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Meeting the challenge of transitioning out of foster care into independent functioning

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Introduction: There are multiple challenges for adolescents transitioning out of foster care into adult living. The efficacy of interventions in addressing the needs of this population is increasing. Interventions and strategies for facilitating the development of skills conducive to becoming an independently functioning adult are identified.

Problem or Purpose: Transitioning into independent adult living is particularly challenging for youth in foster care. While youth adjustment during foster care has been investigated, there is an absence of research in the area of individuals aging out of foster care. The existing evidence on psychosocial and occupational outcomes of youth leaving foster care points to problematic functioning during this transition. This is evident from research that identifies high rates of homelessness, incarceration, unemployment; low educational attainment, teen parenthood and substance abuse (make a reference to a source). Foster care youth leaving the system also suffer from poor physical and mental health in comparison to other young adult populations.

Procedure: The purpose of this poster presentation is to identify the needs of adolescents transitioning into adulthood from foster care, to evaluate the efficacy of current intervention programs and to offer suggestions for what foster parents and case workers can do to promote a successful transition into adulthood.

Results: Evidence based research can serve as a basis for intervention tools and strategies to be utilized by parents and foster care workers to help transitioning youth develop the required skills and competencies needed to become an independently functioning adult. It is imperative that these interventions use models that consider etiological processes of PTSD development. Etiological frameworks focus on how humans adapt to traumatic stress and the interventions goal is to target how they are able to form resilience after trauma and have a healthy adaptation to their continuing life. Providing foster parents with templates of evidence based intervention tools which take into account appropriate timing, context and delivery can better equip the individual for the transition from foster care.

Conclusions & Implications: Foster care youth leaving the system do not often use social assistance in comparison to other adults of their age. Creating outreach programs to this population that provide access to resources, and utilizing technology to provide support, monitoring, education, and resources are discussed as promising options. Potential pitfalls of current interventions and programs need to be challenged and addressed in order to achieve better positive outcomes for individuals transitioning from foster care.

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