, food, and healthcare, exposure to mold and vermin, and poor health outcomes (Healthy People 2030, n.d.). These impacts can be especially severe for those transitioning out of foster care. CNBC News reported that 45% of parents in the general population surveyed provided some form of financial support to their child who is 18 years of age or older (Deckler, 2023). Of course, former foster youth still experience the impacts of homelessness and housing instability as outlined above, but they do not have the familial support that many young adults can lean on. Of the youth surveyed by Greeno and colleagues, only 42% of former foster youth reported having been prepared to transition out of care with skills for living alone and navigating housing (2018).  **Sexual Education**  Sexual education has been an ongoing topic of discussion within society as to how young adolescents gain this information. Data extracted from the National Youth in Transition Database shows that over 40% of females had given birth at least once by the age of 21 (United States Children’s Bureau, 2023). In recent years there has been a decline in teen birth rates, however, in 2020, 76 percent of all teen births occurred between the ages of 18 and 19 (Office of Population Affairs, n.d.). Sexual education already has a minimal presence within the foster care system and has more of an impact than is known to the general public. Another study which extracted data from the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services states that teens in foster care still experience higher rates of teen pregnancy and childbearing at 60% compared to peers in the general population (Tennessee Department of Children’s Services, n.d.-b). When comparing the rates of teen pregnancy within the foster system and general public, it is at an alarmingly higher rate due to the lack of information being readily available. In an article published by The Imprint, within a survey done in 2018 by the American Journal of Sexuality Education, out of the 270 participants, 53.5% were unaware of a condom's effectiveness in reducing sexually transmitted infection (Fitzgerald, 2023). These examples are a part of the bigger picture of sexual health education which is one of the primary focuses of the program. Sexual education continues to be a growing concern with how its presentation is to be dealt with in young adolescence and can impact those coming out of the program to stabilize themselves within the workplace and independence.  **Employment**  Additionally, foster youth may struggle in obtaining employment as they age out of the foster care system (Brisson et al., 2022; Verulava et al., 2021). Youth aging out of the foster care system are less likely to have the soft skills or overall support to obtain employment (Brisson et al, 2022; Liu, 2020; Zinn & Courtney, 2017). Unfortunately, foster youth do not often have supports in their lives that ensure smooth transition into adulthood. Therefore, youth show a reliance on transitional support for needs pertaining to employment, education, and housing (Armstrong-Heimsoth et al., 2021). Employment has been shown to be a major obstacle for transitional and foster youth across multiple studies (Armstrong-Heimsoth et al., 2021; Brisson et al., 2022; Liu, 2020; Verulava et al., 2021; Zinn & Courtney, 2017). With only 51% of foster youth employed by the age of 21, a significant amount of foster youth are struggling with unemployment (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2020).  From the different topics that the literature reveals are important to cover such as education, employment and housing, these are issues that can be covered with informative sessions and classes when foster youth are aging out. The literature that has been reviewed shows that there are gaps within the amount of resources that are readily available which is where the main focus will be. This needs assessment is necessary to pinpoint the exact needs within these five dimensions among foster youth in Bradley County.  The research shows that finances, employment, housing, sexual health, and education are needs for aging foster youth from the literature. However, the researchers do not know the primary obstacles to success foster youth in Bradley County face upon aging out of foster systems, and that is the reason why it is important to explore the obstacles and factors of success available for transitional foster youth in Bradley County.  Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2020). Child welfare and foster care statistics. https://www.aecf.org/blog/child-welfare-and-foster-care-statistics  Armstrong-Heimsoth, A., Hahn-Floyd, M., Williamson, H. J., Kurka, J. M., Yoo, W., & Rodríguez de Jesús, S. A. (2021). Former foster system youth: Perspectives on transitional supports and programs. Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research, 48(2), 287–305. https://doi-org.ezproxy.southern.edu/10.1007/s11414-020-09693-6  Brisson, D., Wilson, J. H., Medina, E., Hughey, C., Chassman, S., & Calhoun, K. (2022). Experiences of youth transitioning out of juvenile justice or foster care systems: The correlates of successful moves to independence. Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal, 39(1), 45–57. https://doi-org.ezproxy.southern.edu/10.1007/s10560-020-00708-x  Deckler, J. (2023, March 29). Amid inflation, nearly half of parents financially support their adult children, but “it has to go both ways,” economist warns. CNBC. https://www.cnbc.com/2023/03/29/amid-inflation-half-of-parents-financially-support-adult-children.html  Fitzgerald, M. (2023, May 9). Foster care’s missing policies for sexual and reproductive health. The Imprint. https://imprintnews.org/top-stories/high-stakes-silent-systems-part-1/240790  Fletcher, C., Cornett, A., Webster, J., Niznik, A., Gardner, T., & Knaff, C. (2022). Student financial wellness survey: Fall 2021 semester results. Social Science Research Network. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4291129  Greeno, E. J., Lee, B. R., Tuten, M., & Harburger, D. (2018). Prevalence of substance use, housing instability, and self-perceived preparation for independence among current and former foster youth. Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 36, 409-418. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-018-0568-y  Healthy People 2030. (n.d.). Housing Instability. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/housing-instability  Jones, L. (2019). Remaining in foster care after age 18 and youth outcomes at the transition to adulthood: a review. Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services, 100(3), 260–281. https://doi.org/10.1177/1044389419847326  Keller, A. (2023). Missing the mark: The importance of financial anxiety in financial skills training for foster youth. International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies, 14(1), 71-83. https://doi.org/10.18357/ijcyfs141202321286  Kirk, C., Lewis, R., Nilsen, C., & Colvin, D. (2013). Foster care and college: The educational aspirations and expectations of youth in the foster care system. Youth and Society, 45, 307–323. https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X11417734  Miller, J. J., Benner, K., Donohue-Dioh, J., & Segress, M. (2019). Supporting collegiate foster youth and alumni: A mixed-method planning approach for Higher Education. Evaluation and Program Planning, 72, 67–76. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2018.10.005  National Foster Youth Institute. (2017). *Aging out of foster care*. NFYI. https://nfyi.org/51-useful-aging-out-of-foster-care-statistics-social-race-media/  National Foster Youth Institute. (2021, May 27). Higher education for foster youth. https://nfyi.org/issues/higher-education/  Office of Population Affairs. (n.d.). Trends in teen pregnancy and childbearing. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://opa.hhs.gov/adolescent-health/reproductive-health-and-teen-pregnancy/trends-teen-pregnancy-and-childbearing  Salazar, A. M., Lopez, J. M., Spiers, S. S., Gutschmidt, S., & Monahan, K. C. (2021). Building financial capability in youth transitioning from foster care to adulthood. Child & Family Social Work, 26(3), 442–453. https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12827  Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. (2022). *Youth transitions advisory council annual report 2022.* TN.gov.  Tennessee Department of Children’s Services. (n.d.-b). Pregnant and parenting. https://www.tn.gov/dcs/program-areas/youth-in-transition/youth-resources/pregnant-and-parenting.html  United States Children’s Bureau. (2023, June 26). National youth in transition database (NYTD). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/reporting-systems/nytd  Verulava, T., & Dangadze, B. (2021). Challenges of emerging adulthood among youth out of foster care. FWU Journal of Social Sciences, 15(1), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.51709/9951272/spring2021/15-1  Youth.gov. (n.d.). *Financial capability & literacy.* https://youth.gov/youth-topics/financial-capability-literacy#\_ftn10  Zinn, A., & Courtney, M. (2017). Helping foster youth find a job: A random-assignment evaluation of an employment assistance program for emancipating youth. Child & Family Social Work, 22(1), 155–164. https://doi-org.ezproxy.southern.edu/10.1111/cfs.12212 | |
| 2.2. **Purpose/Objectives of the Research** | |
| *Briefly state, in non-technical language, the purpose of the research and the problem to be investigated. When possible, state specific hypotheses to be tested or specific research questions to be answered. For pilot or exploratory studies, discuss the way in which the information obtained will be used in future studies so that the long-term benefits can be assessed*. | |
| The purpose of this needs assessment is to discover what factors determine successful transitions for youth aging out of the foster care system in Bradley County, Tennessee.  Research question: What factors determine success as foster youth transition into adulthood, and what do foster youth additionally need to have successful transitions in Bradley County, Tennessee?  Alternate hypothesis (H1):There is a significant relationship between at least one of the independent variables (financial management classes, a financial management counselor, sexual health education classes, housing navigation case management, housing assistance, IDA account through Opportunity Passport, employment classes, and post-secondary education planning classes) and successful transition out of foster care, which includes housing stability, financial well-being, reduced pregnancy rates, graduating high school or obtaining a GED, attending a post-secondary educational institution, and obtaining stable and quality employment among foster youth aging out of the system. | |
| 2.3. **Methods and/or Procedures** | |
| *Briefly discuss, in non-technical language, the research methods which directly involve use of human subjects. Discuss how the methods employed will allow the investigator to address his/her hypotheses and/or research question(s).* | |
| Using a mixed methods approach will create a deeper and more holistic understanding of the answer to the research question. The complementary pairing of the statistical information from the quantitative method and the depth and context of the qualitative approach will increase the study’s validity and give the researchers a fuller perspective that will enhance the results and next steps.  Qualitative sources of data include interviews with school social workers working in Bradley County and focus groups made up of foster youth alumni residing in Bradley County. Quantitative sources of data include a survey distributed to youth ages 16-24 currently in the foster care system in Bradley County.  Using a mixed methods approach will create a deeper and more holistic understanding of the answer to the research question. The complementary pairing of the statistical information from the quantitative method and the depth and context of the qualitative approach will increase the study’s validity and give the researchers a fuller perspective to enhance the results and next steps. The researchers will prepare a survey to be given to foster youth and their parents, case managers, and teachers, as this is a solid method to gain a higher number of responses and see general trends in what is or was helpful for a successful transition (Blackstone, 2012). Focus groups with foster youth and alumni will be the best method for eliciting detailed and lengthy information from participants, as a successful transition out of foster care is a profoundly complex and subjective topic that can be impacted by numerous variables and concepts (Blackstone, 2012). The researchers chose to do focus groups with foster youth to explore their priorities as well as the most important factors to their success and what their needs are as well as the potential to provide a sense of community and support to the participants. The researchers chose to survey parents of foster youth, foster youth and alumni, case managers, and teachers, because they felt that this would be the most convenient way for them to be able to contribute their knowledge and experiences.  Blackstone, A. (2012). *Principles of sociological inquiry: Qualitative and quantitative methods. Saylor Foundation.* https://saylordotorg.github.io/text\_principles-of-sociological-inquiry-qualitative-and-quantitative-methods/s11-survey-research-a-quantitative.html | |
| **3. Description of Research Sample** | |
| 3.1. **Approximate Number of Subjects:** 75 | |
| 3.2. **Type of human subjects that are involved:**  *If human subjects are involved, check all that apply* | |
| x Minors  *if minors are involved, attach a Childs Assent Form*  ☐ Prison Inmates  ☐ Mentally Impaired  ☐ Physically Disabled  ☐ Institutionalized Residents | ☐ Health Care Data Information  *if this line is checked, attach any necessary HIPAA forms*  X Vulnerable or at-risk groups *e.g. poverty, pregnant women,*  *substance abuse population*  ☐ Animals or plants  ☐ Other: Social Workers/Case Managers, Teachers, Parents |
| ☐ Anyone unable to make informed decisions about participation | |
| 3.3. **Participant Recruitment**  *Describe how participant recruitment will be performed. Include how potential participants are introduced to the study.*  *Check all that apply* | |
| ☐ SAU Directory  X Postings, Flyers  ☐ Radio, TV  ☐ Participant Pool  Specify | ☐ Web-based Solicitation  *List the site(s):* Specify  X E-Mail Solicitation  *How addresses obtained*: Email addresses will be obtained through agency websites and school directories.  ☐ Other: Specify |
| ***Attach any recruiting materials you plan to use at the end of the document.*** | |

| **4. Content Sensitivity, Privacy, and Confidentiality** | |
| --- | --- |
| *Efforts will be made to keep personal information confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality.*  *Personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Identities will be help in confidence in reports in which the study may be published and databases in which results may be stored* | |
| 4.1. Does your research address culturally or morally sensitive issues? | **X** Yes  **☐** No  **☐** N/A |
| *If* ***Yes****, describe* We will be asking questions pertaining to sexual education. |
| 4.2. Will personal identifiers be collected? | **X** Yes  **☐** No  **☐** N/A |
| *If* ***Yes****, describe* Due to the small nature of Bradley County, participants may be able to be identified. For example, an unnamed teacher from a small school in the county may be identified through their population type and location. All personal identifiers will be translated into a code. |
| 4.3. Will identifiers be translated to a code? | **X** Yes  **☐** No  **☐** N/A |
| *If* ***Yes****, describe* Identifiers will be coded with a numerical value. |
| 4.4. Will recordings be made (audio, video)? | **X** Yes  **☐** No  **☐** N/A |
| *If* ***Yes****, describe* Audio recordings will be made during the focus group sessions to be later transcribed and coded. |
| 4.5. Does your research include any human health-related information? | **☐** Yes  **X** No  **☐** N/A |
| *If* ***Yes,******your research must address HIPAA requirements****. Refer to the IRB Manual for more information* |
| 4.6. How are you planning to protect sensitive/personal/HIPAA information?  *Please explain* All information will be kept on locked devices and be viewed by the researchers only. The researchers will obtain consent if audio or video recordings are made. Identifying information will be removed in the final research report. | **☐** N/A |
| 4.7. Who will have access to data (survey, questionnaires, recordings, interview records, etc.)? | |
| *Please list* Sarah Cole, Isabella Eklund, Rafael Encarnacion,Morgan Garcia, Laura Gibbs, Dr. [Laura Racovita](mailto:racovita@southern.edu) | |
| **5. Funding, Costs, and Participant Compensation** | |
| 5.1. Is Funding being sought to support this research? **☐ Internal ☐ External** | **☐** Yes  **x** No  **☐** N/A |
| *If* ***Yes****, describe*  Enter |
| 5.2. Is there a funding risk? | **☐** Yes  **x** No  **☐** N/A |
| *If* ***Yes****, describe* Enter |
| 5.3. Who will keep the financial records? | |
| *N/A* | |
| 5.4. Are participants to be compensated for the study?🗆 **Amount** $ Enter $ | **☐** Yes  **x** No  **☐** N/A |
| *If* ***Yes****, describe* 🗆 Type Enter  🗆 Source Enter |
| 5.5. Will participants who are students be offered class credit? | **☐** Yes  **x** No  **☐** N/A |
| *If* ***Yes****, describe* Enter |
| 5.6. Are other inducements planned to recruit participants? | **☐** Yes  **x** No  **☐** N/A |
| *If* ***Yes****, describe*  Enter |
| 5.7. Are there any costs to participants? | **☐** Yes  **x** No  **☐** N/A |
| *If* ***Yes****, explain*  Enter |
| **6. Animals/Plants** | |
| 6.1. Are the animals/plants being studied on the endangered list? | **☐** Yes  **x** No ☐ N/A |
| 6.2. Are Scientific Collection Permits required, i.e. Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency? | **☐** Yes  **x** No  **☐** N/A |
| 6.3. Have the animal(s) of this study already been used in a previous study (non-naïve animals)? | **☐** Yes  **x** No  **☐** N/A |
| 6.4. Will the animal(s) used in this study be used in a future study? | **☐** Yes  **x** No  **☐** N/A |
| 6.5. Where will the animals be housed? | **☐** Yes  **x** No  **☐** N/A |
| 6.6. Will the rodents (if applicable) be housed in wire bottom cages? | **☐** Yes  **x** No  **☐** N/A |
| 6.7. Will plants be used for instructional purposes as part of teaching a course? | **☐** Yes  **x** No  **☐** N/A |

| **7. Risks** | |
| --- | --- |
| *Risk is any potential damage or adverse consequences to researcher, participants, or environment. These might include physical, psychological, social, or spiritual risks whether as part of the protocol or a remote possibility.* | |
| 7.1. **Are there any risks involved with this study?** | **X** Yes **☐** No  **☐** N/A |
| *If* ***Yes****, check all that apply* |
| ☐ **Physical Risk**  *May include pain injury, and impairment of a sense such as touch or sight. These risks may be brief or extended, temporary or permanent, occur during participation in the research or arise after.* | |
| *If* ***Selected****, describe*  Enter | |
| X **Psychological Risk**  *Can include anxiety, sadness, regret and emotional distress, among others. Psychological risks exist in many different types of research in addition to behavioral studies.* | |
| *If* ***Selected****, describe*  Participants may experience a psychological risk while disclosing their personal experience with the foster care system in a survey, interview, and/or focus group. | |
| X **Social Risk**  *Can exist whenever there is the possibility that participating in research or the revelation of data collected by investigators in the course of the research, if disclosed to individuals or entities outside of the research, could negatively impact others’ perceptions of the participant. Social risks can range from jeopardizing the individual’s reputation and social standing, to placing the individual at-risk of political or social reprisals.* | |
| *If* ***Selected****, describe*  Participants involved with the focus groups may risk their identities being known to other individuals involved within the group. | |
| ☐ **Legal Risk**  *Include the exposure of activities of a research subject “that could reasonable place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability.”* | |
| *If* ***Selected****, describe*  Enter | |
| ☐ **Economic Risk**  *May exist if knowledge of one’s participation in research, for example, could make it difficult for a research participant to retain a job or find a job, or if insurance premiums increase or loss of insurance is a result of the disclosure of research data.* | |
| *If* ***Selected****, describe*  Enter | |
| ☐ **Spiritual Risk**  *May exist if knowledge of one’s spiritual beliefs or lack of, could be exposed which in turn could invoke an economic, social and or psychological risk.*  *If* ***Selected****, describe*  Enter | |
| 7.2.In your opinion, do benefits outweigh risks? | **X** Yes  **☐** No  **☐** N/A |
| *If* ***Yes****, explain*  By obtaining data on the needs of the population, the researchers will be able to establish a program to address potential gaps in transitional foster youths’ lives as highlighted by the data. These benefits will outweigh the risks outlined above. |
| 7.3. Explain how you plan to minimize the risks identified above  Confidentiality forms will be distributed prior to all interviews and focus groups. Furthermore, participants taking the survey would agree to a confidentiality notice before answering the survey. The researchers will provide resources for the participants if they experience an alarming level of risk, and participants will be able to stop participating at any time if they choose. | |
| **8. Results** | |
| 8.1. **How will the results be disseminated?**  ☐ Classwork only ☐ Published article ☐ Student conference ☐ Professional conference  X Other The results will be distributed to those creating the programs based on this needs assessment. | |

**Signatures:** If submitted by a faculty member, electronic (typed) signatures are acceptable. If submitted by a student, please print out completed form, obtain the faculty advisor’s signature, scan completed form, and submit it via e-mail. Only Word Form or PDF files are acceptable submissions.

Morgan Garcia

Principal Investigator (PI) or Student Date: 9/27/2023

Dr. Laura Racovita

Faculty Advisor (for student applications) Date: 9/27/2023

All student applications must be either signed by the faculty advisor then scanned and submitted electronically, or submitted directly by the faculty advisor. All applications should be submitted by email to: [**irb@southern.edu**](mailto:irb@southern.edu)



Did the investigator complete CITI Training?

**Additional Special Requirements or Attachments to the Application**

**Approvals from other IRBs**

Cooperative research projects involve research that involves more than one institution. In these instances, federal law holds each institution responsible for safeguarding the rights and welfare of human subjects and for complying with federal policy; therefore, SAU IRB applications must be made even if there is another institution conducting a review of the same research project. When a study is being carried out at a non-USA site, and approval from other institutional review boards at the foreign site must be sought. The IRB recommends that a copy of each IRB approval be submitted.

**Questionnaires/Other Instruments**

Any questionnaires, tests, survey instruments or data collections sheets which are not standard and well known must be submitted as part of the application. Structured interview questions and outlines for unstructured interviews also must be included.

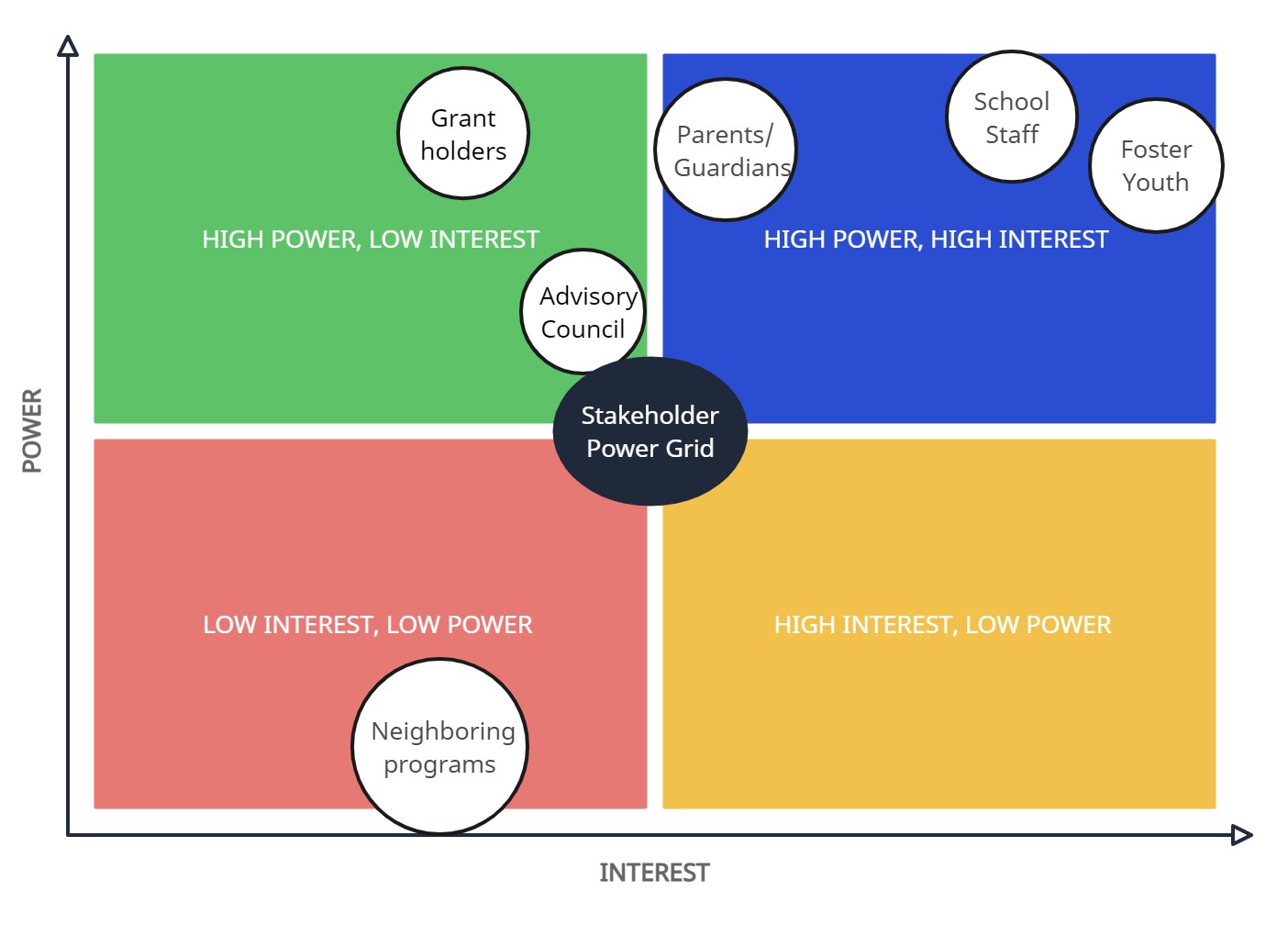
**Advertisements/Notices/Recruitment Flyers**

The text of any advertisement, video display, notice, sign, brochure or flier used to recruit subjects either should be included as an attachment.It includes documents to which there are Links and/or QR-Codes.

| **9. Appendices and Attachments** |
| --- |
| *Insert all Research appendices and/or attachments. These include the checked in the #1.4 items.*  *To* ***add*** *an attachment, click inside the insert-frame below and paste your material. To* ***add several*** *attachments: before pasting your material, click on the frame below and use the “+” button (see the pictured below) to add as many frames as many attachments you have. Paste your material.*    *Start each attachment* ***on a new page*** *by using “Enter” (Windows) or “Return” (Mac) to move to the next page.* |
| Insert appendices and attachments within this frame |

**Appendix H**

**Stakeholder Power-Interest Grid**



**Appendix I**

**Stakeholder Analysis Table**

| **Stakeholder** | **Characteristics** | **Main Interest** | **Fears and expectations** | **Potential impact** | **Priority** | **Recommendations** | **Responsibility** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Identity of individual or group/s.*  *All listed stakeholders are within Bradley County* | *What sort of person or group are they?* | *What are their main interests and/or motivations?* | *What is their potential reaction to the project? What do they expect from the project?* | *How important is their impact on the project? (low, med, high, critical)* | *Rank the importance of the stakeholder to the success of the project (critical, high, med, low).* | *Implications for your project planning. (e.g. keep informed, involve in planning, etc.)* | *Who in your cohort will implement the recommendations?* |
| Foster Youth (Clients) | This group includes foster youth who live in Bradley County, Tennessee, and are transitioning out of foster care. They attend Bradley County high schools, and they are between the ages of 16 and 24. | This group’s interests include successfully transitioning out of foster care and moving into adulthood with sufficient resources, skills, and knowledge to flourish in life. | This group may be excited about the opportunity to take advantage of the resources this program is providing. However, this group also has the potential to doubt the program’s effectiveness and the level of help that it can provide to them. They additionally may not want to take advantage of this program if they feel it will affect how they are viewed socially.  From this program, they can expect to be equipped with knowledge, resources, and skills that will aid them as they transition out of foster care and into adulthood. | Critical | Critical; the foster youth are the target population for this project and will have to decide to take advantage of the resources that the program provides. | Keep informed and involve them in project planning and implementation. | Sarah Cole will be a liaison with the foster youth to keep them involved and a part of the planning and implementation process.  The team will send weekly emails with updates and information regarding the project. |
| Parents/Guardians | This group holds biological parents, foster parents and legal guardians who are candidates and currently in charge of foster youth. | This group’ main interests are being a resource and becoming the main caregivers for the foster youth that are aging out. Wanting to provide a safe environment where they can mature and grow as contributing individuals of society. | This group's reaction to the project would be an additional resource that they can implement to secure a means of providing effective caregiving to the foster youth. Those who may be inexperienced with being a guardian could utilize this program to set a foundation of their youths education and skills. They could also have the opposing reaction of this program not properly equipping themselves or the foster youth with resources and skills and could set an unstable foundation to their growth. | Critical | Critical  Being the direct caregiver for the foster youth, they must be a part of the project as well as providing permission to the foster youth to participate as well. | Consistent updates for this group on the project, and involving them in the planning and implementation. | The team will evenly divide the communication regarding updates and implementation of the projects with the parents and guardians of youth. |
| School Staff | School staff are any faculty or staff who are working with children in Bradley County Schools including School Social Workers, Teachers, and Administration. | School staff are interested in the successful outcomes of their students. Schools want to see their students graduate and transition well into adulthood. | This group may be apprehensive about this program taking away from their school day. | Critical | Critical; The variety of school faculty and staff ranging from school principals to teachers to social workers offer a unique perspective on how to support foster youth in transition. | School staff will be given consistent updates and will be asked to be involved in program planning. | Isabella Eklund will be working directly with the school staff to keep them involved in the planning and implementation.  The team overall will work together to keep the whole of the school updated on any information necessary to provide. |
| Case managers | Case managers are those who work with current foster youth as DCS agents or caseworkers at local agencies. | Case managers are interested in the successful outcomes of foster youth. They are motivated by the care required to ensure that foster youth achieve a level of success in their lives. | Resource related concerns | Medium | Medium - not directly involved in program implementation. | Case managers will be kept informed through reports to their agencies. | The project director will lead in the distribution of agency reports. |
| Youth Transitions Advisory Council (a part of the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth) | This council is made up of state departments and private service providers, mental health advocates, that provide services to youth and young adults, and other community stakeholders. | They were created to assist the Department of Children’s Services with developing extension of foster care services for youth in state custody who age out of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. | Their potential reaction is excited that a new program is being developed to serve youth in transitions in an underserved county. They might expect updates about the number of youth receiving services annually and our outcomes. | Medium | Medium, this council is more a body to report to and to help with funding sources. | Keep informed, the team will compose an outcomes report to share with the youth transitions advisory council annually. | The project director |
| Foster Youth transition program staff from neighboring programs | This includes all staff assisting youth transitioning out of foster care in neighboring counties. | Their main interests are serving youth in transition and also helping their agency partner with local resources. | Their potential reaction could be excitement as the program could accept youth that live too far away from where they are located or cut down on their wait lists. They could also be afraid of potential competition for grant money or that we will steal their clients. | Low | Low, they could help or hurt the reputation of the new program. They could also collaborate with our program by sharing resources and ideas. | Involve in planning loosely by gathering ideas from them in the brainstorming process and resource collection phases. | Laura will reach out to neighboring agencies, find a contact person and inquire how the program could potentially partner with their agency to fill service gaps and not be in competition with them. |
| Grant holders | This group contains the individuals/organizations that are funding the program. | The grant holders are interested in the program’s mission and projected outcomes. | Fears: the grant money will not be used in accordance with what was detailed in the grant proposal. The program will not be a success.  Expectations: the grant will be used as specified in the grant proposal. | Low | Critical; the program’s implementation depends on funding from the grant holders. | Keep informed. | The project director will send financial reporting and programmatic reporting emails to the grant holders on a regular basis that is specified in the grant requirements. |

**Appendix J**

**Logic Model**

**Program Title:** Bradley County Foster’s Future

**Team Members**: Sarah Cole, Isabella Eklund, Rafael Encarnacion,Morgan Garcia, Laura Gibbs

**Statement of Problem:** Foster teens aging out of the foster care system are often unprepared in the areas below due to lack of resources and education.

| **Inputs** | **Outputs** | | **Outcomes (Impact)** | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Activities 🡪** | **Participants** | **Short Term 🡪** | **Medium Term 🡪** | **Long Term** |
| Class instructors  Bradley County High School conference room (equipped with a projector)  Opportunity Passport Curriculum  Casey Life Skills Toolkit | Finance Classes held monthly during the school year | 50 foster youth  2 class instructors | 40 youth will participate in financial management classes and have opened a checking account and or started opportunity passport programming. | 35 youth will track that their finances have been managed over time, have increased credit scores, and have no overdrawn accounts. | 30 youth with increased rates of stable financial wellness |
| Post-secondary education planning classes held monthly during the school year | 50 foster youth  2 class instructors | 40 youth receive information about resources for secondary education, and completing high school. | 35 youth have already or are graduating high school / obtaining a GED. | 30 youth have increased rates of attending a post-secondary educational institution. |
| Housing navigation classes held monthly during the school year | 50 foster youth  2 class instructors | 40 youth receive resources, such as access to housing assistance and connections to housing navigators, to pursue housing stability by applying for one apartment. | 35 Youth have obtained independent housing | 30 youth have maintained housing stability for 6 months - 1 year (one lease period). |
| Sexual health Education classes will be held monthly throughout the school year. | 50 foster youth  2 class instructors | 40 Youth gain higher education on sexual health information. | 35 Youth report higher scores on the the sex ed questionnaire | Reduced pregnancy rate among foster youth according to Bradley County Health Department. |
| Employment preparation classes to educate on soft skills for students, held monthly during the school year | 50 foster youth  2 class instructors | 40 of the 50 students will be educated on soft skills necessary to obtain job security and resources. | 35 of those students will secure two interviews after their post-secondary education. | there will be an increased rate of 30 more employed students at their post-secondary educational point of life |