



Youth At-Risk of Homelessness: Design for an Implementation Study of “Pathways to Success”

A Coach-Like Case Management Program for Youth and Young Adults in Foster Care

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Overview

Preventing homelessness among youth and young adults who have been involved in the child welfare system remains an urgent issue for child welfare policymakers and practitioners. Housing stability is essential for achieving self-sufficiency and promotes health and well-being, particularly during the transition to adulthood. A combination of disadvantages places youth and young adults with a history of foster care, especially those aging out of care, at a higher risk of homelessness compared with their peers.

To expand the evidence base on interventions to prevent homelessness among youth and young adults who have been involved in the child welfare system, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services launched the Youth At-Risk of Homelessness (YARH) multiphase grant program. YARH grantees received funding to develop interventions for youth and young adults with child welfare involvement who are most likely to experience homelessness. The grant program specifies three target populations: (1) adolescents who enter foster care from ages 14 to 17; (2) young adults aging out of foster care; and (3) homeless youth and young adults, up to age 21, with foster care histories.

ACF contracted with Mathematica in the first two phases of YARH to provide evaluation technical assistance to grantees, support them in articulating and refining the design of their service models, assess the evaluability of each service model, and disseminate the knowledge developed. ACF is now in the third phase of YARH (or YARH-3) and is conducting a rigorous summative evaluation of a policy-relevant comprehensive service model developed and refined during the first two phases of YARH.

The summative evaluation conducted under YARH-3 will examine the effect of Colorado's Pathways to Success comprehensive service model (Pathways). Pathways is an intensive, coach-like case management model for youth and young adults in foster care. A large, cluster quasi-experimental impact study design will be used to test the effectiveness of Pathways in 37 counties in Colorado.

The Pathways implementation study will support interpretation of the model's impacts on outcomes and identify factors that contributed to or inhibited implementation of Pathways services in different counties; these findings will aid in the replication or improvement of future Pathways service delivery. The implementation study will systematically assess different contexts in which Pathways is being implemented and the fidelity to which Pathways is being implemented.

This report describes the design of the Pathways implementation study. A separate report describes the impact study for this summative evaluation (Cole et al. 2021).

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Executive Summary

Preventing homelessness among youth and young adults who have been involved in the child welfare system is an urgent issue for child welfare policymakers and practitioners. Housing stability, so essential for achieving self-sufficiency, also promotes health and well-being, particularly during the transition to adulthood. Unstable housing can launch a negative cycle of poor health, limited employment, and continued housing instability (Dion et al. 2014).

A combination of disadvantages places youth with a history of foster care, especially those aging out of care, at greater risk of homelessness than their peers. Experiences of trauma are common, and research suggests youth who age out of foster care are more likely than those in the general population to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (Salazar et al. 2013). Moreover, many youth who age out of foster care encounter barriers to economic independence because they lack the academic credentials, basic job skills, and social networks vital for finding and maintaining employment (Dworsky et al. 2012). Nonetheless, there is also evidence that protective factors, such as caring adults, a stable living situation, and relational skills, can offset risk factors and contribute to improved well-being and longer-term success (Brodowski and Fischman 2013).

To expand the evidence base on interventions to prevent homelessness among youth and young adults who have been involved in the child welfare system, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services launched the Youth At-Risk of Homelessness (YARH) multiphase grant program. YARH aligns closely with the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) Framework for Ending Youth Homelessness (USICH 2013). YARH mirrors the USICH framework's focus on achieving positive outcomes related to housing, permanent connections to caring adults, education, employment, and well-being. YARH also reflects the framework's emphasis on using data to specify risk and protective factors for youth and young adults, identifying and implementing strategies to mitigate risks and enhance protective factors, and using monitoring and evaluation to improve services. The grant program specifies three target populations: (1) adolescents who enter foster care from age 14 to 17; (2) young adults aging out of foster care; and (3) homeless youth and young adults, up to age 21, with foster care histories.

A. History of YARH-1 and YARH-2

In the first phase of the grant program (2013 to 2015, known as YARH-1), 18 grantees received two-year planning grants to understand the characteristics of the three target populations for YARH, develop partnerships and teaming structures, and begin designing comprehensive service models to prevent homelessness. In the second phase of YARH (2015 to 2019, known as YARH-2), 6 of the 18 YARH-1 grantees received four-year implementation grants to further specify their comprehensive service models, begin delivering services, complete usability testing of key components of the service models, and conduct formative evaluations to assess program implementation and early outcomes for youth and young adults served. ACF contracted with Mathematica in YARH-1 and YARH-2 to provide evaluation technical assistance to grantees, support them in articulating and refining the design of their service models, assess the evaluability of each service model, and disseminate the knowledge developed.

ACF is now in the third phase of YARH (or YARH-3), which will continue to provide important information to the field through a rigorous summative evaluation.

B. Goals of the YARH-3 summative evaluation

ACF's goal for YARH-3 is to produce evidence about interventions intended to prevent homelessness and improve key outcomes among youth and young adults who have been involved in the child welfare system. During the first year of YARH-3, ACF and Mathematica convened two meetings in early 2020 with experts from the field to examine the specifics of candidate interventions implemented in YARH-2 and refine potential evaluation designs. On the basis of those conversations, ACF and Mathematica recommended conducting a summative evaluation of Colorado's Pathways to Success (Pathways) service model.

The Pathways service model offers intensive, coach-like case management for youth and young adults in foster care. It is designed to involve the youth and young adults in every aspect of their development. The model emphasizes coaching practices to engage youth and young adults and a youth-driven approach to help identify their goals, connect them with existing services, and promote positive outcomes. Case managers (known as Navigators) use coaching strategies to develop a working alliance with the youth and young adults by listening to them, asking powerful questions, approaching them with curiosity instead of judgment, encouraging them, helping them set achievable goals, and respectfully holding them accountable. These strategies recognize that a lack of social supports and a history of trauma can create challenges with engagement and trust between youth and young adults and service providers.

The Pathways impact study will use a cluster quasi-experimental design to examine the impact of Pathways on key outcomes, including housing, educational attainment, employment, permanency, and well-being. Thirty-seven counties within Colorado will participate in the impact study. Some will train their Chafee Program workers (state employees who assist youth and young adults transitioning from the foster care system) to be Pathways Navigators who will use coach-like strategies to engage with youth and young adults. These will be treatment counties, and all eligible youth and young adults in these counties will be exposed to Pathways. Other counties will not train their Chafee Program workers to be Pathways Navigators during the impact study; in those counties, youth and young adults will receive business-as-usual services. These will be the comparison counties for the purposes of the impact study.

The goal of the Pathways implementation study is to support interpretation of Pathway's impacts on outcomes and identify factors that contributed to or inhibited implementing Pathways services in different counties, to support replication or improvement of future Pathways service delivery. The implementation study will systematically assess different contexts in which Pathways is being implemented and the fidelity to which Pathways is being implemented.

C. Overview of implementation study features

The implementation study design of Pathways has the following key design features:

- **Conceptual framework comprised of two implementation frameworks:** We will adapt the Consolidated Framework of Implementation Research to guide clear conceptualization and systematic assessment of the range of contextual factors that facilitate or hinder implementation of the Pathways service model (Damschroder et al. 2009). We will draw from a theoretical model of fidelity to ensure comprehensive measurement of the various dimensions of fidelity and for the multiple of Pathways components (Carroll et al. 2007).
- **Sample of six Pathways and six comparison sites:** We will document business-as-usual service provision by a Chafee worker for comparison with service provision by Pathways.

- **Two rounds of in-depth qualitative data collection to assess facilitators of and barriers to initial implementation and full implementation:** We will conduct two rounds of site visits to each site in the implementation study sample. During these site visits, we will speak with a range of stakeholders involved in Pathways services and comparison services. The site visits will occur approximately 4 to 6 months after enrollment begins and 18 to 20 months after enrollment begins. The goals of the first site visit are to (1) assess what Pathways sites are doing to support Pathways implementation and initial service delivery, as well as the factors that hinder or contribute to initial service delivery; (2) describe youth and young adults' perceptions of Pathways services and the factors that contributed to or hindered their engagement in services; and (3) document the services available to youth and young adults receiving comparison services. The goals of the second site visit are to (1) assess changes in what Pathways sites are doing to support Pathways service delivery and the factors that hinder or contribute to achieving and sustaining fidelity in service delivery; (2) describe youth and young adults' perceptions of Pathways services and the factors that contributed to or hindered their engagement in services; and (3) document changes to services available to youth and young adults receiving comparison services.

After each site visit, we will conduct “check-ins” by telephone with leadership in counties delivering Pathways services and leadership in counties delivering comparison services. The goal of the telephone check-ins is to collect current information about service delivery in Pathways and comparison sites, in particular, any changes to services available to youth and young adults eligible for the study.

- **Program administrative data to examine fidelity to the Pathways service model:** We will collect and analyze program administrative data to assess patterns of service delivery and describe the extent to which Pathways services are delivered with fidelity. The administrative data will include youth or young adult and Navigator responses to the Working Alliance Inventory (WAI; Horvath 1992), a widely studied measure of the quality of therapeutic relationships between a practitioner and a client that has also been used to assess coaching relationships. The WAI can be organized into three domains that are relevant to engaging youth and young adults in a coach-like way and establishing goals. These domains are: (1) *bonding*, which refers to practitioner and client perceptions regarding each other in terms of liking each other, confidence in their ability to do their job or make the changes needed, mutual appreciation, and trust; (2) *tasking*, which refers to practitioner and client perceptions of what needs to happen to reach goals, establish relative priorities, and if necessary, obtain a new perspective on how to proceed; and (3) *goal setting*, which refers to practitioner and client perceptions of their agreement on goals, ability to develop mutual goals, and agreement on the change needed to achieve program objectives.

A separate report describes the impact study design for the Pathways evaluation (Cole et al. 2021).

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I. Introduction

Preventing homelessness among youth and young adults involved in the child welfare system remains an urgent issue for child welfare policymakers and practitioners. Housing stability is essential for achieving self-sufficiency and promotes health and well-being, particularly during the transition to adulthood. Unstable housing can initiate a negative cycle of poor health, limited employment, and continued housing instability (Dion et al. 2014).

A combination of disadvantages places youth with a history of foster care, especially those aging out of care, at greater risk of experiencing homelessness than their peers. Experiences of trauma are common, and research suggests these youth are more likely than those in the general population to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (Salazar et al. 2013). Moreover, many youth aging out of foster care encounter barriers to economic independence because they lack the academic credentials, basic job skills, and social networks vital for finding and maintaining employment (Dworsky et al. 2012). Nonetheless, there is also evidence that protective factors, such as caring adults, a stable living situation, and relational skills, can offset risk factors and contribute to improved well-being and longer-term success (Brodowski and Fischman, 2013).

Studies confirm that housing instability affects a large proportion of people who exit foster care as older youth or young adults. The National Youth Transition Database (NYTD) gathers information on youth currently or previously in foster care and provides one view into the prevalence of homelessness in this population. Among 19-year-old respondents to the NYTD, 20 percent reported that they experienced homelessness within the past two years (Children’s Bureau 2019). By age 21, 27 percent of NYTD respondents had recent experiences of homelessness (Children’s Bureau 2019). Previous, smaller studies have produced estimates of homelessness among youth formerly in foster care ranging from 11 to 37 percent. An even larger proportion of youth who exit care—up to 50 percent—may experience other forms of housing instability, such as couch surfing or doubling up (Dion et al. 2014).

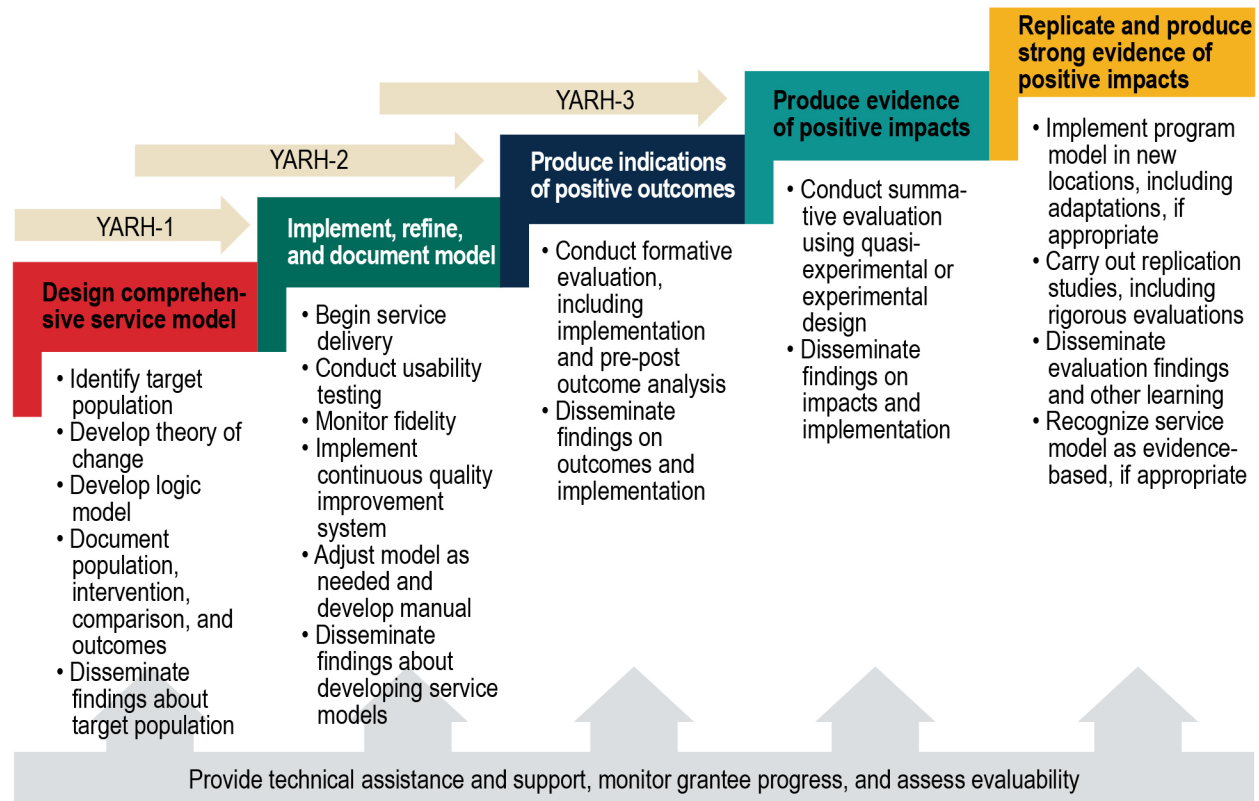
To expand the evidence base on interventions to prevent homelessness among youth and young adults involved in the child welfare system, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) launched the Youth At-Risk of Homelessness (YARH) multiphase grant program. YARH aligns closely with the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) Framework for Ending Youth Homelessness (USICH 2013). YARH mirrors the USICH framework’s focus on achieving positive outcomes related to housing, permanent connections to caring adults, education, employment, and well-being. YARH also reflects the framework’s emphasis on using data to specify risk and protective factors for youth and young adults, identifying and implementing strategies to mitigate risks and enhance protective factors, and using monitoring and evaluation to improve services. The grant program specifies three target populations: (1) adolescents who enter foster care from age 14 to 17, (2) young adults aging out of foster care, and (3) homeless youth and young adults with foster care histories up to age 21.

A. History of YARH and current context

YARH seeks to guide grantees along an evidence-building path (Exhibit I.1). In the first phase of the grant program (2013 to 2015, known as YARH-1), 18 grantees received two-year planning grants to understand the characteristics of the three target populations for YARH, develop partnerships and teaming structures, and begin designing comprehensive service models to prevent homelessness. Under the second

phase of YARH (2015 to 2019, known as YARH-2), 6 of the 18 YARH-1 grantees received four-year implementation grants to further specify their comprehensive service models, begin delivering services, complete usability testing of key components of their service models, and conduct formative evaluations to assess program implementation and early outcomes for youth and young adults served. ACF contracted with Mathematica in YARH-1 and YARH-2 to conduct process studies, provide evaluation technical assistance (TA) to grantees, support them in articulating and refining the design of their service models, assess the evaluability of each service model, and disseminate knowledge developed.

Exhibit I.1. Evidence-building path in YARH



Note: Adapted from Langford et al. (n.d.), p. 5.

ACF is currently in the third phase of YARH (or YARH-3), which will continue to provide important information to the field through a rigorous summative evaluation. YARH-3 incorporates assessments of grantees’ readiness for summative evaluation, a federally led evaluation of one comprehensive service model (discussed more in the following section), including an implementation study and an impact study, and ongoing dissemination of knowledge gained through project activities.

1. Roadmap for this report

This design report summarizes the process used to select the candidate intervention for summative evaluation and the planned implementation study. The remainder of Chapter I summarizes the process of selecting a YARH-2 intervention for the summative evaluation, the factors that informed the final recommendation for participation in the evaluation, and the components of the comprehensive service model to be evaluated. Chapter II describes the conceptual framework and research questions for the

implementation study. Chapter III presents the data sources and analytic approach planned for the study. A separate design report provides details on the proposed impact study to complement the implementation study (Cole et al. 2021).

B. Selection of summative evaluation intervention

For the YARH-3 summative evaluation, ACF intended to select at least one YARH-2 intervention that was likely to produce useful evidence about preventing homelessness and improving key outcomes among youth and young adults who have been involved in the child welfare system. To support selection of the summative evaluation intervention, ACF and Mathematica convened two meetings in early 2020 with experts from the field. During these meetings, four factors guided discussions for recommending a YARH-2 intervention for summative evaluation:

- 1. Interest of the field in the intervention.** The policy relevance of the proposed comprehensive service model was a key consideration for the recommendation. The extent to which researchers and practitioners would be interested in the results and the likelihood that other communities would implement similar service models informed whether an intervention would make a useful contribution to the field.
- 2. Readiness of the intervention for a summative evaluation.** The clarity of the comprehensive service model and the accompanying program manual were key considerations for whether an intervention was ready for summative evaluation. In addition, the following qualities signaled readiness for the evaluation: professionalism of the site management teams, robustness of the sites' continuous quality improvement and fidelity monitoring processes, availability of administrative data for use in the analysis, and emerging findings from the formative evaluation regarding the extent to which the program was implemented with fidelity and that outcomes were improving.
- 3. Rigor of evidence that would result from the proposed design for the summative evaluation.** The potential credibility of the evidence from the proposed evaluation design was the third criterion. Only designs that would produce a credible, internally valid test of program effectiveness were considered for the summative evaluation.
- 4. Likelihood of detecting statistically significant favorable impacts.** The statistical power and likelihood of the study to detect any favorable impacts of the program was the fourth consideration. The combination of the sample size available, research design proposed, expected counterfactual condition, and expected magnitude of changes in outcomes based on the dosage and service contrast contributed to the assessment of an intervention's readiness for a summative evaluation.

Given the information presented from each YARH-2 grantee and feedback from experts, ACF and Mathematica recommended conducting a summative evaluation of one YARH-2 intervention, the Colorado Pathways to Success (Pathways) comprehensive service model. The Pathways model offers intensive, coach-like case management for youth and young adults in foster care. The model emphasizes coaching practices to engage youth and young adults and a youth-driven approach to help identify their goals, connect them with existing services, and promote positive outcomes. (We describe the Pathways model in detail below.)

Meeting participants expressed strong interest in this intervention and its target population for a summative evaluation. The experts felt that a summative evaluation that found statistically significant and favorable findings would create strong interest in expanding this intervention nationally. Notably, the proposed intervention could be used as a model for improving standard services provided through the

Chafee Program in other states. Colorado’s use of standard Chafee services as the counterfactual condition also provides for strong external validity. Participants noted that Colorado’s well-documented comprehensive service model with robust continuous quality improvement and fidelity-monitoring protocols was a particular strength, and that its professional management teams is well-positioned to expand services in a summative evaluation. Finally, the proposed evaluation design (described in the Cole et al. 2021) appeared well suited to produce credible and well-powered estimates of effectiveness.

C. Description of Pathways Comprehensive Service Model

The Pathways comprehensive service model engages youth and young adults in foster care through intensive, coach-like case management. Case managers (known as Navigators) use coaching strategies to develop a working alliance with the youth or young adult by listening to them, asking powerful questions, approaching them with curiosity instead of judgment, encouraging them, helping them set achievable goals, and respectfully holding them accountable. These strategies recognize that a lack of social supports and a history of trauma can create challenges with engagement and trust between youth and young adults and service providers.

The cornerstone of the intervention consists of a Navigator using a coach-like model of engagement to help youth and young adults identify and work toward achieving at least two goals related to the five outcome areas of (1) housing, (2) education, (3) employment, (4) permanent connections, and (5) health and well-being. Youth and young adults set the agenda and pace of their work with the Navigator by developing goals around the five outcome areas. The Pathways comprehensive service model comprises multiple components:

- **Engaging youth and young adults in a coach-like way.** Each Navigator carries a small caseload of up to 10 youth or young adults for a full-time Navigator. This allows Navigators to provide intensive and consistent support to the youth and young adults on their caseload. Engaging the youth and young adults in a coach-like way is the core intervention of Pathways because it builds a framework of support through which Navigators administer all the other components. The key feature that sets this coach-like engagement apart from typical intensive case management models is that it is youth-driven. When Navigators act as coaches, they build a supportive relationship with the youth or young adult that encourages them to set personalized goals, plan, and pace. Although regular case management may focus on achieving the same outcomes by providing services, coach-like engagement empowers youth and young adults to be their own advocates.
- **Supporting youth or young adults during periods of crisis.** Some youth and young adults, especially those who are experiencing homelessness, enroll in Pathways during a period of crisis. When this happens, the Navigator’s primary focus is crisis stabilization. This involves using all other components of the intervention to address immediate safety or housing needs before the youth or young adult develops goals.
- **Establishing goals.** All youth and young adults work with a Navigator to develop at least two goals related to one or more of the five outcome areas. The process of setting goals might involve using a worksheet, or it might be structured as an informal interview about what a youth or young adult would like to achieve in order to transition to independent living. The youth or young adult can set as many goals as they please, and they are free to add goals throughout the program. Progress is tracked by the Navigator, who maintains regular contact with the youth or young adult and guides them through each step.

- **Securing and maintaining safe and stable housing.** This can take many forms, depending upon a youth or young adult’s housing status. For example, Navigators might help the youth or young adult acquire housing vouchers; understand necessary documentation; and build connections with their landlords, roommates, and/or family members.
- **Case planning and assessing needs.** To assess a youth or young adult’s needs and opportunities for growth, Navigators are equipped with a variety of evidence-based tools. These tools are designed to help youth and young adults understand what they need to focus on to be ready to transition to self-sufficiency after graduation.
- **Providing small-scale financial assistance.** Access to supports is key for the youth or young adults to stay on track in achieving their goals. Therefore, Navigators must be able to provide immediate resources for youth or young adults in need. Each Pathways site is given flexible funds, which can be used to provide immediate assistance to the youth or young adult when all other resources have been tapped and the youth or young adult has an unmet need.
- **Referring youth and young adults to appropriate service agencies.** No agency or organization is a one-stop shop for helping youth and young adults in foster care overcome the myriad challenges they must conquer to be equipped for independence. Because of this, Navigators have to be tapped into a wide referral network of partners in the human services field. When a youth or young adult has a particular problem or goal, a primary responsibility of the Navigator is to help find solutions and refer them to the appropriate service agencies.
- **Identifying community connections and transitioning youth and young adults to other supports.** The Pathways model is designed to be short-term and intensive, allowing the youth and young adults to graduate and transition to a less-intensive care management model for the long term. To facilitate this, Navigators must help the youth or young adult identify what areas of support exist within the community that they can rely on after graduation. This could take the form of helping youth and young adults build supportive connections or finding other community assets (referral agencies) that will help them after they are no longer eligible for Pathways.
- **Supporting youths’ and young adults’ involvement in permanency and community roundtables.** Navigators may support youth and young adults during the planning of and participation in the county-led permanency and community roundtable (PRT/CRT). The PRT model was developed as a means of increasing legal permanency rates for older youth and young adults in foster care. It includes setting up a team of internal and external experts, developing permanency goals, brainstorming barriers to permanency, and developing an action plan. PRTs are standard practice in the county sites. The CRT is convened by the Navigator as needed based on the determination of the youth or young adult or Navigator or on the recommendation of a supervisor. Although PRTs and CRTs are not requirements of the Pathways model intervention, within some agencies they work as a natural support for the youth and young adults.
- **Advancing permanency.** A key indicator of long-term stability is relational permanency—ensuring that youth and young adults have at least one supportive adult they can turn to for help when needed. The Pathways model defines a supportive adult as any adult that a youth or young adult identifies as a supportive connection who is not providing professional support. The permanent connection could be a family member, mentor, coach, or staff member at a community agency. Navigators can foster connections by encouraging youth and young adults to spend time building these connections or by providing a space for or hosting an event that facilitates relationship building.

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II. Research Questions and Conceptual Framework for the Implementation Study

The Pathways implementation study will address two broad objectives. First, it will support interpretation of Pathway’s impacts on outcomes. Second, it will generate information about factors that contributed to or inhibited implementation of Pathways services in different settings, to support replication or improvement of future Pathways service delivery. This chapter presents research questions for the implementation study and describes the conceptual frameworks that will guide the assessment of different dimensions of Pathways implementation. These frameworks will support analysis of factors that facilitate or hinder Pathways implementation in different settings and the extent to which the intervention is delivered with fidelity to the service model.

A. Research questions

To provide information necessary for interpreting Pathways impacts and understanding its implementation in different settings, the implementation study will explore research questions related to five topics:

- 1. Differences between the Pathways service model and comparison services.** The question on this topic addresses the ways in which the Pathways service model differs from services offered to youth and young adults in the comparison condition.
- 2. Facilitators of and barriers to Pathways implementation.** Questions on this topic address how Pathways leadership and staff put components of the Pathways service model into operation and the factors that contributed to or hindered implementation.
- 3. Fidelity to the Pathways service model.** Questions on this topic address the extent to which sites delivered core services in the comprehensive service model as intended and factors that might have contributed to or hindered fidelity.
- 4. Service, resource, and policy environment surrounding Pathways implementation.** Questions on this topic address the services generally available to youth and young adults in the evaluation sample (both treatment and comparison groups) and the child welfare policies that may affect youth and young adults in the evaluation sample.
- 5. Youth and young adults’ responsiveness to the Pathways service model.** Questions on this topic address youth and young adults’ acceptance of Pathways services and their perceptions of the services.

A complete list of research questions is presented in Exhibit II.1.

Exhibit II.1. Research topics and questions

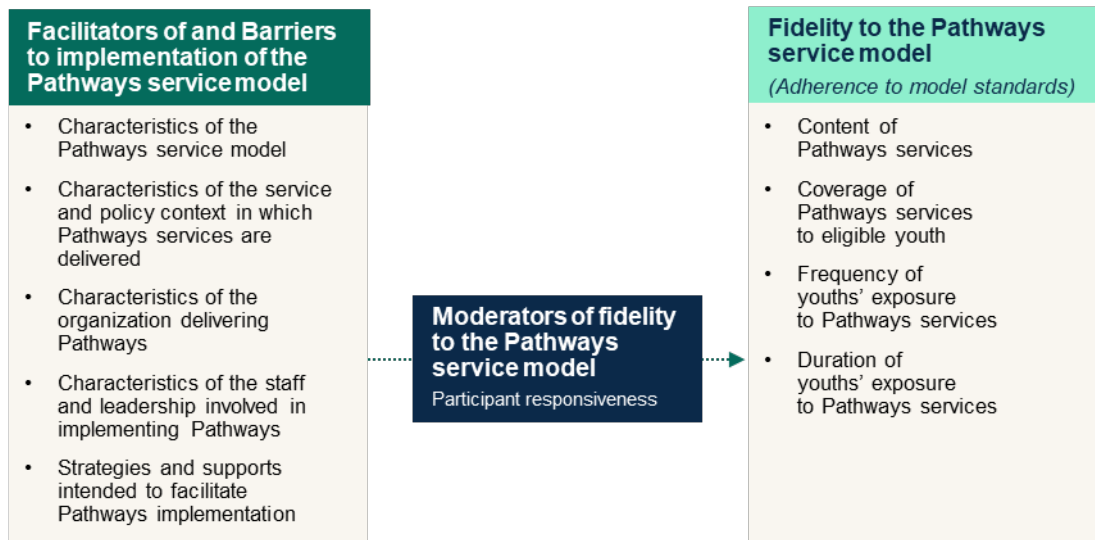
Topic	Research question
Differences between the Pathways service model and comparison services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are services under the Pathways service model distinct from services available to in the comparison condition?
Facilitators of and barriers to Pathways implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did the sites do to support initial service delivery (that is, start-up activities) in Pathways sites? • To what extent did Pathways sites use continuous quality improvement (CQI) to support implementation? How did CQI support implementation? • What factors (facilitators and barriers) contributed to or hindered initial and ongoing service delivery in Pathways sites?
Fidelity to the Pathways service model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent did the Pathways sites deliver Pathways services with fidelity? • To what extent did levels of fidelity vary across Pathways sites? • What factors (facilitators and barriers) contributed to or hindered achieving and sustaining fidelity?
Service, resource, and policy environment surrounding Pathways implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which services and resources are available to youth and young adults in the Pathways and comparison groups in the sites where this summative evaluation occurs? • What does site leadership perceive to be key child welfare policies and regulations that affect youth and young adults in the Pathways and comparison groups in the locations where this summative evaluation occurs?
Youth and young adults' experiences in the Pathways service model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the characteristics of the population served by Pathways? • What services were delivered to youth and young adults in Pathways? • What strategies did Navigators use to promote and maintain youth and young adult engagement? • How did engagement vary among youth and young adults participating in the Pathways service model? • What were youth and young adults' perceptions of Pathways services? How did they describe their experience in Pathways?

B. Conceptual framework

To ensure systematic and transparent assessment of implementation, the implementation science literature recommends using a conceptual framework to guide implementation studies (Alexander and Hearld 2012). In this section, we describe the theoretical models from which we drew constructs to develop the conceptual framework guiding the implementation study (Exhibit II.2).

Our conceptual framework draws from two sets of constructs that will guide our assessment of different dimensions of Pathways implementation. One set will guide our assessment of contextual factors that contributed to or inhibited implementation of Pathways—that is, facilitators of and barriers to implementation. The second set of constructs will guide our assessment of fidelity—that is, whether the Pathways sites delivered services as intended.

Exhibit II.2. Conceptual framework for the implementation study of Pathways to Success



1. Facilitators of and barriers to implementation

To support clear conceptualization of factors that facilitate or hinder implementation of the Pathways service model, we will adapt the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR). (Damschroder et al. 2009). CFIR will enable us to use an exploratory approach to assess the range of contextual factors that may influence Pathways implementation during start-up and ongoing operation and fidelity to the service model, rather than hypothesize factors that may influence Pathways implementation a priori. CFIR contains 39 constructs that reflect the evidence base of factors most likely to influence intervention implementation. However, not all constructs are necessarily relevant to the implementation of every intervention. Therefore, we will adapt CFIR to the Pathways implementation study by identifying and exploring relevant constructs as they emerge during analysis. The 39 constructs are organized into five domains that reflect different levels of the settings in which implementation occurs. In Exhibit II.3, we present the CFIR domains and example constructs. The full list of 39 CFIR constructs is included in Appendix A.

Exhibit II.3. Domains and examples of constructs for analysis of facilitators of and barriers to Pathways implementation

CFIR domain (bolded)	Definition adapted for Pathways
CFIR construct (un-bolded)	
Intervention characteristics	Characteristics of the Pathways service model
Relative advantage	Perception of the advantage of implementing Pathways versus an alternative intervention or maintaining the status quo
Complexity	Perception of the difficulty of implementing Pathways, reflected by duration, scope, disruptiveness, and number of steps, including iterations, required for implementation
Design quality and packaging	Perception of how well Pathways is presented, assembled, and organized for implementation
Outer setting	Characteristics of the service and policy contexts in which Pathways services are delivered
Youth needs and resources	Youth and young adults' needs and the extent to which facilitators of and barriers to meeting those needs are known and prioritized by the organization delivering Pathways
Connection to (external) organizations	The degree to which the implementing entity networks with other external organizations
Inner setting	Characteristics of the organization delivering Pathways services
Networks and communications	The nature and quality of social networks, and formal and informal communications within the organization
Implementation climate	The absorptive capacity for change, shared receptivity of stakeholders to Pathways, and the extent to which use of Pathways is rewarded and supported within the organization; implementation climate includes six subconstructs: tension for change, compatibility, relative priority, organizational incentives and rewards, goals and feedback, and learning climate
Readiness for implementation	Tangible and immediate indicators of organizational commitment to Pathways; readiness for implementation includes three subconstructs: leadership engagement, available resources, and access to knowledge and information
Characteristics of individuals	Characteristics of staff and leadership involved in delivering Pathways services
Knowledge and beliefs about the intervention	Individual stakeholder's attitudes toward and value placed on Pathways as well as familiarity with facts, truths, and principles related to the intervention
Other personal attributes	Other personal traits, such as tolerance of ambiguity, intellectual ability, motivation, values, competence, capacity, and learning style
Implementation process	Strategies and supports intended to facilitate Pathways implementation
Engaging	Attracting and involving appropriate stakeholders in the implementation and use of the intervention; engaging includes four subconstructs: opinion leaders, formally appointed internal implementation leaders, champions, and external change agents
Reflecting and evaluating	Quantitative and qualitative feedback about the progress and quality of implementation accompanied with regular personal and team debriefing about progress and experience; also referred to as continuous quality improvement

Source: Damschroder et al. (2009).

CFIR = Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research.

2. Implementation fidelity

Delivering an intervention with fidelity may be critical to achieving intended impacts on outcomes. Therefore, assessing fidelity is important for building knowledge of how to replicate and scale interventions (Mihalic 2004; Fixsen et al. 2009; James Bell Associates 2009; Breitenstein et al. 2010; Proctor et al. 2011). To guide our assessment of fidelity, we draw on the theoretical model developed by Carroll et al. (2007). This model delineates two domains of fidelity: moderators of fidelity and adherence. We draw from one construct in the moderator domain and four constructs in the adherence domain to guide our assessment of fidelity (Exhibit II.4).

Exhibit II.4. Domains and constructs for fidelity analysis

Fidelity domain (bolded)	
Fidelity construct (un-bolded)	Definition adapted for Pathways
Moderator of fidelity	Measures of factors that can influence adherence
Participants' responsiveness	The extent to which youth and young adults respond to or are engaged in Pathways services or the acceptability of Pathways among youth and young adults
Adherence	Measures of the extent to which those responsible for delivering Pathways services (Navigators) follow the model's standards, so that services or model components are delivered as intended in the program design
Content	The extent to which sites deliver Pathways services such as treatment, skills, or knowledge
Coverage (program reach)	The extent to which all eligible youth and young adults receive Pathways services
Frequency of exposure (dosage)	The time Navigators spend delivering (or youth and young adults spend receiving) Pathways services
Duration of exposure	How long the youth and young adults received Pathways services

Source: Carroll et al. (2007).

Moderators of fidelity refer to factors that can influence the level of adherence achieved. We will measure participants' responsiveness to assess the extent to which youth and young adults respond to and accept Pathways services.

Adherence refers to the extent to which delivery of an intervention meets standards set forth by the intervention's developers. Adherence to the intervention includes content (delivering the intended content of the intervention), coverage (providing the intervention to the intended population), frequency of exposure (delivering or receiving the intervention with the intended frequency), and duration of exposure (delivering or receiving the intervention for the intended length of time). For example, the Pathways service model involves a Navigator working one-on-one with an enrolled youth or young adult to deliver youth-driven case management services. The Pathways service model standard involves the Navigator and the youth or young adult meeting once a week. We will assess the extent to which Navigators and youth or young adults do meet once a week to measure frequency of exposure.

The conceptual framework (Exhibit II.2) shows how fidelity to the Pathways service model may be shaped by the facilitators and barriers that emerge in the context surrounding Pathways implementation, represented by the arrows. The facilitators and barriers may or may not be moderated by youth and young adults' responsiveness to model services. In the next chapter, we describe the methods we will use to assess Pathways implementation, guided by the conceptual framework.

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III. Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting Approach

The implementation study will use multiple methods to collect, analyze, and report on comprehensive data to address the study’s two broad objectives, supporting interpretation of Pathway’s impacts on outcomes and assessing Pathways implementation. We will collect data from a range of stakeholders using interviews and administrative data. We will take a structured approach, guided by the constructs presented in Chapter II, to analyze the data across Pathways sites. Our reports of findings will similarly integrate data from all sources to address the research objectives and present a comprehensive understanding of implementation of the Pathways service model.

A. Data collection

Data collection for the implementation study will take place over multiple years; it will focus on all components of the Pathways service model and comparison services and the constructs delineated in the conceptual framework. We will begin data collection at the start of study enrollment for this summative evaluation and continue throughout the course of service provision under this summative evaluation. In Exhibit III.1, we identify the data we will collect for each domain in the conceptual framework. Data collection methods will include the following:

- Conducting site visits to Pathways and comparison sites, during which we will interview leadership and staff delivering Pathways services and leadership and staff delivering comparison services. During the site visits, we will conduct focus groups with youth and young adults receiving Pathways services and youth and young adults receiving comparison services. After each site visit, we will conduct “check-ins” by telephone with leadership in counties delivering Pathways services and leadership in counties delivering comparison services.
- Reviewing the Pathways Intervention Manual and other documents and comparison sites’ training guides and policies and procedures documents.
- Obtaining administrative data that captures service receipt and participant responsiveness, through the Pathways Management Information System (PMIS).
- Collecting county-level indicators of service, resource, and policy context.

Exhibit III.1. Data collection methods, by conceptual framework domain

Conceptual framework domain	Data source				
	Site visits		Document review	Program MIS	County characteristics
	Interviews	Focus groups			
Facilitators of and barriers to implementation of the Pathways service model (CFIR)					
Characteristics of the Pathways service model	X				
Characteristics of the service and policy context in which Pathways services are delivered	X	X			X
Characteristics of the organization delivering Pathways services	X				
Characteristics of staff and leadership implementing Pathways	X	X			
Strategies and supports intended to facilitate Pathways implementation	X		X		
Moderators of fidelity to the Pathways service model					
Participant responsiveness	X	X		X	
Fidelity to the Pathways service model					
Content of Pathways services			X	X	
Coverage of Pathways services to eligible youth and young adults				X	
Frequency of youth and young adults' exposure to Pathways services				X	
Duration of youths and young adults' exposure to Pathways services				X	

CFIR = Consolidated framework for implementation research, MIS = Management information system.

1. Site visits

During site visits, we will collect information about facilitators of and barriers to implementation of the Pathways service model, including moderators of fidelity. As described above, we will collect this information from a range of stakeholders to assess different perspectives on Pathways services and implementation and the extent to which Pathways services are distinct from comparison services.

Number and timing of site visits. We will conduct two rounds of site visits. Both rounds will include approximately three to four week-long site visits and will cover multiple sites. We expect to conduct the first round of site visits about four to six months after enrollment begins. The goal of the first site visits is to assess what the Pathways sites are doing to support Pathways implementation and initial service delivery and factors that hinder or contribute to initial service delivery. We will also describe youth and young adults' perceptions of Pathways services and factors that contributed to or hindered their engagement in services. Finally, we will document the services available to youth and young adults receiving comparison services. During the first site visit, we will collect information on the services generally available to youth and young adults in the evaluation sample (both intervention and comparison groups) and the child welfare policies that may affect these youth and young adults.

The expected study enrollment period is 30 months. We expect that after halfway through the enrollment period, implementation will be relatively stable. We will conduct the second round of site visits approximately 18 to 20 months after enrollment begins. The goal of the second site visits is to assess changes in what Pathways sites are doing to support Pathways service delivery and factors that hinder or contribute to achieving and sustaining fidelity in service delivery, including youth and young adults' perceptions of Pathways services. We will document any changes to services available to youth and young adults receiving comparison services.

We expect the first round of telephone check-ins to occur approximately 6 months after the first round of site visits, and the second round of telephone check-ins to occur approximately 6 months after the second round of site visits. The goal of the telephone check-ins with leadership is to collect current information about service delivery in Pathways and comparison sites, in particular, any changes to services available to youth and young adults eligible for the study.

Selection of sites. We will work with the Center for Policy Research, the entity leading Pathways implementation, to select 6 of the 21 Pathways sites and 6 of the 16 comparison sites for the implementation study. We will purposefully select sites that vary on a range of characteristics, including poverty, urbanicity, population without health insurance, proportion of homeless students, and proportion of youth and young adults receiving Chafee services.

Site visit activities. During both rounds of site visits, we will conduct one-on-one semi-structured interviews with key informants, including Pathways leadership, supervisors, and Navigators; county child welfare agency leadership; and caseworkers delivering comparison services. After each site visit, we will conduct virtual focus groups with youth and young adults enrolled in Pathways and youth and young adults receiving comparison services.¹ The questions in the interview and focus group guides will be open-ended and allow for a range of responses. Site visitors will be trained to probe respondents for the appropriate depth of information needed to address the study's research questions. The interview and focus group guides are in Appendix B. Site visitors will record each interview and focus group so that we can transcribe verbatim all data collected for analysis.

During the telephone check-ins, we will ask county child welfare agency leadership a subset of questions from the interview guides. These questions are focused on changes to services offered to youth. The telephone check-ins will not be transcribed. We will record the telephone interviews to augment notes taken during the check-ins. The check-in guides are in Appendix B.

Site visit planning and scheduling. To initiate site visit planning, the implementation study team will schedule a call with Pathways leadership to learn about the staffing structure and to obtain contact information for each Pathways and comparison site in the implementation study sample. Six weeks before the target date for the site visit, the site visitor will schedule an orientation call with each site's point of contact. During that call, the site visitor will discuss with the point of contact the purpose of the site visit, the topics covered in the interviews and focus groups, and the most effective approach for scheduling interviews and recruiting focus group respondents and scheduling focus groups. The site visitor will emphasize the importance of recruiting youth and young adults with both high and low participation in Pathways and comparison services. One strategy for focus-group recruitment may be to randomly identify

¹ During a webinar for YARH-3 stakeholders, held on August 24, 2020, we received feedback on youth recruitment and engagement activities for evaluation activities. Stakeholders suggested that virtual focus groups are more effective than in-person focus groups for engaging youth participants. We will have the flexibility to conduct in-person focus groups, if necessary.

youth and young adults who are part of Navigators’ and Chafee caseworkers’ caseloads. After the orientation call, the site visitor will coordinate with the point of contact to identify and recruit respondents and finalize the site visit agenda.

While planning and scheduling the site visits, all site visitors will communicate regularly to ensure consistent data collection across sites while accommodating sites’ varying staffing structures. Exhibit III.2 presents an illustrative activity list for the first round of site visits; these activities will be tailored for each site as we learn more about staffing and supervisory and leadership structures and determine whether individual or small group interviews are more appropriate.

We will use email to schedule the telephone check-ins. Each check-in will be scheduled for 30 minutes.

Exhibit III.2. Illustrative activities to occur during site visits

Activity and respondent	Approximate length
Pathways site	
Individual or small group interview with Pathways leadership	1 hour (not every site)
Individual or small group interview with supervisors	1 hour (not every site)
Individual or small group interview with Pathways Navigators	1 hour (every site)
Focus group with up to four youth and young adults	1.5 hours (every site)
Comparison site	
Individual or small group interview with child welfare agency leadership	1 hour (not every site)
Individual or small group interview with supervisors	1 hour (not every site)
Individual or small group interview with Chafee caseworker	1 hour (every site)
Focus group with up to four youth and young adults	1.5 hours (every site)

Recruiting youth and young adults for focus groups. We hope to recruit enough youth and young adults for each focus group to provide a range of perspectives on their experiences with Pathways and comparison services. Recognizing the likelihood of a high no-show rate among youth and young adults recruited for the focus group, we will over-recruit and offer a \$40 incentive for each youth and young adult’s participation. We hope to include four youth and young adults in each focus group to provide a range of perspectives on their experiences with Pathways and comparison services. To obtain a focus group of four youth and young adults, we will recruit ten.

Ensuring high-quality data. We will take several steps to ensure consistent, high-quality data collection across implementation study sites. Before conducting the site visits, we will provide training to all site visitors to review the implementation study’s research questions and interviewing pitfalls and best practices. At a minimum, this training will cover the following topics:

- Overview of the implementation study design and the role of the site visits in data collection and addressing the research questions
- Detailed review of the components of the Pathways service model
- Detailed review of the interview and focus group guides
- Review of the best practices and pitfalls of interviewing

In addition to the training before site visits, each site visitor will conduct a line-by-line review of another site visitor’s transcript from their first site visit to highlight areas for improvement and reinforce strengths.

2. Program documents

We will work with the Center for Policy Research to obtain relevant program documentation from Pathways and comparison sites. This information will inform our understanding of Pathways and comparison services and help us prepare for data collection during site visits.

We will review the Pathways manual and other relevant Pathways documents, such as Navigator training session agendas. This will inform our understanding of the comprehensive service model and plans for start-up activities in Pathways sites, including preparing for and promoting change, putting supports in place to facilitate implementation, hiring and training staff, and screening and enrolling eligible youth and young adults. We will account for changes in the enrollment strategies that may be necessary for rigorous summative evaluation, which may not be documented in the manual.

We will review documents related to services provided to youth and young adults in the comparison group. These documents might include training documents or summaries of policies and procedures relevant to child welfare services. We will review comparison site service documents to describe the services available to youth and young adults in the comparison group.

3. Pathways Management Information System

We will regularly collect administrative data from the Pathways Management Information System (PMIS) to assess patterns in service delivery and describe the extent to which Pathways services are delivered with fidelity. PMIS is an online management information system developed by the Center for Policy Research for Pathways to Success. PMIS serves as the online case management systems for Navigators and supports the data collection necessary for this summative evaluation. The data collected in PMIS is presented in Exhibit III. 3.

Exhibit III.3. Pathways Management Information System data elements

Data element	Purpose
Screening and assessment data	
Youth and young adult eligibility screening tool ^a	Identify transition-age foster youth and young adults most at risk of homelessness
Working Alliance Inventory ^b	Collect information about the quality of the coaching relationship between the Navigator and youth and young adults
Youth Connections Scale ^c	Collect information about the number and nature of supportive adult connections that each youth and young adult has
Case management data	
Participation data	Enrollment and graduation dates
Youth-Navigator contact	Frequency Mode Duration Content, including topics discussed and the outcome of the contact, and services or funds provided Youth progress, including youth's development of two goals Enrollment, graduation, and length of participation in Pathways

Data element	Purpose
Youth goals	Development of at least two goals grouped along one or more of the five outcome areas Progress toward achieving goals
Graduation criteria checklist	Youth meet at least five of eight criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not in crisis • In stable housing • At least one supportive adult connection (non-child welfare professional) • Completed assessments • Achieved two linchpin goals (determined by youth and Navigator) • Has daily living skills necessary to sustain independence • Demonstrated increased ability to set goals and recognize what action steps need to be taken to achieve those goals • Demonstrated increased confidence, and ability to be assertive and self-advocate

Source: Colorado Pathways to Success Intervention Manual, February 2020.

^a The youth and young adult eligibility screening tool is an adaptation of the Transition-Age Youth (TAY) triage tool used to identify youth at highest risk for chronic homelessness. The screening tool includes 12 yes/no questions that ask about homelessness risk factors such as parental incarceration and foster care history, youth involvement in the foster care system, drug use, conflict or abuse in the home, pregnancy, and human trafficking.

^b WAI, Horvath 1992

^c Pathways uses the Youth Connections Scale (Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare n.d.) to quantify the number and nature of supportive adult connections in a young person’s life. Navigators complete the assessment with youth and young adults 30 days after enrollment and near completion of the intervention.

4. County characteristics

To document the service, resource, and policy environment for each intervention and comparison site in the implementation study sample, we will use data available at the county level and interview data. Before and during the first round of site visits, we will document the environment in each county to understand funding for runaway and homeless youth programs, the Chafee program, and education and training voucher programs; housing costs and available housing vouchers; youth and young adult unemployment and available mental health services.

B. Analysis

Analysis for the implementation study, which will take place over multiple years, will focus on all components of the Pathways service model and comparison services and the constructs delineated in the conceptual framework. Below, we describe our approach to analyzing data from the sources described above. We then describe how we will address the study’s research questions and report study findings.

1. Site visit data

We will analyze qualitative data from visits to Pathways sites to describe factors that contributed to or inhibited implementation and youth and young adults’ responsiveness to Pathways. We will analyze qualitative data from visits to comparison sites to describe the services offered to youth and young adults. We will use a template analysis approach to code and organize data collected during the site visits. Template analysis uses a coding template (or codebook) to balance the structure involved in using a framework for data analysis with the flexibility necessary to adapt the codebook to the study context (King 2012).

After each round of site visits and check-ins, we will systematically code the data, using the components of the Pathways service model and CFIR. The codes we develop to organize data by individual Pathways components will reflect the components of the Pathways service model, described in Chapter 1. We will use these component codes to organize data on the various Pathways components being implemented. Coding the individual service model components will enable us to describe the range of services offered to youth and young adults in the comparison sites and to assess the facilitators of and barriers to implementing each distinct component in the Pathways sites. The CFIR codes will be different from the component codes in that they are theoretical and will require the coder to interpret the data and apply the CFIR code that reflects the facilitator or barrier being described (Sinkovics and Alfoldi 2012). The CFIR codes will reflect the CFIR constructs described in Exhibit II.3. During initial coding, we will adapt the CFIR codes to the Pathways context and remove from the codebook any CFIR codes that are not reflected in the data. We will adapt the CFIR codes for both rounds of analysis, because the facilitators and barriers that emerge during initial implementation may be different from the facilitators and barriers that emerge during full implementation, when we expect the service model to be relatively more stable.

To ensure the coders judiciously apply the fewest codes possible when interpreting the meaning of each data segment, we will use the codebook to guide coders through three decisions for each data segment (Mason 2002).² First, the coder will decide which Pathways component is being discussed and assign the appropriate component code. Second, the coder will identify which one of the five CFIR domains is reflected in the principal implementation theme in the data (for example, a characteristic of the program component versus a characteristic of the service provider organization). Third, the coder will determine which CFIR code within the identified domain is reflected in the data segment and assign the appropriate code. CFIR domains and examples of CFIR constructs are in Exhibit II.3. We will include a participant responsiveness code to capture both youth and youth adults' attitudes toward services or their understanding of Pathways services shared during focus groups and Navigators' perceptions of youth and young adults' responsiveness and engagement in Pathways services shared during interviews.

In the initial stages of coding, the four members of the study team will together review interview transcripts and code data. During this process, the team will refine code definitions, develop coding rules, and resolve disagreements to achieve consistency in their application of the codes to the data. Then, to ensure reliability across coders, each study team member will independently code a transcript. The team will then meet to compare codes applied to the transcript to identify and resolve discrepancies. The team will continue this process until consistency in the application of codes across coders is achieved. After achieving consistency in applying codes to the data, we will divide the remaining transcripts among two team members; after each codes five different transcripts, the team will code the same sixth transcript independently and meet to discuss and resolve coding discrepancies to ensure ongoing reliability in coding.

To analyze the coded data, we will generate reports from NVivo for each collaborating site in the implementation study. These reports will include all the data segments coded for each combination of model component and CFIR code. We will develop analytic summaries for each combination of model component and CFIR code for each of the six Pathways sites and determine whether the CFIR constructs exerted negative, positive, or neutral influence on implementation. We will then populate analytic matrices with these summaries for cross-case analysis of patterns of facilitators and barriers relating to each model component (Miles and Huberman 1994). This approach supported our coding and analysis in

² A data segment contains an interview question and response.

the YARH-2 process study, and we found that it balanced the structure of a framework to guide data analysis with the flexibility necessary to adapt our coding and analysis to the study context.

2. Program documents data

We will analyze program documents by developing a document review protocol to guide systematic review of information from these documents. This protocol will ensure that the study team uses a consistent, comprehensive approach to extracting information to inform the study. We will use the results of this document review to tailor interview guides and validate data collected through site visits.

3. PMIS data

We will analyze quantitative data from PMIS to describe patterns in service delivery and fidelity to the Pathways model. To prepare the data for analysis, we will check the data for invalid character and numeric data values, examine frequencies and means for variables to identify outliers, and assess the extent of missing data. If missing data are not extensive, we will analyze the data and note what is missing. If we have a large amount of missing data for a particular site or a particular data source, which may require a change to the analytic plan, we will work with ACF to determine an appropriate strategy for handling the data. For example, if missing data are pervasive, we could forgo analyzing data elements for certain sites or not analyze certain data elements.

To facilitate data analysis, we will create variables that address the implementation study's research questions. For example, we can use attendance information recorded by Navigators to construct a variable that counts the total number of meetings that each youth or young adult attended. Though all quantitative data for this study will be obtained from PMIS, data sources within PMIS vary. For instance, PMIS contains case management data about service delivery as well as youth and young adults' responses to the Working Alliance Inventory (WAI). The WAI can be organized into three domains that are relevant to engaging youth and young adults in a coach-like way and establishing goals. These domains are: (1) *bonding*, which refers to practitioner and client perceptions regarding each other in terms of liking each other, confidence in their ability to do their job or make the changes needed, mutual appreciation, and trust; (2) *tasking*, which refers to practitioner and client perceptions of what needs to happen to reach goals, establish relative priorities, and if necessary, obtain a new perspective on how to proceed; and (3) *goal setting*, which refers to practitioner and client perceptions of their agreement on goals, ability to develop mutual goals, and agreement on the change needed to achieve program objectives. Construction of variables will vary, depending on a variable's purpose and the data source. Variables may combine several items into a scale, aggregate attendance data from a set time period, or compare responses to identify a level of agreement.

We will use extracts from PMIS to present descriptive statistics on service delivery and fidelity in the Pathways sites in the implementation study sample. We will then compare these results across the intervention sites to assess similarities and differences. The Pathways model does not have established fidelity benchmarks. We anticipate the findings from our analysis of fidelity will inform appropriate fidelity benchmarks. As fidelity benchmarks are established, we will draw conclusions about the extent to which services were delivered with fidelity. In Exhibit III.4, we present the PMIS data that we will use to assess fidelity for the components of the Pathways model that we do not expect to vary by site or participant, and indicate how these data align with the range of fidelity constructs in the conceptual framework. In Exhibit III.5, we present the PMIS data that we will use to describe service receipt for the peripheral components of the Pathways model that we do expect to vary by site or participant.

Exhibit III.4. Pathways components, fidelity measures, and constructs

Pathways component	Fidelity measure	Fidelity construct			
		Content	Coverage	Frequency	Duration
Enrolling youth and young adults	Percent of eligible youth and young adults who enroll in Pathways		X		
Screening and consent	Number of youth and young adults screened		X		
	Percent of youth and young adults screened into Pathways		X		
Engaging youth and young adults in a coach-like way	Frequency of meetings between youth or young adult and Navigator			X	
	Frequency of Navigator-youth or young adult contact			X	
	Frequency of Navigator-youth or young adult communication, by mode of communication: in-person, phone, e-mail, text, Skype/Web video			X	
	Duration of communication between youth or young adult and Navigator				X
	Duration of time youth or young adult is enrolled in Pathways				X
	Percent of youth and young adults who report “always” or “very often” that as a result of meetings with the Navigator, they are clearer as to how they might be able to prepare for the future	X			
	Percent of youth and young adults who report “always” or “very often” that what they are doing with their Navigator gives them new ways of looking at how they can prepare for the future	X			
	Percent of youth and young adults who report “always” or “very often” that they believe their Navigator cares about them	X			
	Percent of youth and young adults who report that they “always” or “very often” feel that they work together with their Navigator on setting goals to help them prepare for the future	X			
	Percent of youth and young adults who report that they “always” or “very often” feel that “[Navigator] and I respect each other”	X			
	Percent of youth and young adults who report that they “always” or “very often” feel that “[Navigator] and I are working towards mutually agreed upon goals”	X			
	Percent of youth and young adults who report “always” or “very often” they feel that their Navigator appreciates them	X			
	Percent of youth and young adults who report that they “always” or “very often” feel that “[Navigator] and I agree on what is important for me to work on”	X			
	Percent of youth and young adults who report “always” or “very often” that their Navigator “cares about me even when I do things that they do not approve of”	X			
	Percent of youth and young adults who report “always” or “very often” that “I feel that the things I do in my work with my Navigator will help me to make changes that will help me prepare for the future”	X			
	Percent of youth and young adults who “always” or “very often” feel that they and their Navigator have “a shared understanding of what I need to do to prepare for the future”	X			
Percent of youth and young adults who report that they “always” or “very often” feel that “I think we’re doing the right things to prepare me for the future”	X				
Supporting youth and young adults during periods of crisis	Percent of case management contacts that were emergency contacts		X		
Establishing goals	Percent of youth and young adults who set at least two goals related to at least one outcome area		X		

		Fidelity construct			
		Content	Coverage	Frequency	Duration
Pathways component	Fidelity measure				
Case planning and assessing needs	Percent of youth and young adults with Youth Connection Scale completed within 60 days of enrollment		X		
	Percent of youth and young adults who completed the Working Alliance Inventory after four to six meetings with the Navigator		X		

Exhibit III.5. Service receipt measures for Pathways peripheral components

Pathways peripheral component	Service receipt measure
Securing and maintaining stable housing	Percent of youth and young adults who discussed housing with their Navigator
	Of the youth and young adults who discussed housing with their Navigator, the percent who discussed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General housing situation • Identifying housing options • Accessing housing • Searching for housing • Creating housing budget • Family unification voucher • Signing a lease • Other
Providing small-scale financial assistance	Percent of youth and young adults who received: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation assistance • Money for work clothes or tools • Money for rent or housing • Money for school-related fees • Money for employment training fees
	Percent of youth and young adults who received any assistance
Referring youth or young adults to appropriate service agencies	Percent of youth and young adults who received a referral to the following services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health services (medical) • Mental health services (non-medical, including emotional and mental health services) • Legal services • Financial literacy services • Education (post-secondary) • Education (GED or high school) • Employment (job referral) • Employment agency (job search services) • Employment training (job training/career pathways) • Housing • Public benefits
	Percent of youth and young adults who received a referral to any type of service
Supporting youth or young adults' involvement in permanency and community roundtables	Percent of youth and young adults who attended a Permanency or Community Roundtable
	Percent of youth and young adults who participated in a permanency pact
Advancing permanency	Percent of youth with Youth Connections Scale completed within 60 days of enrollment

GED = General Educational Development

4. County characteristics data

We will analyze information about county characteristics collected during interviews with the site visit data, using the template analysis approach described previously. We will analyze county-level descriptive

statistics to summarize the policy and service environment within each county and to identify variation in the environment across counties.

C. Addressing research questions

We will describe narratively and in tables or other graphics our findings and supporting evidence for each research question, organized by the five research topics. The findings for each research question are critical for interpreting the impact study results and for understanding the facilitators of and barriers to Pathways implementation. Below we describe how we will report on each research topic.

1. Differences between the Pathways service model and comparison services.

The degree to which an intervention condition and a comparison condition differ lays a foundation for understanding intervention impacts. The implementation study’s first research question focuses on describing the ways that components of the Pathways service model differ from services offered to youth and young adults in the comparison group. We will describe the Pathways components, including the intended content, coverage, frequency of exposure, and duration of exposure, and the ways in which the Pathways service model is distinct from comparison services.

2. Facilitators of and barriers to Pathway’s implementation.

Describing the implementation experience of stakeholders involved in delivering an intervention is central to understanding the implementation process and lessons learned for future implementation efforts. The implementation study includes questions about the implementation experiences of the Pathways leadership and Navigators. We will describe the factors that influenced implementation of individual Pathways components within and across Pathways sites. Exhibit III.6 provides an illustrative table shell for how we will present a comparison of the facilitators and barriers that emerged early during the initial implementation of Pathways and those that emerged during full implementation, when we expect that Pathways services will be relatively stable.

Exhibit III.6. Illustrative table shell for presenting facilitators and barriers that emerged at different stages of implementation

CFIR domain	Initial implementation	Full implementation
Characteristics of the Pathways service model		
Characteristics of the service and policy context in which Pathways services are delivered		
Characteristics of the organizations delivering Pathways		
Characteristics of the staff and leadership involved in implementing Pathways		
Strategies and supports intended to facilitate Pathways implementation		

CFIR = Consolidated framework for implementation research.

3. Fidelity to the Pathways service model.

Understanding the extent to which an intervention was implemented with fidelity to the intervention model is another critical element of understanding intervention impacts. The extent to which an intervention is implemented with fidelity can have a direct impact on the extent to which the intervention achieves its anticipated outcomes. We will describe variation in levels of fidelity across Pathways sites and assess links between facilitators of and barriers to implementation and levels of fidelity. We will also describe facilitators and barriers that contributed to achieving and sustaining fidelity.

4. The service, resource, and policy environment in which Pathways and comparison services were delivered.

Understanding the service, resource, and policy environment in which an intervention is implemented helps in understanding intervention impacts, as it elucidates factors that may contribute to or inhibit the detection of impacts outside the control of the study. We will describe the services and resources that are generally available to youth and young adults in each collaborative and comparison site, as well as the child welfare policies that might affect youth and young adults in the evaluation sample.

5. Youth and young adults' responsiveness to the Pathways service model

Understanding participant responsiveness with an intervention can help contextualize impact study findings and offer lessons for future implementation efforts. Participants' responsiveness to an intervention, as indicated through participation rates and reported satisfaction, can offer insight into the need for modifications to the intervention, as well as into the reasons an intervention was or was not effective. We will also describe youth and young adults' characteristics, strategies used to engage youth and young adults in Pathways, and the services delivered to youth and young adults in Pathways.

D. Reporting approach

Mathematica and ACF will develop a plan for reporting implementation study findings. We propose to write two separate reports, both describing findings for each implementation study research topic. The first report will include interim findings about initial implementation based on the first round of site visits and early PMIS data. The interim findings could help shape the final set of site visits. In the second report, we will present summative findings about factors that influenced sites' implementation of the Pathways service model in the later stages of implementation, when we would expect service delivery to be relatively stable. The summative findings will support interpretation of Pathway's impacts on outcomes included in the final impact study report.

Throughout the development of reports, we will engage experts and stakeholders in conversation regarding dissemination planning and initial findings. Based on these discussions, our plans regarding reporting are subject to change to address dissemination needs in the field.

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Appendix A

Full List of Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research Constructs

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CFIR domain (bolded) CFIR construct (un-bolded)	Definition adapted for Pathways
Intervention characteristics	Characteristics of the Pathways service model
Intervention source	Perception of whether the intervention is externally or internally developed
Evidence strength and quality	Perception of the quality and validity of evidence supporting the respondent's belief that the intervention will have desired outcomes
Relative advantage	Perception of the advantage of implementing Pathways versus an alternative intervention or maintaining the status quo
Adaptability	Perception of the degree to which sites can adapt or tailor the intervention to meet local needs
Trialability	Perception of the ability to test the intervention on a small scale in the implementing organization
Complexity	Perception of the difficulty of implementing Pathways, reflected by duration, scope, disruptiveness, and number of steps, including iterations, required for implementation
Design quality and packaging	Perception of how well Pathways is presented, assembled, and organized for implementation
Cost	Perception of costs associated with implementing the intervention
Outer setting	Characteristics of the service and policy contexts in which Pathways services are delivered
Youth needs and resources	Youth and young adults' needs and the extent to which facilitators of and barriers to meeting those needs are known and prioritized by the organization delivering Pathways
Connection to (external) organizations	The degree to which the implementing entity networks with other external organizations
Peer pressure	Mimetic or competitive pressure to implement an intervention; typically because most or other key peer or competing organizations have already implemented or in a bid for a competitive edge
External Policy & Incentives	A broad construct that includes external strategies to spread interventions including policy and regulations (governmental or other central entity), external mandates, recommendations and guidelines, pay-for-performance, collaboratives, and public or benchmark reporting.
Inner setting	Characteristics of the organization delivering Pathways services
Structural Characteristics	The social architecture, age, maturity, and size of an organization.
Networks and communications	The nature and quality of social networks, and formal and informal communications within the organization
Implementation climate	The absorptive capacity for change, shared receptivity of stakeholders to Pathways, and the extent to which use of Pathways is rewarded and supported within the organization; implementation climate includes six subconstructs: tension for change, compatibility, relative priority, organizational incentives and rewards, goals and feedback, and learning climate
Readiness for implementation	Tangible and immediate indicators of organizational commitment to Pathways; readiness for implementation includes three subconstructs: leadership engagement, available resources, and access to knowledge and information
Characteristics of individuals	Characteristics of staff and leadership involved in delivering Pathways services
Knowledge and beliefs about the intervention	Individual stakeholder's attitudes toward and value placed on Pathways as well as familiarity with facts, truths, and principles related to the intervention
Other personal attributes	Other personal traits, such as tolerance of ambiguity, intellectual ability, motivation, values, competence, capacity, and learning style

CFIR domain (bolded)	Definition adapted for Pathways
CFIR construct (un-bolded)	
Individual stage of change	Characterization of the phase an individual is in, as he or she progresses toward skilled, enthusiastic, and sustained use of the intervention
Individual Identification with Organization	A broad construct related to how individuals perceive the organization and their relationship and degree of commitment with that organization
Other Personal Attributes	A broad construct to include other personal traits such as tolerance of ambiguity, intellectual ability, motivation, values, competence, capacity, and learning style
Implementation process	Strategies and supports intended to facilitate Pathways implementation
Planning	The degree to which a scheme or method of behavior and tasks for implementing an intervention are developed in advance and the quality of those schemes or methods.
Engaging	Attracting and involving appropriate stakeholders in the implementation and use of the intervention; engaging includes four subconstructs: opinion leaders, formally appointed internal implementation leaders, champions, and external change agents
Executing	Carrying out or accomplishing the implementation according to plan
Reflecting and evaluating	Quantitative and qualitative feedback about the progress and quality of implementation accompanied with regular personal and team debriefing about progress and experience; also referred to as continuous quality improvement

Source: Damschroder et al. (2009).

Appendix B

Interview, Check-in, and Focus Group Guides

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Appendix B1

Interview Guide for Pathway Sites

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1. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PATHWAYS SITES

Introductory script

Thank you for your time and for agreeing to participate in this interview. I'm _____, and I work for Mathematica, an independent social policy research company.

We are conducting a study for the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The goal is to understand how [name of implementing site] is delivering Pathways to Success services. We want to understand the services [name of agency] is delivering and the factors that helped or hindered [name of agency]'s success in delivering those services to youth.

I would like to talk with you about your experience with and perceptions of Pathways. Your responses will be kept private to the extent permitted by law and used only for research purposes. I will not share your comments with anyone other than members of the Mathematica study team. Our team will use your responses, along with other information we collect about Pathways, to help describe what influenced your experience delivering services under Pathways. When we report information from this study to OPRE and ACF, we will not attribute any comments to you or your organization, and no individuals will be quoted by name.

In the future, information from this study may be securely shared with qualified individuals to help learn more about the experiences of young adults who have been in foster care. The information that is shared will be de-identified, meaning it would only include a study ID number and not your name.

All of my questions are open-ended. There are no right or wrong answers. You may choose not to answer any questions you don't want to answer. You are the expert on your experience with the program, and I would like to learn from you during the discussion.

Your participation in this discussion is voluntary. Being part of this discussion is up to you, and it will not affect your employment. Nothing you share will be shared with your employer.

I would like to record this discussion. We will transcribe the recording to help summarize information from all the interviews we are conducting. No one besides the transcription service and members of the Mathematica study team will have access to or listen to the recording. If you want to say anything that you do *not* want recorded, please let me know, and I will be glad to pause the recorder.

Do you have any concerns about being part of this interview or to my recording our discussion?

We have many topics to cover. At times, I may need to move the conversation along to be sure we cover everything. The discussion will last no more than one hour.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB control number for this collection is 0970-XXXX, and it expires XX/XX/20XX.

If you would like more information about this study, please contact Dr. M.C. Bradley at Mathematica at 855-888-2092 or by email at SYSIL@mathematica-mpr.com.

Do you have any questions before I turn on the recorder?

Warm-Up

To start, would you please describe your role/involvement in Pathways to Success?

[Follow-up]

How long have you been in that role?

How long have you been involved in the Pathways to Success program?

Recruitment and enrollment

[These questions will be asked of leadership, supervisors, and navigators]

I'd like to start with questions about how youth get to Pathways to Success.

0) [Round 1] Can you walk me through how you identify youth who are potentially eligible for Pathways? [Round 2] In the past year, have you made any changes to how you identify youth who are potentially eligible for Pathways? If yes, what are those changes?

a) [Round 1] How do you identify youth?

b) What helps to make the identification process work well?

c) What has been challenging about identifying youth (probe on challenges reaching the target population)

How did you address/overcome this challenge?

1) [Round 1] Now can you tell me about your role in identifying potentially eligible youth for risk factors for homelessness? [Round 2] In the past year, have you made any changes to how you identify potentially eligible youth for risk factors for homelessness? If yes, what are those changes?

a) What helps to make the screening process work well?

b) What has been challenging about screening youth for enrollment (probe on challenges enrolling the target population)?

How did you address/overcome this challenge?

c) How have youth responded to the screening assessment?

2) [Round 1] Once you identify eligible youth, what is the enrollment process like? [Round 2] In the past year, have you made any changes to the enrollment process? If yes, what are those changes?

a) [Round 1] What are the steps of the enrollment process?

b) What helps to make the enrollment process work well?

c) What has been challenging about the enrollment process?

How did you address/overcome these challenges?

3) What have been youths' reactions to the Pathways enrollment process?

a) [Round 1] How do you present youth with the opportunity to enroll in Pathways?

b) What has helped with successful enrollment?

c) Are there points at which youth drop out of the enrollment process? If so, why?

Pathways service components

[These questions will be asked of navigators]

Now I want to talk to you about the components of the Pathways to Success program. First, I will ask about the core components of Pathways to Success. By core components, I mean the Pathways services and supports that are provided to all enrolled youth. Then I will ask about other components that might not be provided to all youth.

- 5) **Overall, how is Pathways going?**
- 6) **Please tell me about engaging youth in a coach-like way. How is that going?**
 - a) What does it mean to you to engage youth in a coach-like way?
 - b) What has helped with engaging youth in a coach-like way?
 - c) What has been challenging about engaging youth in this way?
 - i) How did you address/overcome [each challenge]?
 - d) How have youth responded to working with Navigators in a coach-like way? *[Probe on factors that facilitate and challenge youth in working with navigators in a coach-like way.]*
- 7) **Please tell me about helping youth establish goals. How is that going?**
 - a) What has helped you support youth to establish goals?
 - b) What has been challenging about helping youth establish goals?
 - i) How did you address/overcome [each challenge]?
 - c) How have youth responded to establishing goals? *[Probe on factors that facilitate and challenge youth in developing goals.]*
- 8) **Next, will you please tell me about how you support youth who are in crisis situations (such as their immediate safety is threatened and/or housing instability)?** *[Ask for examples of crisis situations that Pathways youth have brought to their attention]*
 - a) What has helped Navigators provide support to youth who are in crisis?
 - b) What has been challenging about providing support to youth who are in crisis?
 - i) How did you address/overcome [each challenge]?
 - c) How have youth responded to the support that is provided to them when they are in crisis?
- 9) **Next, I have some questions about the assessment tools you may use to gather information about youth for case planning purposes.** *[Ask for examples of assessment tools, such as the Youth Connections Scale. Navigators may use other evidence-based assessment tools.]*
 - a) What has helped to complete the assessments or use this information to support youth?
 - b) What has been challenging about completing the assessments or using information from the assessments to support youth?
 - i) How did you address/overcome [each challenge]?
 - c) How have youth responded to the assessments?

Now, I have questions about the other services and supports that might not be provided to all youth.

- 10) **Have you worked with youth to secure and maintain housing? If yes, how is that going?** *[Ask for examples of working with youth to secure and maintain safe and stable housing.]*
 - a) What has helped to support youth in securing and maintaining housing?
 - b) What has been challenging in working with you to secure and maintain housing?
 - i) How have you addressed/overcome [each challenge]?
 - c) How have youth responded to your working with them to secure and maintain housing?

- 11) Have you provided youth with “flexible funds”? If yes, how is that going?** *[Ask for examples of when they provided funds or resources to youth and the reasons for providing these resources.]*
- What has helped to you to effectively use flex funds?
 - What has been challenging about using flex funds?
 - How did you address/overcome [each challenge]?
 - How have youth responded to receiving the flex funds or resources paid for with flex funds?
- 12) Have you referred youth to other services? If yes, how is that going?** *[Ask for examples of when they referred youth to other services, the services to which they referred youth, and the reasons for the referral.]*
- What has helped make referring youth to other services successful?
 - What has been challenging about referring youth to other services?
 - How did you address/overcome [each challenge]?
 - How have youth responded to referrals to other services?
- 13) Have you supported youth to plan or participate in county-led Permanency Roundtables (PRT) or Community Roundtables (CRT)?** *[Ask for examples of how they have supported youth with Permanency/Community Roundtables.]*
- What has helped youth to plan or participate in roundtables?
 - What has been challenging about roundtables?
 - How did you address/overcome [each challenge]?
 - How have youth responded to the roundtables?
- 14) Have you helped youth who are graduating from Pathways build connections with other supports in the community that they can rely on after they graduate from Pathways?** *[Ask for examples of community supports to which they have helped youth build connections.]*
- What has helped to make these connections and transitions successful?
 - What has been challenging about identifying connections and transitioning youth to these supports?
 - How did you address/overcome [each challenge]?
 - How have youth responded to your attempts to connect them to other supports in the community?
- 15) Now, thinking about all the services and supports provided to youth enrolled in Pathways, how do you determine the services that are provided to each youth?** *[Ask for examples, and probe on barriers and facilitators.]*

Partnerships that support Pathways

[These questions will be asked of leadership, supervisors, and navigators.]

- 16) [Round 1] Who are the organizations that you partner with to provide Pathways services? [Round 2] In the past year, have the organizations that you partner with to provide Pathways services changed? If yes, how?**
- Which services do the partner organizations provide?
 - How have these partnerships improved your ability to serve Pathways youth?
 - What factors help facilitate a good relationship between you and your partners?
 - Have you experienced any challenges with your partners?
 - If so, can you describe these challenges?
 - Can you describe how [each challenge] has been overcome?

Service, resource, and policy context

[These questions will be asked of leadership, supervisors, and navigators, unless indicated.]

Next, I'd like to speak with you about the services and resources that are generally available to youth in this area.

- 17) **[Round 1] First, what are some of the main service needs of the youth enrolled in Pathways? [Round 2] In the past year, have the main service needs of the youth enrolled in Pathways changed?** *[Ask for examples, affordable housing, mental health counseling, access to transportation.]*
- 18) **[Round 1] Now that you've described the needs of youth, can you describe the extent to which Pathways meets these needs? [Round 2] In the past year, has anything changed about the how Pathways meets the needs of youth? If yes, how?**
- 19) **What needs do youth have that are not being met by Pathways?**
 - a) In your opinion, why is Pathways to Success unable to meet these needs?
 - b) What changes would be needed to meet these needs?
- 20) *[Leadership only]* **[Round 1] How do federal, state, or local policies affect how your agency serves youth?** *[Ask for examples.]*
 - a) Do [policies/regulations] make it easier to meet the needs of youth? If so, how?
 - b) Do [policies/regulations] make it challenging to meet the needs of youth? If so, how?
 - c) Do [policies/regulations] result in gaps in services for youth? If so, what are the gaps?

Implementation experience

[These questions will be asked of leadership, supervisors, and navigators, unless indicated.]

Now I'm going to ask you about your experiences putting Pathways to Success into operation and the factors that have contributed to or inhibited implementation.

- 21) *[Leadership/supervisors only]* **[Round 1] How did you work with [state-level Pathways leadership] to prepare for Pathways implementation?**
 - a) What went well in working with [state-level Pathways leadership] to prepare for Pathways implementation?
 - b) What was challenging about working with [state-level Pathways leadership] to prepare to implement Pathways?
- 22) *[Leadership/supervisors only]* **[Round 1] How do you staff Pathways in [this agency]? [Round 2] In the past year, have you made any changes to how you staff Pathways in [this agency]? If yes, what are the changes?**
 - a) **[Round 1]** Who is responsible for providing direct services to youth?
 - i. How many staff provide services to Pathways to Success youth?
 - ii. How many staff work full time? Part-time?
- 23) *[Leadership/supervisors only]* **[Round 1] Will you tell me about your experiences with recruiting and preparing/training staff (Navigators) to support Pathways? [Round 2] Have you made any changes to how you recruit and train staff (Navigators) to support Pathways?**
 - a) What went well in your efforts to hire and prepare/train Navigators to support Pathways to Success?
 - b) What was challenging about hiring and preparing/training Navigators to support Pathways to Success?

- 24) Has there been turnover within your organization that has affected the operation of Pathways?**
- i) If so, how have you dealt with this turnover?
 - ii) In general, what factors help to retain staff?
 - iii) [If not addressed] What are some of the reasons that staff turnover has occurred?

Program resources

[These questions will be asked of leadership in agencies implementing Pathways]

- 25) What are the primary resources needed to implement Pathways?** *[Probe on staff, space, materials, financial resources, etc.]*
- a) Have you experienced any challenges obtaining the resource needed for implementation?

- 26) What funding sources are used to provide financial incentives to youth for participation?**

Continuous quality improvement

[These questions will be asked of leadership, supervisors, and navigators]

- 27) [Round 1] How, if at all, do you monitor the implementation of Pathways? [Round 2] In the past year, have you made any changes to how you monitor the implementation of Pathways? If yes, what are the changes?**
- a) Did you identify implementation goals? If so, how?
 - i) Who is responsible for setting and monitoring goals?
 - b) How do you monitor progress toward these goals?
 - i) Have you identified benchmarks? If so, what benchmarks have you identified?
 - ii) How often do you review progress toward goals?
- 28) Have you made changes to the Pathways model as a result of monitoring implementation?**
- i) If so, what changes were made?
 - ii) How did you measure change?
 - iii) If so, how has performance changed in light of these changes?
- 29) What has facilitated your ability to monitor implementation?**
- 30) What challenges have you experienced monitoring implementation?**

Wrap-up

Is there anything else you would like to share about Pathways to Success that we have not discussed?

Appendix B2

Interview Guide for Comparison Sites

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2. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COMPARISON SITES

Introductory script

Thank you for your time and for agreeing to participate in this interview. I'm _____, and I work for Mathematica, an independent social policy research company.

We are conducting a study for the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The goal is to understand how [name of agency] implemented the Chafee Foster Care Program. We want to understand the services the Chafee Foster Care Program is delivering and the factors that helped or hindered [name of agency]'s success in delivering those services to youth.

I would like to talk with you about your experience with and perceptions of the Chafee Foster Care Program. Your responses will be kept private to the extent permitted by law and used only for research purposes. I will not share your comments with anyone other than members of the Mathematica study team. Our team will use your responses, along with other information we collect about the Chafee Foster Care Program, to help describe the services delivered. When we report information from this study to OPRE and ACF, we will not attribute any comments to you or your organization, and no individuals will be quoted by name.

In the future, information from this study may be securely shared with qualified individuals to help learn more about the experiences of young adults who have been in foster care. The information that is shared will be de-identified, meaning it would only include a study ID number and not your name.

All of my questions are open-ended. There are no right or wrong answers. You may choose not to answer any questions you don't want to answer. You are the expert on your experience with the program, and I would like to learn from you during the discussion.

Your participation in this discussion is voluntary. Being part of this discussion is up to you, and it will not affect your employment. Nothing you share will be shared with your employer.

I would like to record this discussion. We will transcribe the recording to help summarize information from all the interviews we are conducting. No one besides the transcription service and members of the Mathematica study team will have access to or listen to the recording. If you want to say anything that you do *not* want recorded, please let me know, and I will be glad to pause the recorder.

Do you have any concerns about being part of this interview or to my recording our discussion?

We have many topics to cover. At times, I may need to move the conversation along to be sure we cover everything. The discussion will last no more than one hour, and we will not take any formal breaks. Please feel free to get up at any time if you need to.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB control number for this collection is 0970-XXXX, and it expires XX/XX/20XX.

If you would like more information about this study, please contact Dr. M.C. Bradley at Mathematica at 855-888-2092 or by email at SYSIL@mathematica-mpr.com.

Do you have any questions before I turn on the recorder?

Warm-Up

To start, would you please describe your role/involvement at [name of agency]?

[Follow-up]

How long have you been in that role?

Design of comparison services

[These questions will be asked of leadership, supervisors, and case managers.]

Now I have some questions about the services that you provide to youth, especially through the Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood.

- 1) **[Round 1] Can you walk me through how you enroll youth who receive Chafee Foster Care Program services? [Round 2] In the past year, have you made any changes to how you enroll youth who received Chafee Foster Care Program services? If yes, what are the changes?**
 - a) [Round 1] How do you identify youth?
 - i) What does [agency] do to reach out to youth?
 - ii) What organizations refer youth to [agency]?
 - iii) How do youth get recruited and enrolled into the program?
 - b) [Round 1] What is the process for screening youth for eligibility to receive Chafee Foster Care Program services?
 - i) Are there specific eligibility criteria youth need to meet in order to receive program services?

- 2) **[Round 1] Can you describe the services offered to youth under the Chafee Foster Care Program? [Round 2] In the past year, have you made any changes to the services offered to youth under the Chafee Foster Care Program? If yes, what are the changes?**

[For each service listed below, probe on the following to generate a detailed narrative about the service/support provided]

- i) What does the service entail?
- ii) Who provides the service?
- iii) How often does each youth receive the service? (i.e., hours)
- iv) For how long does each youth receive the service?
-) What services are provided to youth by your agency?
 - i) Meeting with youth one on one?
 - ii) Helping youth establish goals?
 - iii) Helping youth when they are having an emergency?
 - iv) Helping youth find stable housing?
 - v) Providing financial support to youth?
 - vi) Organizing roundtables or meetings with others to support youth in achieving their goals?
 - vii) Connecting youth with other services and supports?
 - viii) Other services?

- 3) **[Round 1] How do you determine the services that are provided to each youth? [Round 2] In the past year, have you made any changes to how you determine the services that are provided to each youth? If yes, what are the changes?**
 - a) [Round 1] What is the process for assessing youth needs?
- 4) **[Round 1] How do you determine which staff provide services to youth? [Round 2] In the past year, have you made any changes to how you determine which staff provide services to youth? If yes, what are the changes?**
 - a) [Round 1] What criteria do you use to assign youth to staff?
 - b) [Round 1] Do certain staff only provide certain services?
 - i) If so, which staff provide which services?
 - ii) If so, how do you determine which staff provide which services?
 - c) [Round 1] What is the average caseload for staff?
- 5) **[Round 1] Can you describe the process for referring youth to other services? [Ask for examples.] [Round 2] In the past year, have you made any changes to the process for referring youth to other services?**
 - a) [Round 1] How do you identify the need to refer youth to other services?
 - b) [Round 1] How do connect youth with other services (youth's initiative, referral, warm hand-off, etc.)?
 - c) [Round 1] To what extent do you communicate with external service providers about youth's progress?
- 6) **Who are the organizations that you partner with to provide services?**
 - a) How long have these partnerships been in place?
 - b) Which services do the partner organizations provide?

Service, resource, and policy context

[These questions will be asked of leadership, supervisors, and case managers.]

Next, I'd like to speak with you about the services and resources that are generally available to youth in this area, especially youth and young adults transitioning out of foster care.

- 7) **[Round 1] First, what are some of the main service needs of the youth and young adults you serve who are transitioning out of foster care (for example, affordable housing, mental health counseling, access to transportation)? [Round 2] In the past year, have the main services needs of youth and young adults who are transitioning out of foster care changed? If yes, how?**
- 8) **[Round 1] Now that you've described the needs of youth, can you describe the extent to which you believe your agency and other organizations in your area are able to meet these needs? [Round 2] In the past year, has anything changed about the how your agency or other services in the area meet the needs of youth? If yes, how?**
- 9) **What are the needs that youth have that are not being met, if any?**
 - a) What services, if any, are needed to fill those gaps?

[These questions will be asked of leadership in agencies delivering comparison services]

Finally, I'd like to talk with you about the key child welfare policies and regulations that affect youth in your area.

10) [Round 1] How do federal, state, or local policies affect how your agency serves youth who are transitioning out of foster care? [Ask for examples.]

- a) Do [policies/regulations] make it easier to meet the needs of youth? If so, how?
- b) Do [policies/regulations] make it challenging to meet the needs of youth? If so, how?
- c) Do [policies/regulations] result in gaps in services for youth? If so, what are the resulting gaps?

Appendix B3

Focus Group Discussion Guide for Pathway Youth

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3. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR PATHWAYS YOUTH

Introductory script

Thank you for taking the time to come to this discussion group today. I'm _____, and I work for Mathematica, a company that studies how programs like Pathways can improve peoples' lives.

We are conducting a study for the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

We want to spend the next 90 minutes talking about Pathways to understand how this program is working, whether it is making a difference in your life, and how to improve it for you and others. We would like to talk about your experience with the services, what motivates you to participate in the services, and if you are learning useful information.

Your responses will be kept private to the extent permitted by law and used only for research purposes. I will not share your comments with anyone other than the four members of the small Mathematica study team. We will use the information to describe your opinions, but we will not identify you by name or use your name in any information we share for our study.

In the future, information from this study may be securely shared with qualified individuals to help learn more about the experiences of young adults who have been in foster care. The information that is shared will be de-identified, meaning it would only include a study ID number and not your name.

All of my questions are open-ended. There are no right or wrong answers. Your participation is voluntary, and you can choose to not answer any questions. You are the expert on your experiences with the program, and I would like to learn from you during the discussion.

I would like to record this discussion. The recording will be transcribed to help summarize information from this discussion. No one besides the transcription service and members of the Mathematica study team will have access to or listen to the recording. If you want to say anything that you do *not* want recorded, please let me know, and I will be glad to pause the recorder. Do you have any objections to being part of this discussion or to my recording our discussion?

I hope to get your input on a number of topics during the hour and a half we have for this discussion. At times, I may need to move the conversation along to be sure we cover everything. You might have more to say about some topics than others, but I really want everyone to feel comfortable participating in the discussion. You can disagree, and that's okay. Please feel free to offer your opinion, whether positive or negative. Also, you may learn about other people's experiences and feelings during the course of our conversation, please do not share what is discussed in this conversation with others.

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If you would like more information about this study, please contact Dr. M.C. Bradley at Mathematica at 855-888-2092 or by email at SYSIL@mathematica-mpr.com.

Do you have any questions before I turn on the recorder?

Warm up

[Once the recorder is on] To start, will you please introduce yourselves?

-) **Please tell me your first name and how long you've been involved with Pathways.**
- a) **What do you think about Pathways (*let youth know that we are interested in their good and bad thoughts*)?**

Experiences with Pathways to Success

I would like to talk with you about your experiences with Pathways to Success in [locality]. [Note to interviewer: if youth interact with multiple service providers, ask these questions for each service received for Pathways to Success.]

First, I'd like to talk with you about your earliest experiences with Pathways to Success.

- 0) **How did you first learn about Pathways to Success?**
 - a) Who told you about Pathways to Success?
 - b) Do you remember what you thought about the program?
 - i) What did you think the program would help you do or achieve?
- 1) **Was your decision to participate easy or hard?**
 - a) What made it easy?
 - b) What made it hard?
- 2) **After you were told about Pathways to Success, was it easy to connect with [navigator]? Why or why not?**
 - a) Did you meet with your navigator?
 - b) Did you have to do anything to start getting services?
 - i) Were you told that you needed to provide any information or documentation about yourself or your situation before you could begin receiving services?
 - ii) Did you need to get permission from a parent or guardian to receive services? How did that go?

Next, I'd like to talk with you about your experiences working with your navigator.

- 3) **Overall, how is talking with your navigator?**
 - a) Is there anything that you like about talking with [names of navigators]?
 - b) Is there anything that you don't like about talking with [names of navigators]?
 - c) Probe on the extent to which youth feel the navigator listens to them, understands their needs, and helps them solve problems.
- 4) **How is it going with meeting with your navigator?**
 - a) How often do you meet?
 - b) Is there anything that you like about those meetings? What do you like?
 - c) Is there anything that you don't like about those meetings? What don't you like?
- 5) **Has anyone worked with their navigator to set goals? [Ask for examples.]**
 - a) Can you tell me how that is going?
 - i) Is there anything that you like about setting goals?
 - ii) Is there anything that you don't like about setting goals?

- 6) **Has anyone reached out to their navigator when they were having an emergency?** [*Ask for examples.*]
 - a) How did your navigator help you?
 - b) How could your navigator have been more helpful?
 - c) Has anyone had an emergency and not reached out to their navigator? Why not?

- 7) **Has anyone worked with their navigator to find a place to live?** [*Ask for examples.*]
 - a) How did your navigator help you?
 - b) How could your navigator have been more helpful?

- 8) **Has anyone received financial help from their navigator?** [*Ask for examples.*]
 - a) How did your navigator help you?
 - b) How could your navigator have been more helpful?

- 9) **Has anyone worked with their navigator to organize a roundtable, or a meeting with other people to talk about how to achieve your goals?**
 - a) How did your navigator help you?
 - b) How could your navigator have been more helpful?
 - c) What did you like about the meeting?
 - d) How could the meeting have been more helpful?

- 10) **Does your navigator help you connect with other services?** [*Ask for examples.*]
 - a) How did your navigator help you connect with the other service? [provided contact information, coaching, warm hand-off, etc.]
 - b) How could your navigator have been more helpful?
 - c) Was [services/supports] helpful to you? How were they helpful? Not helpful?
 - d) Are there any services or supports that you think would be helpful to you that your navigator does not help you with? If so, what are those services?

- 11) **What other supports have you received from your navigator?**
 - a) Are there any services or supports that you need but have not received? If so, what are those services and why have they not been provided to you?

- 12) **Overall, what do you find the most helpful, or like the most, about participating in Pathways?**

Wrap Up

Thank you for your time today. Before we end, I'd like to give you an opportunity to share final thoughts about Pathways to Success or changes that would improve the program.

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Appendix B4

Focus Group Discussion Guide for Comparison Youth

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4. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR COMPARISON YOUTH

Introductory script

Thank you for taking the time to come to this discussion group today. I'm _____, and I work for Mathematica, a company that studies how programs like the Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood can improve peoples' lives.

We are conducting a study for the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

We want to spend the next 90 minutes talking about services for youth and young adults in foster care in [name of locality]—especially services to help you prepare to live independently—to better understand how they work and your experiences. Your responses will be kept private to the extent permitted by law and used only for research purposes. I will not share your comments with anyone other than the four members of the small Mathematica study team. We will use the information to describe your opinions, but we will not identify you by name or use your name in any information we share for our study.

In the future, information from this study may be securely shared with qualified individuals to help learn more about the experiences of young adults who have been in foster care. The information that is shared will be de-identified, meaning it would only include a study ID number and not your name.

All of my questions are open-ended. There are no right or wrong answers. Your participation is voluntary, and you can choose to not answer any questions. You are the expert on your experiences with the program, and I would like to learn from you during the discussion.

I would like to record this discussion. The recording will be transcribed to help summarize information from this discussion. No one besides the transcription service and members of the Mathematica study team will have access to or listen to the recording. If you want to say anything that you do *not* want recorded, please let me know, and I will be glad to pause the recorder. Do you have any objections to being part of this discussion or to my recording our discussion?

I hope to get your input on a number of topics during the hour and a half we have for this discussion. At times, I may need to move the conversation along to be sure we cover everything. You might have more to say about some topics than others, but I really want everyone to feel comfortable participating in the discussion. You can disagree, and that's okay. Please feel free to offer your opinion, whether positive or negative. Also, you may learn about other people's experiences and feelings during the course of our conversation, please do not share what is discussed in this conversation with others.

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If you would like more information about this study, please contact Dr. M.C. Bradley at Mathematica at 855-888-2092 or by email at SYSIL@mathematica-mpr.com.

Do you have any questions before I turn on the recorder?

Warm up

[Once the recorder is on] To start, will you please introduce yourselves?

Please tell me your first name and how long you've lived in [locality].

Experiences with foster care

First, I would like to talk with you about your experiences with services that are intended to help you prepare to live independently.

- 1) **Can you tell me what services you've received that have helped you prepare to live independently?**
 - a) **What do you think about these services, good or bad?**

Next, I'd like to talk with you about the services available to you through the child welfare system and the services you have received.

- 2) **How is working with your caseworker or Chafee worker?**
 - a) Is there anything that you like about talking with your caseworker or Chafee worker?
 - b) Is there anything that you don't like about talking with your caseworker or Chafee worker?
[Probe on the extent to which youth feel the caseworker or Chafee worker listens to them, understands their needs, and helps them solve problems.]
- 3) **How often do you meet with your caseworker or Chafee worker?**
 - a) Is there anything that you like about those meetings? What do you like?
 - b) Is there anything that you don't like about those meetings? What don't you like?
- 4) **Has anyone worked with their caseworker or Chafee worker to set goals?** *[Ask for examples.]*
 - a) Is there anything that you like about setting goals with your caseworker or Chafee worker?
 - b) Is there anything that you don't like about setting goals?
- 5) **Has anyone reached out to their caseworker or Chafee worker when you were having an emergency? (ask for examples)**
 - a) How did your caseworker help you?
 - b) How could your caseworker have been more helpful?
 - c) Has anyone had an emergency and not reached out to their caseworker? Why not?
- 6) **Has anyone worked with their caseworker or Chafee worker to find a place to live?** *[Ask for examples.]*
 - a) How did your caseworker help you?
 - b) How could your caseworker have been more helpful?
- 7) **Has anyone received financial help from their caseworker or Chafee worker?** *[Ask for examples.]*
 - a) How did your caseworker or Chafee worker help you?
 - b) How could your caseworker or Chafee worker have been more helpful?

- 8) **Has anyone worked with their caseworker or Chafee worker to organize a roundtable, or meeting with others to talk about how to achieve your goals?**
 - a) How did your caseworker or Chafee worker help you?
 - b) How could your caseworker or Chafee worker have been more helpful?
 - c) What did you like about the meeting?
 - d) How could the meeting have been more helpful?

- 9) **Does your caseworker or Chafee worker help you connect with other services and supports?**
[Ask for examples.]
 - a) How did [caseworkers' names] help you connect with the other service? [provided contact information, coaching, warm hand-off, etc.]
 - b) How could your caseworker have been more helpful?
 - c) Was [services/supports] helpful to you? How were they helpful? Not helpful?
 - d) Are there any services or supports that you think would be helpful to you that your caseworker or Chafee worker hasn't helped you access? If so, what are those services?

- 10) **What other supports have you received from your caseworker or anyone else from [local agency]?**
 - a) Are there any services or supports that you need but have not received? If so, what are those services and why have they not been provided to you?

- 11) **Overall, do you feel your caseworker or Chafee worker has helped prepare you to live independently, or on your own? Why or why not?**

Wrap Up

Thank you for your time today. Before we end, I'd like to give you an opportunity to share final thoughts about your experiences with services in [locality] to help you prepare to live independently.

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Appendix B5

Check-In Guide For Pathways Sites

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5. CHECK-IN GUIDE FOR PATHWAYS SITES

Introductory script

Thank you for your time and for agreeing to participate in this interview. I'm _____, and I work for Mathematica, an independent social policy research company.

We are conducting a study for the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The goal is to understand how [name of agency] implemented the Chafee Foster Care Program. We want to understand the services the Chafee Foster Care Program is delivering and the factors that helped or hindered [name of agency]'s success in delivering those services to youth.

I would like to talk with you about your experience with and perceptions of Pathways. Your responses will be kept private to the extent permitted by law and used only for research purposes. I will not share your comments with anyone other than members of the Mathematica study team. Our team will use your responses, along with other information we collect about Pathways and the Chafee Foster Care Program, to help describe the services delivered. When we report information from this study to OPRE and ACF, we will not attribute any comments to you or your organization, and no individuals will be quoted by name.

In the future, information from this study may be securely shared with qualified individuals to help learn more about the experiences of young adults who have been in foster care. The information that is shared will be de-identified, meaning it would only include a study ID number and not your name.

All of my questions are open-ended. There are no right or wrong answers. You may choose not to answer any questions you don't want to answer. You are the expert on your experience with the program, and I would like to learn from you during the discussion.

Your participation in this discussion is voluntary. Being part of this discussion is up to you, and it will not affect your employment. Nothing you share will be shared with your employer.

I would like to record this discussion to ensure I have an accurate record of the discussion for my notes. No one besides the members of the Mathematica study team will have access to or listen to the recording. If you want to say anything that you do *not* want recorded, please let me know, and I will be glad to pause the recorder.

Do you have any concerns about being part of this interview or to my recording our discussion?

The discussion will last no more than 30 minutes.

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If you would like more information about this study, please contact Dr. M.C. Bradley at Mathematica at 855-888-2092 or by email at SYSIL@mathematica-mpr.com.

Do you have any questions before I turn on the recorder?

Design of comparison services

[These questions will be asked of leadership and supervisors]

Now I have some questions about the services that you provide to youth, especially through the Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood.

1. In the past year, have you made any changes to the services offered to youth under the Chafee Foster Care Program? If yes, what are the changes?

[For each service listed below, probe on the following to generate a detailed narrative about the service/support provided]

- i) What does the service entail?
- ii) Who provides the service?
- iii) Did the service change require additional or new funding? If yes, what was the source of that funding?
- iv) How often does each youth receive the service? (i.e., hours)
- v) For how long does each youth receive the service?
- a) What services are provided to youth by your agency?
 - i) Meeting with youth one on one?
 - ii) Helping youth establish goals?
 - iii) Helping youth when they are having an emergency?
 - iv) Helping youth find stable housing?
 - v) Providing financial support to youth?
 - vi) Organizing roundtables or meetings with others to support youth in achieving their goals?
 - vii) Connecting youth with other services and supports?
 - viii) Other services?
- 2. In the past year, have you made any changes to how you determine the services that are provided to each youth? If yes, what are the changes?**
- 3. In the past year, have you made any changes to the process for referring youth to other services?**

Service, resource, and policy context

[These questions will be asked of leadership and supervisors.]

Next, I'd like to speak with you about the services and resources that are generally available to youth in this area, especially youth and young adults transitioning out of foster care.

4. In the past year, has anything changed about the how your agency or other services in the area meet the needs of youth? If yes, how?

Appendix B6

Check-In Guide For Comparison Sites

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6. CHECK-IN GUIDE FOR COMPARISON SITES

Introductory script

Thank you for your time and for agreeing to participate in this interview. I'm _____, and I work for Mathematica, an independent social policy research company.

We are conducting a study for the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The goal is to understand how [name of agency] implemented the Chafee Foster Care Program. We want to understand the services the Chafee Foster Care Program is delivering and the factors that helped or hindered [name of agency]'s success in delivering those services to youth.

I would like to talk with you about your experience with and perceptions of the Chafee Foster Care Program. Your responses will be kept private to the extent permitted by law and used only for research purposes. I will not share your comments with anyone other than members of the Mathematica study team. Our team will use your responses, along with other information we collect about the Chafee Foster Care Program, to help describe the services delivered. When we report information from this study to OPRE and ACF, we will not attribute any comments to you or your organization, and no individuals will be quoted by name.

In the future, information from this study may be securely shared with qualified individuals to help learn more about the experiences of young adults who have been in foster care. The information that is shared will be de-identified, meaning it would only include a study ID number and not your name.

All of my questions are open-ended. There are no right or wrong answers. You may choose not to answer any questions you don't want to answer. You are the expert on your experience with the program, and I would like to learn from you during the discussion.

Your participation in this discussion is voluntary. Being part of this discussion is up to you, and it will not affect your employment. Nothing you share will be shared with your employer.

I would like to record this discussion to ensure I have an accurate record of the discussion for my notes. No one besides the members of the Mathematica study team will have access to or listen to the recording. If you want to say anything that you do *not* want recorded, please let me know, and I will be glad to pause the recorder.

Do you have any concerns about being part of this interview or to my recording our discussion?

The discussion will last no more than 30 minutes.

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Do you have any questions before I turn on the recorder?

Design of comparison services

[These questions will be asked of leadership and supervisors]

Now I have some questions about the services that you provide to youth, especially through the Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood.

1. In the past year, have you made any changes to the services offered to youth under the Chafee Foster Care Program? If yes, what are the changes?

- *[For each service listed below, probe on the following to generate a detailed narrative about the service/support provided]*
 - i) What does the service entail?
 - ii) Who provides the service?
 - iii) Did the service change require additional or new funding? If yes, what was the source of that funding?
 - iv) How often does each youth receive the service? (i.e., hours)
 - v) For how long does each youth receive the service?
 - b) What services are provided to youth by your agency?
 - i) Meeting with youth one on one?
 - ii) Helping youth establish goals?
 - iii) Helping youth when they are having an emergency?
 - iv) Helping youth find stable housing?
 - v) Providing financial support to youth?
 - vi) Organizing roundtables or meetings with others to support youth in achieving their goals?
 - vii) Connecting youth with other services and supports?
 - viii) Other services?
- 2. In the past year, have you made any changes to how you determine the services that are provided to each youth? If yes, what are the changes?**
- 3. In the past year, have you made any changes to the process for referring youth to other services?**

Service, resource, and policy context

[These questions will be asked of leadership and supervisors.]

Next, I'd like to speak with you about the services and resources that are generally available to youth in this area, especially youth and young adults transitioning out of foster care.

4. In the past year, has anything changed about the how your agency or other services in the area meet the needs of youth? If yes, how?

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