



think of us

Driving change for youth to heal, develop & thrive.















YOUTH, SUPPORTERS AND PROFESSIONALS IN ONE PLACE

The screenshot shows a legacy case management application. The main window is titled 'Client Services - Case [Estevez, Lilliana] - [Hearing [04/03/2015]]'. It features a menu bar with options like File, Edit, Search, Action, Associated, Attach/Detach, Window, Help, and Toolz. Below the menu is a toolbar with various icons. The interface is cluttered with multiple overlapping windows and tabs. A 'Minors' tab is active, showing a list of minors with columns for ID, Local, and ID. Below this, there's a section for 'Open Notebook: Information Available: Current' with a 'Select Item to Open' dropdown. The 'For this Case' section shows details for 'Estevez, Lilliana' with a date of '04/03/2015'. The 'Open this Hearing' section shows a date of '04/03/2015' and a name 'Estevez, Lilliana'. The 'Client Information' section includes fields for Prefix, First, Middle, Last, Suffix, Name Type, Gender, Marital Status, SSN, Alien Registration #, Driver's License - State/Number, Date of Birth, Age and Age Unit, and Client Number. The 'Outstanding Warrant Exists' checkbox is checked.



The screenshot shows a modern web-based life coaching platform. The main heading is 'Housing' with a sub-heading 'Find an apartment to move into'. Below this is a progress bar showing '3/6 completed'. The 'Actions' section lists tasks with checkboxes: 'Compile list of areas, ideally close to work', 'Visit areas and walk around', 'Visit local real estate agents', 'Ask a supporting adult to join apartment viewings', 'Shortlist apartments in selected area', and 'Add an action'. The 'Hacks & resources' section features three cards titled '8 Things to Know & Do Before Renting an Apartment' with images of apartment buildings and 'FOR RENT' signs. The 'Stories' section includes three cards titled 'Maria's story' with video thumbnails. The interface is clean, modern, and user-friendly.

Provide workers, youth and supportive adults the first ever data driven life coaching platform for youth ageing out of foster care



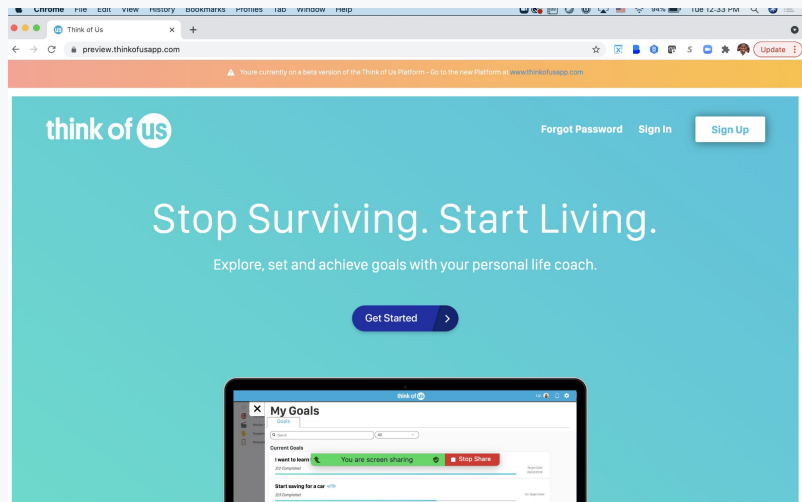
@Sixtocancel #HackFosterCare #ThinkofUs





Think of Us 1.0

Tech nonprofit that focused on delivering a software product

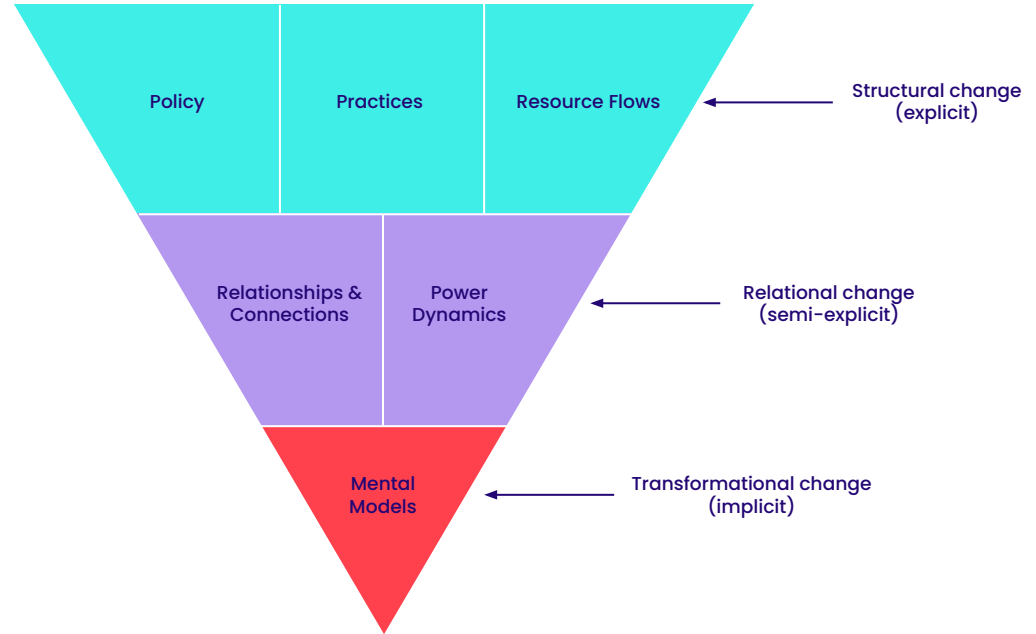


Think of Us 2.0

The R+D Lab for Child Welfare – transforming the system to center lived experience.

We take on strategic – and opportunistic – projects with the goal of causing “good trouble” and, ultimately, driving concrete, structural changes in policy, practice, resource flows, power dynamics, relationships and mental models.

We are living in
the most
unique
moment for
system
transformation



1 Spark

Breakthrough solutions in technology and policy.

#HackFosterCare

Sparking new ideas by bringing folks with a myriad of backgrounds and experiences to develop breakthrough solutions in technology and policy.

Sample Projects:

- LA Quarantine Housing
- Micro-Cash Grants
- FYI Housing Connections
- Hack-a-thons

2 Support

Lived Experience Led Research & Data.

The Center of Lived Experience

Supporting projects beyond TOU by leveraging qualitative and quantitative evidence to promote system design centered around real world experiences of youth in foster care

Sample Projects:

- Office of Adolescence (State of WA)
- Binti: Youth Centered Case Management Model
- End Congregate Care (Away from Home)

3 Co-Drive

Large Scale Systemic Initiatives.

Flagship Projects

Driving and co-driving large-scale, sometimes multi-year projects that have the potential to fundamentally change the foster care system.


Sample Projects:

- Digital Wraparound - Virtual Support Services
 - California
 - Greater Boston Area
 - Washington DC

What have we learned?

Our Command Center has shown us that Foster Youth and Alumni need a resource that is easy to use and helps them navigate available resources

1. Accessing services and tangible resources is complex
2. Emergent needs are overwhelming frontline staff
3. Youth navigational support is needed
4. Youth in need want community
5. We cannot upgrade foster care ecosystem fast enough

think of 

Foster YouthAgenciesAboutThink Of Us

Child Welfare COVID-19 Command Center

RESOURCES

Foster Youth

Money

Housing

Technology

Health

Family

Legal Aid

Agencies

Communicate About COVID-19

Support Youth

Support Your Workers

Support Foster Families and Licensing

Alter Procedures Previously Done In-Person

Comply with Requirements

GET INVOLVED

Share an Obstacle

Share a Solution

LEARN MORE

About This Site

Think Of Us

Foster Youth

These are resources that might be helpful if you're a youth in foster care or in extended care.

What do you need support with?

Find up-to-date resources most closely aligned with your situation(s).
This content is updated consistently, so please keep coming back as we post more information.

Money

- I lost some or all of my work due to coronavirus
- I'm not sure if I qualify to receive the stimulus check
- I am a student who was impacted by coronavirus
- I am unable to meet my basic needs
- I want to find a job

Housing

- I am unable to afford rent
- I am experiencing homelessness or at risk of being homeless
- I'm a student who was recently displaced
- I live in a group home or with roommates

Technology

- My school switched to remote learning but I don't have a laptop
- I cannot afford to buy access to the internet

Health

- I have important medical needs
- I need to stay active
- I'm feeling anxious about coronavirus
- I am no longer able to access therapy
- I deal with substance abuse issues
- I'm queer and/or trans living in a non-supportive environment

Export as PDF

CONTENTS

What do you need support wi...

Money

Housing

Technology

Health

Family

Legal Aid

Anything else?

“I am so busy I am just trying to fit things in any free moment I can.”
— Former Foster Youth

“We spend more time managing crises than we would like, so that purposely sitting down and working on your goals and making steps towards them can be hard when you're just trying to save the kid's placement all the time.”
— Case manager

National Town Hall with New Children's Bureau Associate Commissioner

2,785 views • Streamed live on Apr 15, 2021

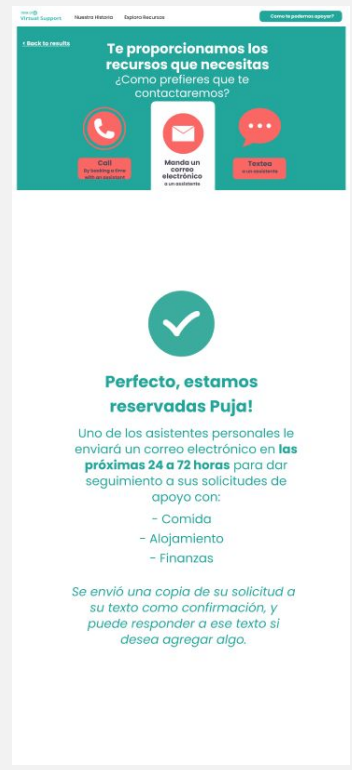
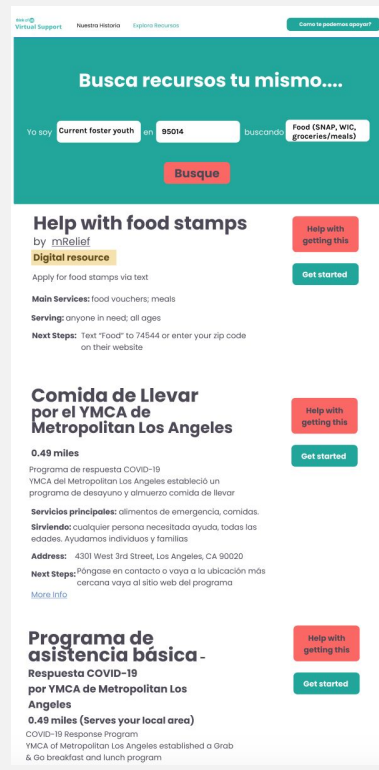
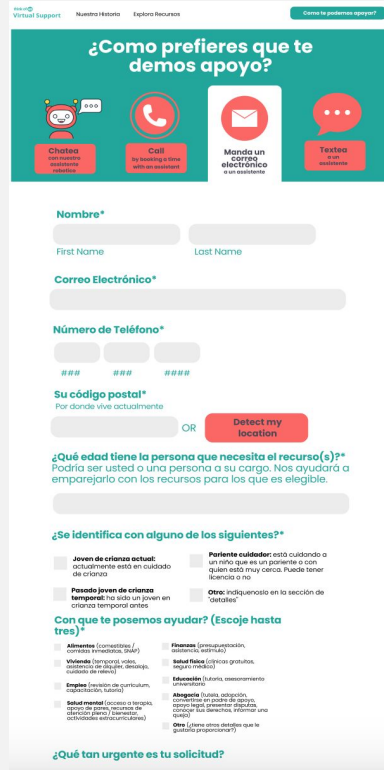
Top chat replay ▾

- 48:50 Constance Iannetta Ryan, you are doing great things! ❤️
- 48:57 Restream Bot [Facebook: Tanya Sutton] Connecticut needs those vouchers for our youth aging out of foster care
- 49:00 Loney Nguyen -DHS- SSC FYI is amazing but a lack of safe and affordable housing compounded with livable wages is still a major issue in metro areas.
- 49:02 Jessica Rogers We developed a coalition in MN to help get 128 Fosters \$1500. We are still struggling to get those additional dollars out through the new legislation
- 49:05 sara nebraska doesn't have enough housing to use the vouchers - we need more affordable housing and willing landlords
- 49:09 Shajuana Gaston Yes! Shoutout to Ruth, Lisa and Jamole!!!!!!
- 49:14 Maryellen Santiago @Anthony Barrows ❤️
- 49:14 Restream Bot [Facebook: Cathy Cubby] Haven't been able to access and HUD vouchers in Mass
- 49:22 Jill Bloch Shout out to Foster Action Ohio and Ruthe from NCHCW!
- 49:26 Jessica Rogers Thank You Jamole Callahan for your work on FYI
- 49:54 Oum Jannate el khair سلام عليكم ام جنت الخير
- 49:58 Constance Iannetta Great work Ohio fam!!! 🙌🙌🙌

All Watched

Like 111 Comment 2 Share Save ...

VVS – WEBSITE (v3) FIGMA SCREENS

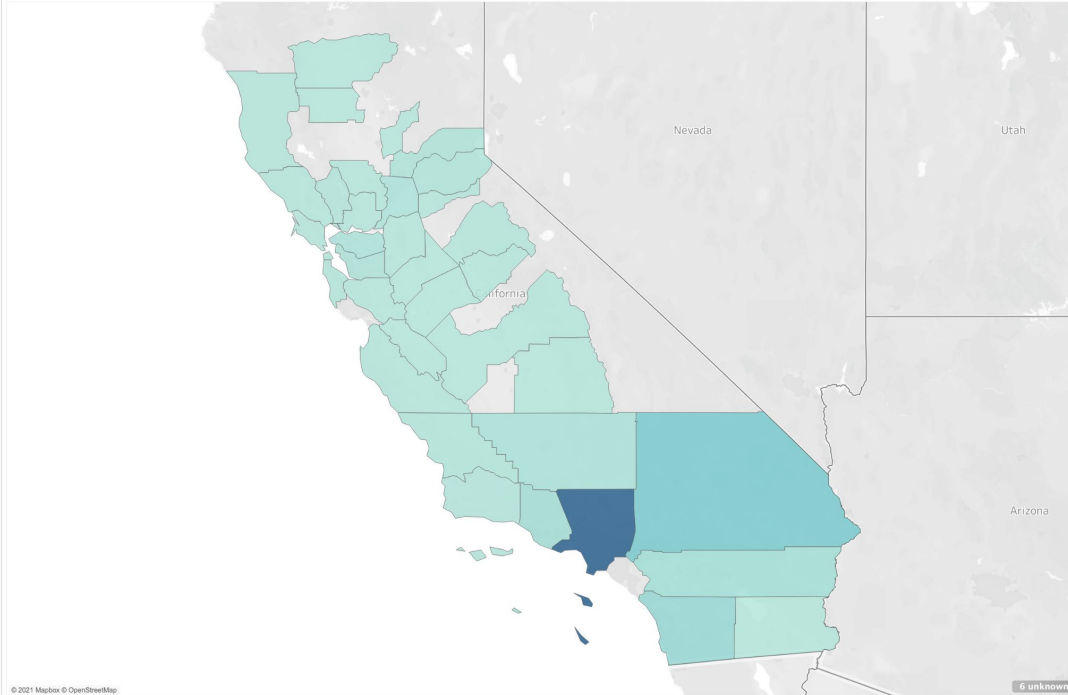


Voices from CA Kinship Caregivers: Total Per County

Total Per County

County	
Null	42
Alameda	35
Amador	6
Butte	27
Contra Costa	40
El Dorado	27
Fresno	4
Glenn	3
Humboldt	1
Imperial	8
Kern	57
Lake	3
Los Angeles	1,135
Marin	12
Mariposa	1
Mendocino	6
Merced	2
Monterey	14
Napa	15
Nevada	2
Orange	18
Placer	37
Riverside	83
Sacramento	38
San Benito	1
San Bernardino	265
San Diego	135
San Francisco	4
San Joaquin	11
San Luis Obispo	23
San Mateo	8
Santa Barbara	17
Santa Clara	1
Solano	10
Sonoma	7
Stanislaus	5
Tehama	3
Tulare	2
Tuolumne	6
Ventura	86
Yolo	8
Yuba	1

Total Per County

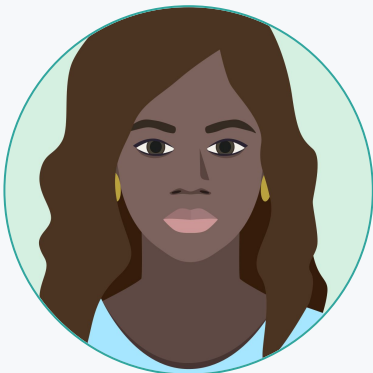


Voices from CA Kinship Caregivers

CA Caregivers' Needs

Selection1	State CA
Childcare	317
Clothing/Supplies	650
Education	162
Employment	52
Food	172
Healing from trauma	150
Housing	222
Legal	47
Managing family relations	51
Mental health	67
Physical health	26
Respite/breaks	135
Support/Connection with ..	61
Transportation	116

1:1 Virtual Assistance for Caregivers + Youth



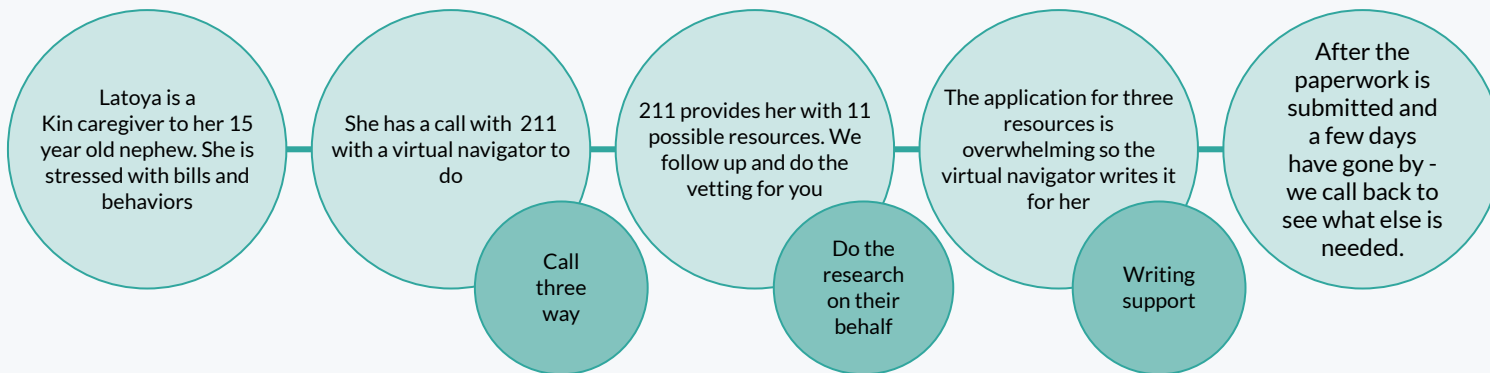
Community Responders with Lived Experience Offer Virtual Assistance

1. Referring traditional and non-traditional resources
2. Do the research for you
3. Call places on your behalf and/or three way
4. Helps you organize your to do list
5. Identify potential funding sources and/or Partner Collaborative resources
6. Complete the paperwork

Traits

supportive, understanding, passionate, helpful, persistent, accommodating, empathetic, flexible, caring, kind, compassionate, safe, genuine, loving, chill, engaging, respectful, encouraging, strict, cooperative, patient, accountable, open-minded.

What does the tangible help look like? (Not a hotline, hands on keyboard support)



Highlighting Kinship Caregivers' Experiences with VSS

Regarding our current housing situation, I am currently fostering 4 grandchildren ages 2, 4, 6, and 8 so it is just the 4 kids along with myself living together in a 3 bedroom home in Los Angeles. We receive funding for Foster care from the county, approximately \$4000 mo. however, it is just barely enough to cover the the rent and utilities. This leaves me very little, if any extra money for food and clothing . I have depleted much of my savings To maintain their needs.



Assisted in applying to:

- One Simple Wish
- The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Family Sources in Mid-City
- LADWP Low-Income Discount Program
 - KCMCG

	July 2021 Totals	Key Details
Inbound		
Kinship Caregiver Microcash Grant Applications	2,273	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2,273 CA Kin Caregivers submitted their application
Referrals (Total July)	91	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 91 incoming referrals for the month of July 90% (82/91) were solved by CR team
Website Visitors	152	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 152 visitors on VSS website Spike on 7/12, which correlates with the KCMCG outreach
Outbound		
Kinship Caregiver Microcash Grant	19,536	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outreach to Kinship Caregivers
One Simple Wish	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14 caregivers + 2 young people were referred to One Simple Wish (Digital Collaborative Partner) Due to clothing + supplies being the top need across Kin Caregivers in CA, we increased referrals to OSW
TOTAL	22,068	Inbound - 2,516 Outbound - 19,552

PROXIMITY LOOP

Optimizing and expanding the feedback loop between US Children's Bureau leadership and people with lived experience is the foundation to the success of the next four years – and beyond.

The foundation has been established – and what has come to be known as a best practice is now, without question, integral, yet few are leveraging this moment well.

Think of Us is a national leader in this work – leveraging technology and our relationships, will include the following workstreams:

1. Offer a tech-based community tool to facilitate consistent communication between lived experience experts and Children's Bureau
2. Organize monthly virtual meetings for the Associate Commissioner to engage the ecosystem of lived experience
3. Host quarterly Town Hall events to shift the mental models
4. Conduct a Discovery Sprint on what are the inequitable experiences

SNAPSHOT: Tech Based Community Tool

think of US

command-center.mn.co/groups/3180898/feed

Back to Network

Search this Groups

73%

Activity Feed

Discovery

Members

About

Invite

Topics

Events

CHAT

CB Commissioner & Curr...

ONLINE NOW

GROUPS

CB Commissioner & Current Foster Youth

Facilitating the most dynamic dialogue between the Children's Bureau and current foster youth

Manage +

+ Share what's on your mind...

SHOWING EVERYTHING

SORTED BY LAST ACTIVITY

Ryan Young cheered this 6mo ago

Sixto Cancel Host

Hello Everyone! The Associate Commissioner is curious about what is occurring with foster care alumni that were in college. Post a picture, screenshot, easy, letter, art, a video or anything that you feel would be helpful for him and his team to understand what are some of the challenges and what are some of the positives.

CB Commissioner & Current F... Updated 19m ago

4 8

PREVIOUS COMMENTS

Bobbi Taylor 6mo

Greetings!! think one of the biggest barriers for students is simply navigating life when it hits them hard. Which, is inevitable however, when there is a lack of support and lack of transitioning prep it makes that much harder to boun ...

MORE

1

Frank J. Smith 6mo

This is a great article that lays out some of the unique challenges young adults aging out of foster care are facing during the pandemic:

<https://www.today.com/tmrw/young-adults-aging-out-foster-care-face-unique-challenges-during-t193363>

Young adults aging out of foster care face unique...

Host Help



Connecting current & former foster youth with pandemic relief funds

Most states are providing between \$500 - \$2,000 for current & former foster youth. Sign up to find out what your state is doing!

[SIGN UP](#)

Sound On!

Away from Home Youth's Experiences of Institutional Placements in Foster Care

By Sarah Fathallah & Sarah Sullivan

Researched and written by
Think Of Us, with the generous
support of the Annie E. Casey
Foundation and Casey Family
Programs.

Detailed Findings

And in some instances, chores were performed without any monetary compensation.

"I did chores, whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted, and I did it for free. Kind of like slave labor."

(MP-MT-CA-02)

"We had to do lots of chores and were rewarded with only drives."

(GH-ST-AZ-01)

Finding 2.6.

Youth appreciated the predictable structure that their institutional placements provided, but their schedule was highly policed.

Many youth reported that institutions had a strict, regimented daily schedule. Some youth said that they thrived on the schedule and discipline of living in an institutional placement, as it gave them structure and a sense of stability.

"I still wake up every day at 8am and I make my bed every morning or before I go somewhere."

(MP-LT-IA-01)

However, some institutional placements ultimately dictated every aspect of a youth's day. These schedules determined when youth went to sleep, when they woke up, when they could eat, when they could go to the bathroom, and when they had to do their chores. One participant reported that every minute of the day was scheduled. This meant that some youth did not have enough time for self care in the shower or enough time to eat until they were full. This lack of freedom can also make it difficult for youth to learn basic, necessary time management skills.

"Staff didn't care... They gave us 45 minutes to eat, clean up, and complete our chores."

(MP-LT-OH-01)

Finding 2.7.

Youth in institutional placements were in survival mode.

Youth in institutional placements reported living in survival mode. They were concerned about getting their basic needs met while dealing with trauma, navigating complex relationships with staff and other youth, and knowing neither how long they would be in the institutional placement nor where they would live next.

"I felt like I didn't have as much of a say and that I was trapped until I turned 18 and had to survive until then."

(GH-ST-CA-01)

"My own focus was to do what I needed to do to survive."

(MP-MT-KS-01)

This stressful context was the backdrop in which youth operated. In this survival state, getting an education or anything beyond getting basic needs met can feel like a luxury.

"We're supposed to reach for the sky but I don't have my basic needs".

(MP-LT-CA-01)

"I didn't really get the school experience. My focus was never on school. I never really even finished high school. I was constantly in survival mode, I wasn't paying attention to math or anything like that. That's something I'm really disappointed in."

(MP-MT-CA-02)

What is a Discovery Sprint?

- A discovery sprint is a fast-paced, human centered design activity, that is useful when trying to understand human attitudes, mental models, and experiences with a technology product, service, system, or a policy.
- This qualitative method is frequently used in technology design, service design, and increasingly in policy design to generate insights that can inform the design of a technology product, the design of a service, or the design of a policy.
- While the methods used in this discovery sprint draw from social science disciplines, such as ethnography and anthropology, this study is not considered to be academic or scholarly research.
- Rather than seeing these stories as anecdotes, this report is as an effort to center the voices of the people who survived these placements and the family regulation system and emphasize direct quotes and visual artefacts that highlight their voices, words, and testimonies. This is about uncovering how youth themselves think, talk about, and experience institutional placements.

Away From Home: Discovery Sprint Overview

- This Discovery Sprint kicked-off in September 2020. The purpose of the project was to understand the experiences, mental models, and opinions of young people with recent experience living in institutional placements in foster care in the U.S.
- Think Of Us led a team of 7 people who conducted this study, which included teammates from Think Of Us, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Casey Family Programs. Two of the teammates had experienced living in institutional placements while in foster care themselves.
- This project was a qualitative research study using human-centered design methodologies. Over the course of the study, the team conducted 37 virtual interviews with youth and conducted 56 cultural probe activities.
- This project culminated with the *Away From Home* report, authored by Think Of Us, which has 4 key sections: Seeing the Big Picture, Recommendations and Alternatives, Detailed Findings, and the Appendices (including Terminology, Methodology, and References).

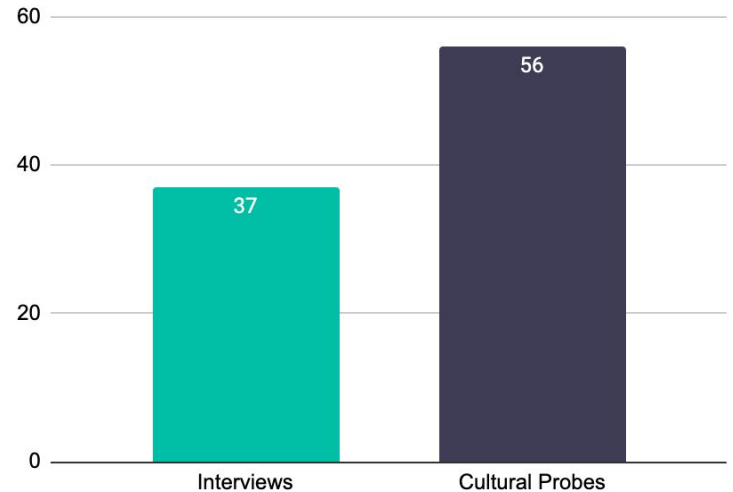
Methodology

Qualitative methods

We used two qualitative research methods:

- **Individual, semi-structured, in-depth interviews** with current and former foster youth, held remotely, each lasting from 60 to 90 minutes, to get a full picture of their experiences pre-, during, and post-institutional placements, as well as their perspective on and attitudes towards said placements.
- **Digital cultural probes** with current and former foster youth, including open ended prompts and participatory activities given to participants to respond to asynchronously, using a variety of formats (visual, oral, written, and electronically mediated).

Research sessions

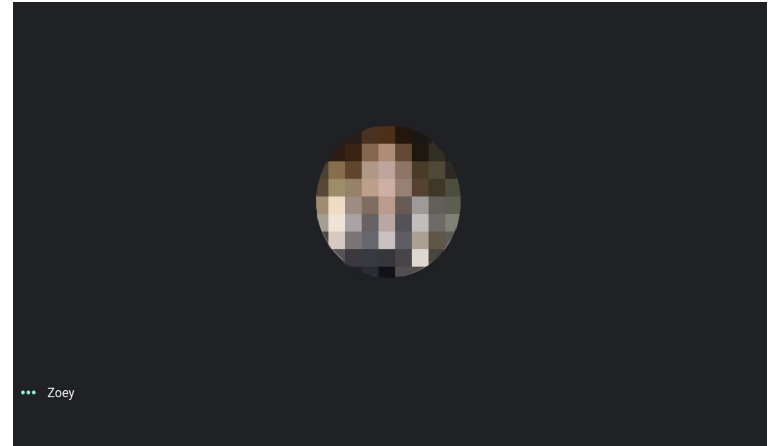


Methodology

In-depth interviews

Interviews covered topics such as:

- The physical environment in institutional placements;
- The staff working in institutional placements;
- The relationships that youth had before, during, and after institutional placements;
- Youth's educational attainment;
- Punishment and discipline in institutional placements;
- Youth's access to basic necessities and services;
- The perceived impact that their experience in institutional placements has had on their life.



Methodology

Digital cultural probes

Youth were invited to:

- Take a picture of an object in their possession that reminds them of their time in institutional placements.
- Imagine that they were invited to an open mic performance, and say a poem, spoken words, rap, or short song about their time in institutional placements.
- Make a list of all the people in their life while they were in institutional placements.
- Contribute a piece of art to a hypothetical museum exhibit about what life in institutional placements looks like.
- Imagine and draw a world in which institutional placements no longer exist.



Methodology

Participant sampling and recruiting

Using purposive sampling, participants were selected based on:

- Type of institutional placement;
- Combined duration of time in institutional placements;
- Number of different institutional placements;
- Standing in foster care (current or former foster youth);
- Placement location (variety of states; urban, suburban, and rural locations; out-of-state vs. in-state placements);
- Demographic background (age; gender identity; sexual orientation; race and ethnicity);
- Interaction with other systems (parental experience; juvenile justice interaction);
- Perceived experience with their institutional placement(s).

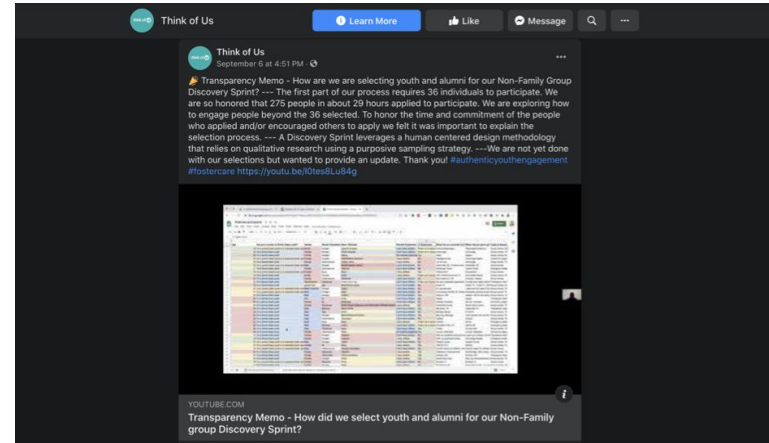
Age	Are you a current or former foster youth?	Gender	Sexual orientation	Race / ethnicity	Parental experience	JJ experience	State
19	I'm a current foster youth or in extended foster	female	straight	Spanish & Italian	I don't have children	Prefer not to share	AZ
18	I'm a former foster youth	Female	Straight	Pacific Islander	I don't have children	Prefer not to share	AK
23	I'm a former foster youth	Female	Straight	Native	I'm currently expecti	Yes	ID
15	I'm a current foster youth or in extended foster	Female	Straight	White/Native American	I have children	No	AK
20	I'm a former foster youth	Female	Heterosexual	Alaska native	I have children	No	AK
19	I'm a current foster youth or in extended foster	Male	Straight	Middle Eastern (white)	I don't have children	No	SC
21	I'm a former foster youth	Female	heterosexual	Hispanic	I don't have children	No	TX
19	I'm a current foster youth or in extended foster	Female	Boys	Black	I have children	Yes	FL
19	I'm a former foster youth	female	Straight	Asian	I have children	Prefer not to share	AK
23	I'm a former foster youth	Female	Heterosexual	Multiracial	I don't have children	No	CA
22	I'm a former foster youth	Transfemme	Pansexual	Prefer not to say.	I don't have children	Prefer not to share	IL
20	I'm a current foster youth or in extended foster	Male/Transman	Straight	Latina	I don't have children	No	NY
21	I'm a current foster youth or in extended foster	Male	Straight	Black	I don't have children	No	NY
20	I'm a former foster youth	Male	Straight	Latinx	I don't have children	Yes	OR
23	I'm a former foster youth	Trans	bi	white	I don't have children	No	HI
25	I'm a former foster youth	Female	Bi	Multiracial	I don't have children	No	CO
19	I'm a former foster youth	Female	Straight	Hispanic	I have children	No	AK
23	I'm a former foster youth	Male	Straight	Black/African American	I don't have children	Yes	MI
24	I'm a former foster youth	male	heterosexual	Caucasian	I don't have children	No	KS
24	I'm a former foster youth	Male	Bisexual	Latine	I don't have children	Prefer not to share	CA
24	I'm a former foster youth	Female	Heterosexual	White	I'm currently expecti	Yes	NE
21	I'm a former foster youth	Female	Straight	Hispanic	I don't have children	No	AZ
23	I'm a former foster youth	Female	Lesbian	Black	I don't have children	Yes	NC
24	I'm a former foster youth	Female	Heterosexual	Bi-racial	I don't have children	Yes	LA
24	I'm a former foster youth	Female	Bisexual	Latina	I don't have children	No	NJ
25	I'm a former foster youth	Male	Pansexual	Black	I don't have children	Yes	OH
20	I'm a current foster youth or in extended foster	Male	Heterosexual	Hispanic/Latino	I don't have children	No	TX
21	I'm a former foster youth	Female	Straight	White	I have children	Yes	RI
18	I'm a current foster youth or in extended foster	Male	Straight	Latino	I don't have children	No	GA
24	I'm a former foster youth	Female	Straight	Caucasian	I don't have children	No	ME
20	I'm a former foster youth	Female	Pansexual	North African Indigenous and West Asian (Middle East)	I have children	No	CA
24	I'm a former foster youth	female	hetero	mixed	I don't have children	No	CA
21	I'm a former foster youth	Female	Lesbian	White	I don't have children	Yes	CA
24	I'm a former foster youth	Female	Pansexual	Hispanic	I have children	Yes	PA
20	I'm a former foster youth	Female	Straight	White	I have children	Yes	IA
23	I'm a former foster youth	Male	Gay	White	I don't have children	No	IL
18	I'm a current foster youth or in extended foster	Female	Bisexual	White	I don't have children	No	CT

Methodology

Youth-centered and trauma-informed process

The research process itself sought to give real opportunities for participants to make choices for themselves, so they can feel empowered and promote their own wellness. This included:

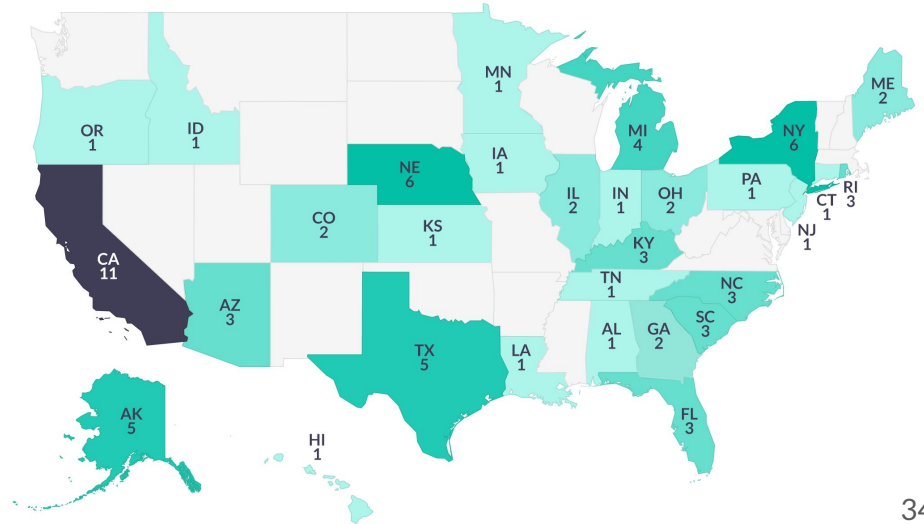
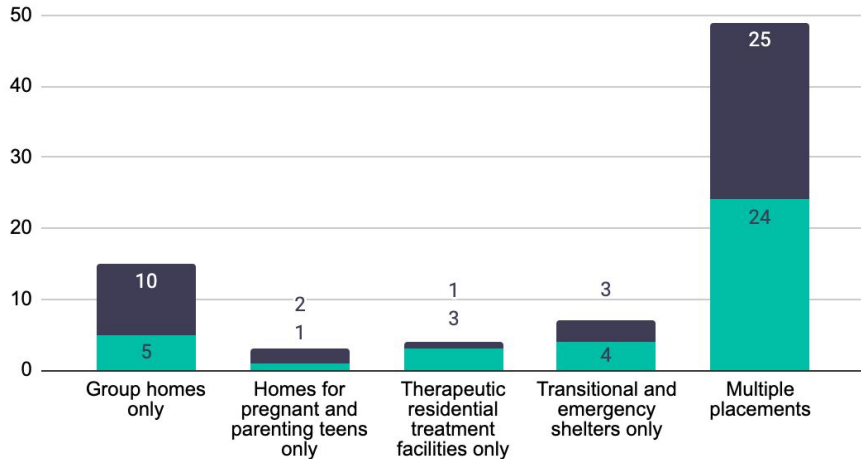
- Organizing an open call for participation;
- Providing a transparency memo around the participant recruiting process;
- Framing the informed consent process as a Bill of Rights;
- Checking in with participants before, on the day of, during, and after the research;
- Offering choice in activities and modes of connecting;
- Providing compensation and a meal stipend;
- Having referral paths to life affirming services through a resident clinical supervisor (MA, LCMHC, CRC).



Methodology

Research participants

We engaged with 78 youth in total: 22 in interviews alone, 41 in cultural probes alone, and 15 in both. Youth hailed from 30+ states, and had varied experiences with different institutional placements.

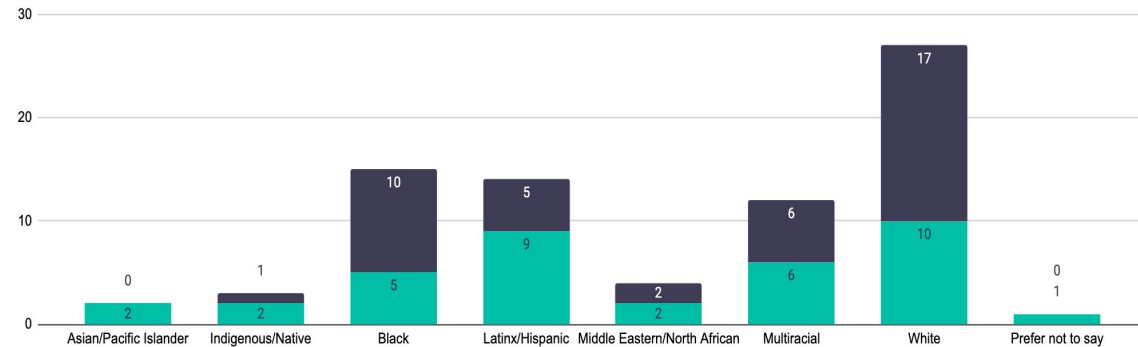


Methodology

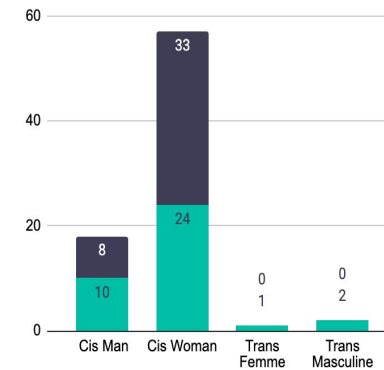
Participants' demographics

The sampling criteria aimed to ensure that the study included a wide range of varied backgrounds and experiences.

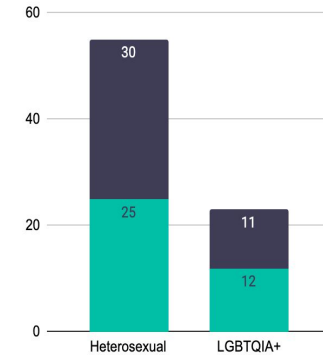
Race/ethnicity



Gender



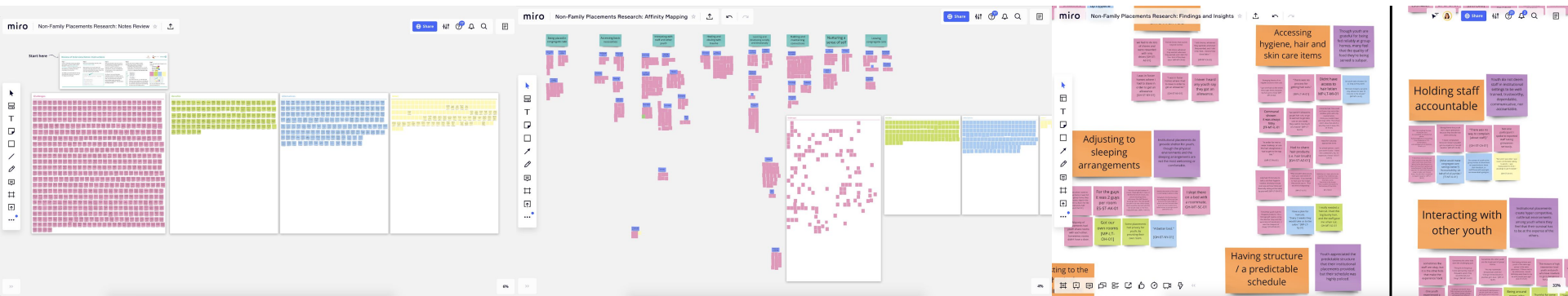
Sexual orientation



Methodology

Data synthesis

Synthesis was conducted a grounded theory approach, a social sciences inductive reasoning methodology where collected primary research data is analyzed for repeated themes. These themes were then grouped into categories which became the basis for constructing new insights.



Big Picture Conclusions

Institutional placements...

failed to meet the
mandate of child
welfare

were
carceral

were
punitive

were traumatic
and unfit for
healthy child
and adolescent
development

shielded youth
from building
relationships

felt like they
didn't have a
way out

Recommendations

1

Eliminate
institutions

2

Ask youth where
they want to live
and do everything
possible to make
that a reality

3

Avoid entering foster
care when possible
by focusing on
prevention

4

Make foster family
placements more
stable and culturally
appropriate

5

Ask youth where
they want to live
and do everything
possible to make
that a reality

6

Expand the
definition of kin and
improve licensing
and support for
kinship placements

7

As institutional
placements are
being phased out,
accommodate
youths' preferences

8

Center lived
experience in the
research, design,
and implementation
of policy changes