

Just in Time for Foster Youth Baseline Data Report

May 2013

harder+company
community research

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Introduction

Just in Time for Foster Youth (JIT) is a community based organization in San Diego County dedicated to supporting transitioning foster youth to achieve self-sufficiency and well-being. They seek to ensure that San Diego's former and current foster youth successfully transition to a thriving adulthood. To this end, JIT provides a variety of services and resources to help youth meet their basic needs, create safe and stable home environments, pursue post-secondary education, increase their financial literacy and become leaders in their local communities. In order to measure the impact JIT has on the youth they serve, they contracted with Harder+Company Community Research (Harder+Company) to refine their organizational logic model, develop an evaluation plan, and review and provide recommendations to improve their current data collection tools and processes. As part of that process, Harder+Company conducted a baseline review of JIT's intake survey data from July 2011 through May 2013.¹ The findings from that review are shared in this report for the purpose of informing JIT staff. JIT confined the baseline review to youth who completed the intake survey and were eligible for JIT services based on the following three criteria:

- Must be a former or current foster youth
- Must be between ages 18-26 at the time they completed the intake survey
- Must reside in San Diego County

The data provided did not allow for distinction between those foster youth who received JIT services and those who expressed interest but did not receive JIT services. Thus, this report presents a profile of those individuals seeking JIT services but not necessarily served.

Organization of the Report

This report is organized into three major sections as follows:

- The first section of this report, *Who Does JIT Serve?*, provides information regarding the demographics of individuals who completed JIT's intake survey between July 2011 to May 2013.
- The next section, *Survey Findings: JIT Youth by the Numbers*, focuses on quantitative survey findings. It presents findings related to participants' current status in terms of factors related to self-sufficiency.
- The *Conclusion* offers a summary of key findings about the JIT intake survey as well as concluding thoughts on the use of the data.

JIT's Mission Statement:

Just in Time for Foster Youth engages a caring community to help transitioning foster youth achieve self-sufficiency and well-being.

¹ Data was exported by JIT staff and provided to Harder+Company with no identifying information.

² The Scale of Self-Sufficiency tool, scoring and administration protocol were developed internally by JIT staff.

Who Does JIT Serve?

The demographic data described below represent the individuals who completed JIT's intake survey between July 2011 to May 2013 and were former or current foster youth between ages 18-26 who resided in San Diego County (n=622).

Demographics

Of the 622 youth who completed the intake survey, nearly two-thirds were between 18-20 years old (61.7%) when they completed the intake and their average age was 20.35 years. Two-thirds of youth are female (66.6%) and most of the youth identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino/Spanish (36.2%), Black/African American (28.0%) or White/Caucasian (19.3%). Slightly more than one quarter of respondents (27.5%) reported having children of their own (19.0% of the total population reported having one child and 8.5% having two or more children).

The majority of respondents are former foster youth (89.2%) vs. current foster youth (10.8%). Most of the youth spent between 9-16 years in foster care (57.0%) and just over half experience 5 or more placements during their time in foster care (51.6%), as shown in Exhibits 1 and 2 below.

Youth were also asked about their connections to a caring adult. JIT understands and emphasizes the important role a caring adult can play in the lives of transitioning foster youth, especially a caring adult with sustained connections to the youth. As shown in Exhibit 3, three-quarters (76.7%) of the youth reported having a caring adult in their life for at least six months and nearly half (42.4%) reported having a caring adult in their life for more than two years.

Exhibit 1. Years in Foster Care (n=622)

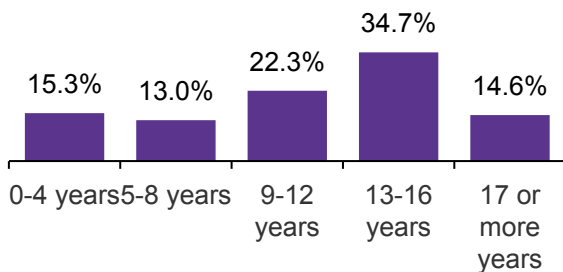


Exhibit 2. Number of Placements (n=620)

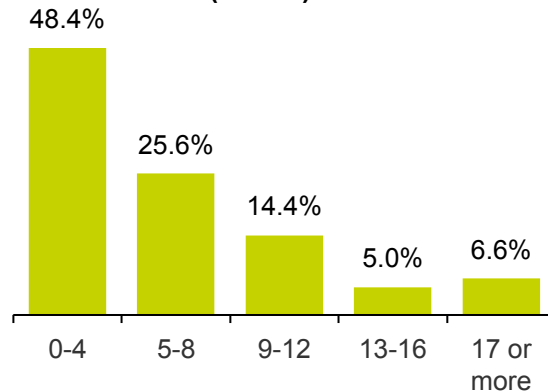
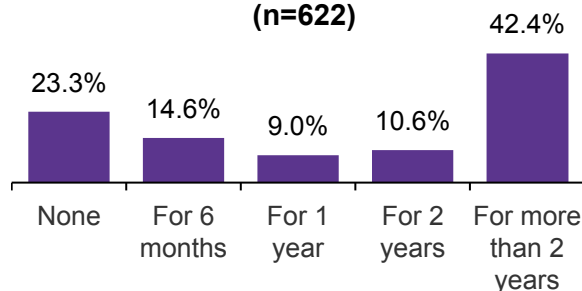


Exhibit 3. Duration of Connection to a Caring Adult (n=622)



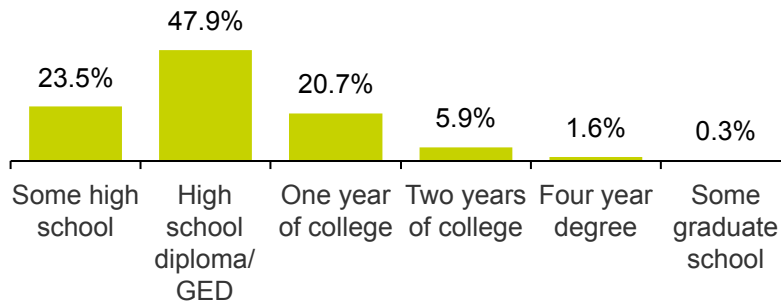
Survey Findings: JIT Youth by the Numbers

Intake survey respondents were asked to report on their current self-sufficiency levels, both perceived and as measured by the Scale of Self Sufficiency² in terms of their education, employment and finances, housing and community service. This section summarizes their responses as well as additional analyses which included further exploration of all variables by connection to a caring adult, time in foster care and number of placements; however only statistically significant results are included in this report. All n's reported include the total number of valid responses to each question (excludes missing responses).

Education

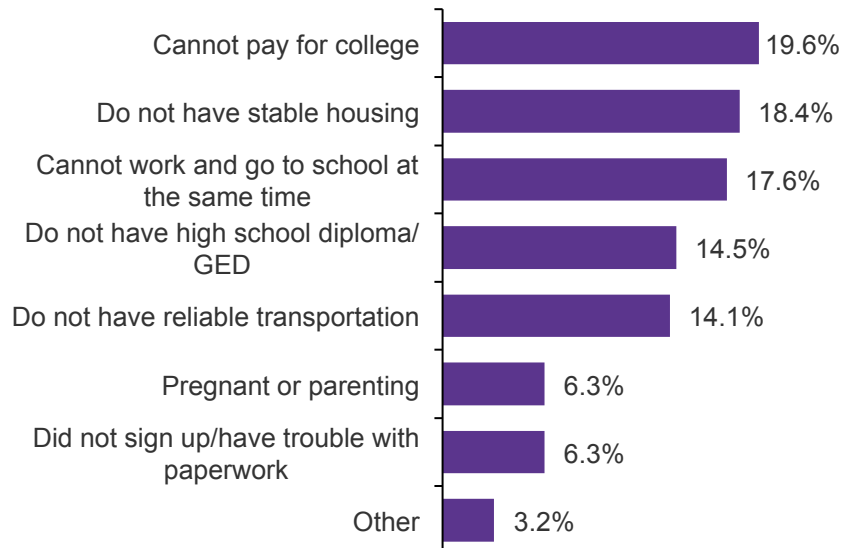
Exhibit 4 shows the highest level of education completed by JIT youth. The majority reported some high school or a high school diploma/GED as their highest level of education (71.4%). About one-fifth of respondents (20.7%) completed one year of college and only 7.8% completed more than one year of college. More than two-thirds of youth (68.8%) reported being enrolled in school at time of intake. Of those enrolled, nearly half (45.8%) were attending a 2-year community college and a third (31.6%) were attending high school or GED courses. The most common GPA ranges reported were 2.5-3.0 (40.1%) and 3.1-3.4 (24.1%)

Exhibit 4. Highest Education Level (n=622)



Those who were not enrolled in school provided the reasons shown in Exhibit 5. The most common reasons for not enrolling in school were lack of financial resources to pay for college (19.6%) and lack of stable housing (18.4%).

Exhibit 5. Reasons for not enrolling in school (n=255)*

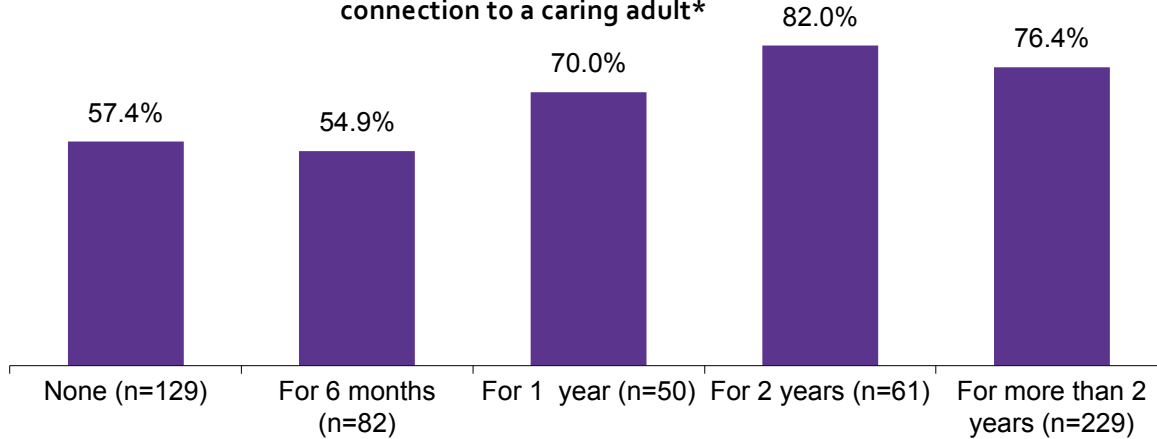


**199 youth provided at least one reason for not attending school. Youth were allowed to pick multiple reasons; percentage reported is out of total number of reasons (255).*

² The Scale of Self-Sufficiency tool, scoring and administration protocol were developed internally by JIT staff.

The percentage of youth enrolled in school was broken down further by whether or not they had a connection to a caring adult and how long they had that connection. Results, displayed in Exhibit 6, showed that youth who had a caring adult in their lives for at least one year were more likely to be enrolled in school than those who did not have a connection with a caring adult or have only had one for six months (70.0-82.0% vs 54.9-57.4%).

Exhibit 6. Percentage of youth enrolled in school by duration of connection to a caring adult*



*Statistically significant at

Employment and Financial Status

Youth were asked to report their current employment status at the time they completed the intake survey. The majority were unemployed, seeking employment, or working at a seasonal job (63.1%). About a quarter (24.5%) had semi-stable employment and only 11.2% had stable employment (Exhibit 7).

Of the youth who had stable or semi-stable employment, most worked 34 hours or less per week (69.3%, n=189) and earned less than \$10/hour (70.7%, n=188).

Exhibit 7. Employment status(n=607)

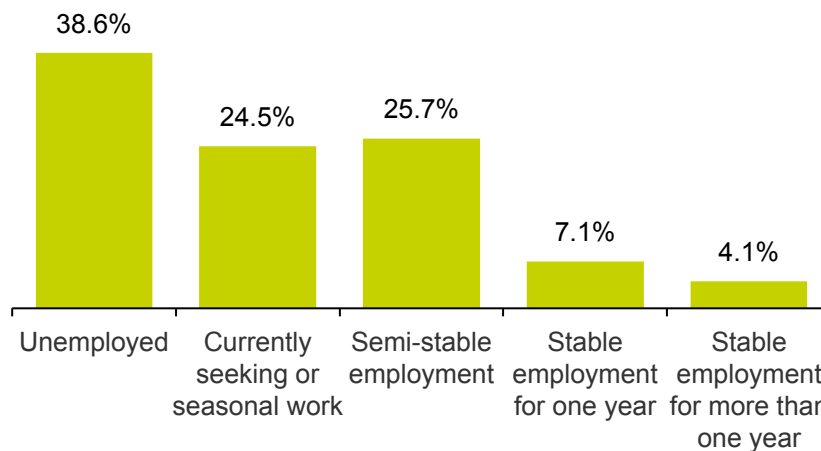
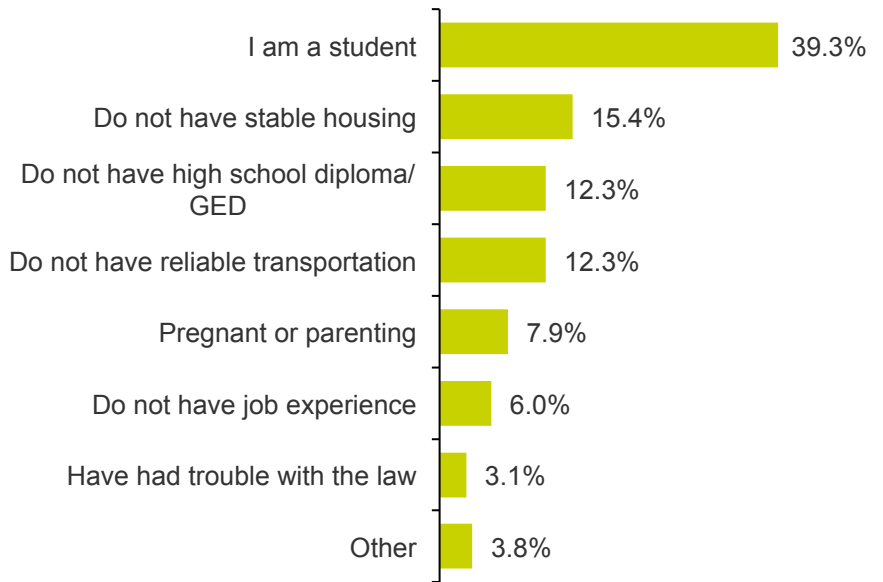


Exhibit 8. Reasons for unemployment (n=318)*

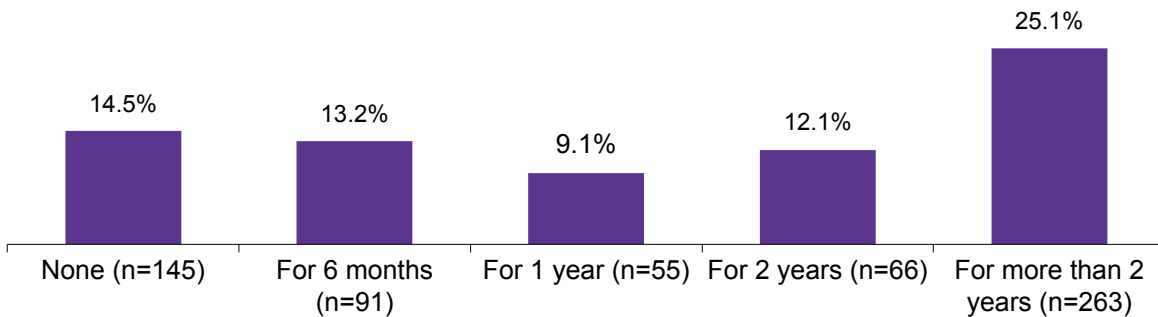


**240 youth provided at least one reason for not working besides currently searching for employment. Youth were allowed to pick multiple reasons; percentage reported is out of total number of reasons (318).*

Those who were unemployed provided the reasons shown in Exhibit 8. The most common reasons for not working were because the youth was in school (39.3%) or lack of stable housing (15.4%). Of the 325 youth who reported reasons for being unemployed, 40.0% reported they were currently searching for employment.

Youth also reported on their financial status at the time of the intake survey. Of the 620 youth who provided valid responses, more than half (52.5%) could not support themselves most or all of the time, 29.5% could support themselves some of the time and 18.0% could support themselves most or all of the time. When analyzed further, employment status was not significantly associated with connection to a caring adult. However, as shown in Exhibit 9, those who had a connection with a caring adult for more than two years were significantly more likely to be able to support themselves most or all of the time than those who did not (25.1% vs 9.1-14.5%).

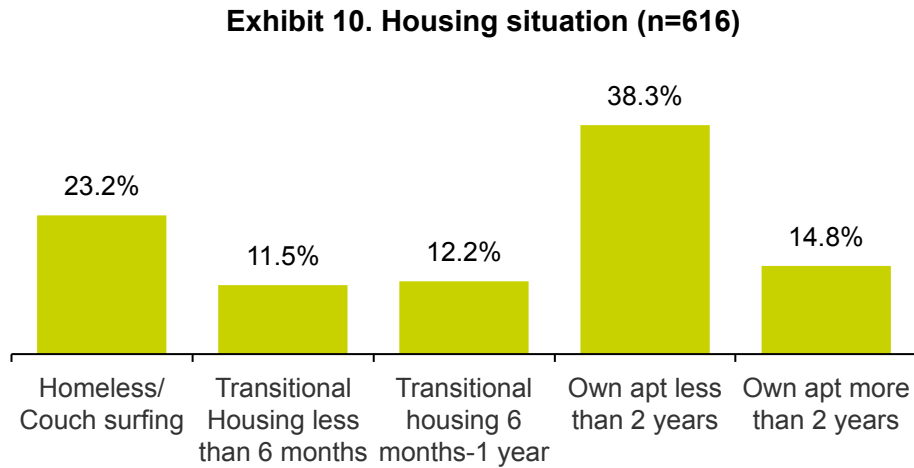
Exhibit 9. Percentage of youth who support themselves most or all of the time by duration of connection to a caring adult*



**Statistically significant at p<0.01*

Housing Situation

One of the goals of JIT is to improve the capacity of transitioning youth to establish and sustain stable housing. At intake, youth were asked to report their current housing situations. The most common response was living in their own apartment for less than two years (38.3%) followed by homeless or couch surfing (23.2%), as shown in Exhibit 10.



Upon further analysis, youth without a connection to a caring adult were significantly more likely to be homeless or couch surfing than those who had a caring adult in their life for more than two years (37.2% vs. 13.4%) as shown in Exhibit 11. Additionally, youth who had 13 or more placements while in foster care were significantly more likely to be homeless or couch surfing than those who had four or fewer placements (35.2% vs. 20.9%) as shown in Exhibit 12.

Exhibit 11. Percentage of youth who are homeless or couch surfing by duration of connection to a caring adult*

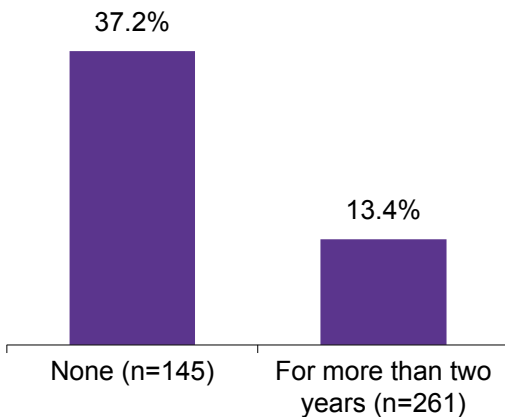
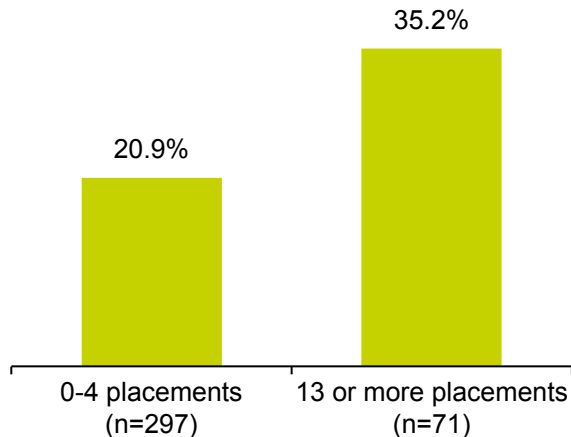


Exhibit 12. Percentage of youth who are homeless or couch surfing by number of placements**

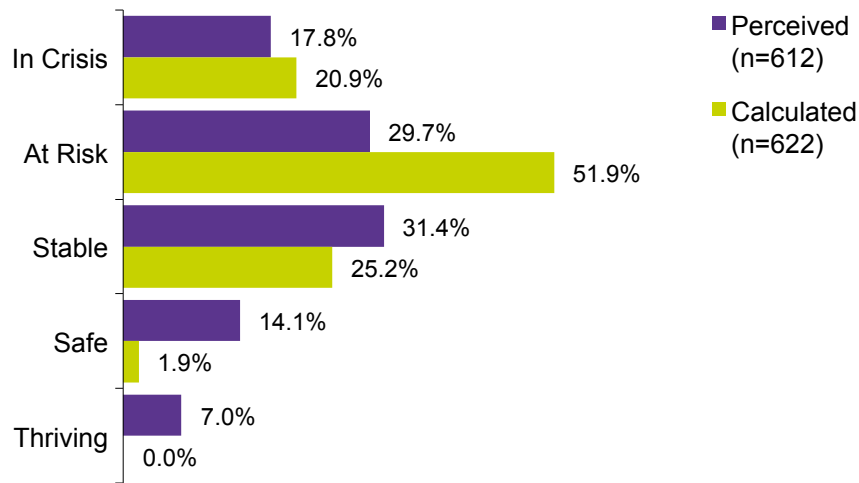


***Statistically*

Self-Sufficiency

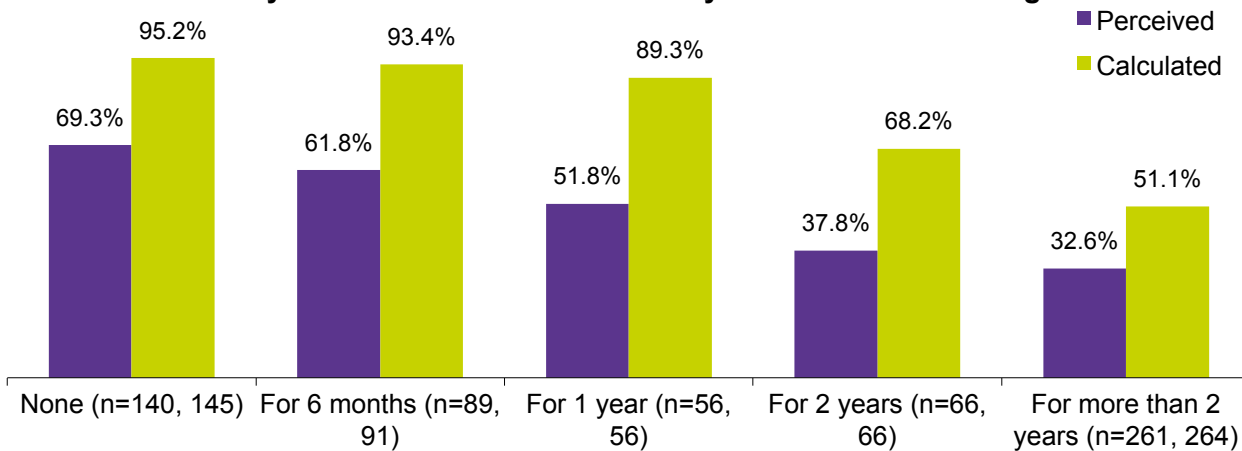
JIT staff developed the Scale of Self Sufficiency in order to quantitatively categorize youths' self-sufficiency levels as In Crisis, At Risk, Safe, Stable or Thriving based on their housing, education, employment, financial fitness, connection to a caring adult, and community service status. Youth were also asked to rate their perceived self-sufficiency according to these same levels. Overall, more youth perceived their self-sufficiency levels to be higher than their calculated self-sufficiency levels. Less than half (47.5%) rated themselves as In Crisis or At Risk while almost three quarters (72.8%) had calculated scores in the In Crisis or At Risk range (Exhibit 13).

Exhibit 13. Percentage of youth by their calculated and perceived self sufficiency levels



Analysis of perceived and calculated self-sufficiency levels broken down by the youth's connection to a caring adult yielded significant results. The general trend shows that youth who have had a caring adult in their life are less likely to be In Crisis or At Risk, both in their perception and based on their calculated score. In addition, those with a connection to a caring adult for longer are less likely to be In Crisis or At Risk than those with less time knowing a caring adult (Exhibit 14).

Exhibit 14. Percentage of youth who have perceived or calculated Self Sufficiency levels of In Crisis or At Risk by connection to a caring adult*



*Statistically significant at

Conclusion

The baseline data presented in this report is a snapshot in time of the youth completing the JIT intake survey between July 2011 to May 2013. The survey results paint a picture of the transitioning foster youth in San Diego County interested in JIT services. Overall, findings showed that youth with a connection to a caring adult were significantly more likely to be in more positive situations in regards to education, finances, housing and overall self-sufficiency than those without a caring adult.

The data from this report can serve many functions. For one, this data can be utilized to inform JIT on the needs of their target population and assist in setting realistic targets for the outcome measures in their logic model and evaluation plan. By basing the targets for their outcome measures on the baseline data, JIT can develop challenging but reachable goals for their organization.

The results can also serve as baseline data that can be compared to follow up data for the youth after they receive JIT services. Providing this comparison over time will provide a critical understanding of if and how the youth's circumstances have changed, and allow JIT to more clearly identify the combination of services and resources that result in positive change. Any additional data needs can also be identified by assessing the gaps in the baseline data, such as ways to measure well-being and increased knowledge, and may be added to future data collection tools.

This baseline data report does not reflect the additional effort that JIT has invested in their organizational growth during the first half of 2013. JIT has recognized the importance of being able to demonstrate the impact their organization is making on the lives of transitioning youth in San Diego County. To this end, they have endeavored in this process with Harder+Company to refine their mission and logic model and develop a strong evaluation framework while building the capacity of their staff to incorporate evaluative thinking into their existing processes. The logic model and evaluation framework are still under development but the most recent versions are included in this report as Appendix A and B. The changes JIT has made to their evaluation processes as a result of the updated logic model and evaluation framework during the past six months will guide the organization's future data collection and allow for JIT to better demonstrate their effectiveness to stakeholders.