



Chafee Strengthening Outcomes for Transition to Adulthood

Building Evidence to Support Youth Success

The [Chafee Strengthening Outcomes for Transition to Adulthood \(Chafee SOTA\)](#) project is exploring innovative ways to evaluate programs that serve youth transitioning out of foster care. Four sites have been selected to participate in the Chafee SOTA evaluation, supported by the [Administration for Children and Families \(ACF\)](#). These four programs will partner with the Chafee SOTA evaluation team, led by [Westat](#), to carry out evaluation activities using innovative learning methods tailored to each program's service model. Chafee SOTA aims to develop a set of innovative learning methods to improve the implementation of promising practices and programs while strengthening the evidence of how well they work to support successful outcomes for youth transitioning out of foster care.

Works Wonders

Works Wonders® (WW) is a program that supports youth and young adults who are currently or were formerly in foster care, as well as youth experiencing homelessness and/or at risk of systems involvement. WW is a program offered at [Foster Forward \(FF\)](#), a nonprofit organization in East Providence, RI. The central components of the program include a 16-hour intensive empowerment and employment (E2) training, ongoing career coaching, and experiential learning opportunities. Program staff work with participants on resume building; completing a career portfolio; developing skills to identify, apply for, and secure a job; and building soft skills relevant for stable employment. The program focuses on helping participants to identify and eliminate barriers to achieving their education and employment goals. A replication manual for WW has been developed and utilized to implement the program in two additional sites.

12 Weeks of one-on-one career coaching

125 Young adults served by WW each year

5 Number of components in the WW program



What supports does WW provide?

E2 Training | The E2 course provides strengths-based training in a group setting and includes mutual peer support from Youth Leaders who work for FF. The E2 training consists of six modules that combine concrete skill development and peer support.

Career Coaching | The career coaching component includes supports on job placement, job development, and financial planning. During this period, young adults complete a tool called the Youth Career Readiness Portfolio.

Experiential Learning | Young adults are connected to paid work-based learning opportunities in order to practice their skills and competencies in a supportive environment. WW is able to provide paid internships of up to 220 hours with employment partners throughout the state. Other opportunities available to participants include job shadowing and informational interviews to gain authentic career insights.

What outcomes does WW aim to achieve?



Increased employment and employment retention



Increased attainment of GED or high school degree



Increased enrollment in postsecondary education



Increased interpersonal skills, including problem solving, conflict resolution, team work, and active listening



Evaluation research questions

- 1 How effective is a focused employment readiness program (WW) in developing soft skills and other work-related outcomes for young adults transitioning from foster care?
- 2 How much does individual coaching build on these outcomes?
- 3 How much does work experience add to these outcomes?

How will WW be evaluated?

Single Case Design (SCD)

SCD is a research method that evaluates the effectiveness of a program on a single subject or case. SCD is one of the strongest alternatives to randomized control trials, accommodates small numbers of participants, measures immediate outcomes, and can be implemented flexibly. The results of an SCD are typically visually displayed and accessible to a wide range of audiences.

SCD at WW

SCD is an appropriate design for assessing WW as WW serves a small cohort of individuals at a time (3–10 young adults) and is focused on assessing employment and work readiness outcomes. Each cohort can be considered a case that is followed before and after entering the program. Successive cohorts can be compared in a multiple baseline approach. The relatively discrete time-based nature of WW cohorts fits into SCD design parameters.

Qualitative Evaluation

The evaluation includes interviews and focus groups with program staff and young adult participants focused on understanding the program and assistance provided to participants to provide context for the findings.

Youth voice

The Chafee SOTA project was developed with a focus on the meaningful involvement of young adult partners with foster care experience. Youth voice on the project is led by the Young Adult Advisor (YAA) team. The YAAs are a team of individuals with varying experiences within the foster care system. The YAAs work closely with the study team to advise and consult on all aspects of the project. In particular, the YAAs lead youth engagement at each of the four study sites to incorporate the views of youth with foster care experience.