



For Immediate Release
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CIDI'S OUTCOMES STUDY OF YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE AND THE JUSTICE SYSTEM SUPPORTS THE NYC ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN SERVICES' INITIATIVES TO ADVANCE PREVENTION PRACTICES AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR ADOLESCENTS

(Conrad N. Hilton Foundation funds groundbreaking study of youth discharged from foster care or the justice system and their outcomes in young adulthood.)

New York, New York – June 3, 2015 – A groundbreaking study of 28,703 adolescents discharged from New York City's foster care system, justice systems, and those youth who are dually involved in both systems has found that in all three groups (foster care, justice, and dually involved), only 25% of the youth accounted for up to 78% of the total service costs associated with programs such as homeless shelters, hospitals, and jail.

The study, funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, followed adolescents who left these systems between 2004 and 2006 for six years. The young adult outcomes of the three groups were measured in five domains: foster care, justice (including juvenile detention and jail), homeless shelters, public benefits, and hospital use. The young people who had been dually involved used the most services after discharge. In fact, over 90% of this dually involved group interacted with at least one system in the six years after their discharge and almost half interacted with three or more systems. However, the foster care and justice groups also interacted with multiple systems: almost 80% of both groups interacted with at least one system after discharge and almost a third interacted with three or more systems.

The study also explored the costs associated with this service use. All three groups continued to incur substantial costs after discharge. The average cost for the dually involved group was approximately 40% higher than the other two groups: the foster care group had an average cost of \$46,670 per person over the six years, the justice group had an average cost of \$47,854 per person over the six years, and the dually involved group had an average cost of \$65,433 over the six years.

“This data provides valuable insights into the trajectories of young people in the foster care and justice systems,” said Steven M. Hilton, Chairman, President and CEO of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. “Measuring these outcomes and the costs of accessing public services helps all of us gain a greater understanding of the importance of providing more effective supports for these youth so they can thrive in adulthood.”

This work, led by the Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence (CIDI), a research and policy center in the NYC Office of the Mayor, supports many of the policies that are being developed in the NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS) under Mayor de Blasio. The primary approach to improving the lives of these vulnerable young adults is to prevent them from becoming system-involved in the first place. The administration is expanding and



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strengthening its alternatives to detention, court involvement, and placement of young people in the justice system. New York City also continues to reduce the number of young people entering foster care, so that fewer ever have to leave foster care, instead focusing efforts on prevention in child welfare. Specifically, ACS has reduced the number of teens placed in foster care by implementing new, evidence-based, intensive preventive family support services designed specifically for families struggling with behavioral health issues related to their teen children. These research-based programs currently have the capacity to serve more than 3,000 families per year and should continue to expand.

“These findings about this vulnerable population are an opportunity to highlight the reforms and expanded services that the de Blasio administration designed to prevent children from ever entering the foster care or justice systems,” said Gladys Carrion, Commissioner of the NYC Administration for Children’s Services.

The study also found that the top 25% of dually involved users used an average of \$173,440 per person over the six years, compared to \$2,359 per person for dually-involved low cost users. Over half of the high-cost users’ cost was due to subsequent stays in the juvenile detention and jail systems. Dually involved youth who had multiple spells in foster care and who entered foster care for the first time in their early adolescence were more likely to be high-cost users.

Similarly, for the foster care group, the high-cost users used an average of \$145,770 per person over the six years, compared to \$0 per person for the lowest-cost users. Almost a third of the high-users cumulative cost was attributable to hospital use. A disproportionate number of females in the high-cost users group had a hospital stay related to childbirth, relative to the other females in the foster care group. A disproportionate number of high-cost users also had psychiatric hospital visits, relative to the rest of the group. Females in the foster care group, as well as youth who were discharged to settings other than adoption, particularly to mental health facilities, were more likely to be high-cost users.

For the justice group, the high-cost users used an average of \$144,602 per person over the six years, compared to \$4 per person for the lowest-cost users. Similar to the dually involved group, over half of that cost was due to subsequent stays in the justice system.

To target services to these youth who are at higher risk of becoming a high-cost service user, ACS is developing data-driven, predictive analytic tools to determine which young people exiting foster care or the justice system are most likely to return. These tools make it possible to provide specialized support services to address family needs early, reinforce family stability and prevent the crises that lead to young people returning to care.

“This study reinforces the direction of ACS to focus on both prevention efforts and program efforts specifically tailored to meet the needs of this vulnerable group of youth,” said Dr. Maryanne Schretzman, Executive Director of CIDI. “This study is a rallying call to provide more



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specific services to meet the needs of youth most at risk of poor outcomes, rather than using a one-size-fits-all approach.”

The full report can be found here: www.nyc.gov/cidi. CIDI would like to express its appreciation to the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation for funding the study and to the NYC agencies who provided data for the study.

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