

## ABSTRACT

### INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAMS FOR TRANSITIONING YOUTH: NARROWING THE GAP TO REACHING SELF- SUFFICIENCY THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXPLORING PROGRAM MODEL

Independent Living Programs for transitioning youth were developed to respond to difficulties often experienced among this population, which include homelessness, unemployment, incarceration, victimization, and deficiencies in educational attainment. This study examined the Fresno County Department of Children and Family Services Independent Living Program's implementation of the Exploring Program model in addressing the career needs of youth in out of home care. A comparison study was conducted of a sample of 8 Explorer youth, and 13 Non-Explorer youth (n=21). Secondary data was utilized to gather demographic information and to compare the differences between the groups on measures of perceived self-sufficiency. In addition, interviews were conducted on the Explorer youth sample. The results of this study found that, although the two groups measured similar in perceived self-sufficiency, the Exploring Program promoted a sense of belonging, instilled positive future career aspirations, and aided in helping youth achieve some of their independent living goals.

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