

First Year Report: April 2013

Washingtonians
ForChildren

a division of **FEDCAP**

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Year One Report

Washingtonians For Children: A Division of Fedcap

I. Background

Over the past decade, data has become more prevalent about the long-term outcomes for young adults leaving our child serving systems. They are facing complex social and economic realities that are intersecting to create the “perfect storm.” Over 68% become involved in the adult criminal justice system, 3 in 5 are homeless for significant periods of time, 66% do not have a high school degree and 60% have an untreated mental health condition.¹ Further, we have learned that, while 70% indicate that they want to go to college, only 10% enter and less than 3% graduate.²

According to the District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency there are a significant number of youth who enter college every year. The majority enter one of three local community colleges; University of the District of Columbia (UDC), Trinity University and Prince George’s Community College (PGCC). In the past five years there have been no graduates from UDC or Prince George’s Community College and only two graduates in 2010 from Trinity University.

In December of 2011 Fedcap launched Washingtonians for Children (WFC) because we believe that this story can be changed; many more youth can enter college and of those who enter, many more can graduate.

Washingtonians for Children has been an unqualified success. Sixty youth have taken advantage of the various kinds of supports and services offered through WFC –even if is just calling on a down day to receive the encouragement and to hear “you can do this.” Youth who were on the verge of dropping out have stayed in college, those who were feeling isolated have found caring adults to turn to, and those who were struggling academically have received tutoring and academic guidance. Those who needed internships are being helped to find them and those who need jobs are being referred to employment.

Nothing this important is done in a vacuum. The efforts of the Child and Family Services Agency, CASA –DC, Community Family Life Services and AFC Scholarship Foundation are integral to the success of WFC.

II. Overview of Fedcap

¹ District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency (2011).

² Jim Casey Young adults Alternatives (2010)

In the spring of 1935, a chance meeting in New York City's Times Square led three men with physical disabilities to change the world. Shut out of the workforce because society believed they were unemployable, they set out to prove that people facing barriers could be productive workers. Today, Fedcap is a national nonprofit that helps Americans overcome barriers to economic security through the delivery of high quality services in four major Practice Areas: workforce development, occupational health services, economic development and education. Fedcap impacts the lives of more than 12,000 people annually throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. Fedcap's work is structured within four practice areas:

Education. Annually Fedcap's assists 3000+ youth graduate from high school or obtain their GED, go to college and graduate, and/or obtain high level vocational training and employment. We deliver special education services through the Fedcap School and we provide in-school academic support and college readiness activities in over 75 schools throughout New York City. Additionally, through our nationally recognized Career Design School we provide vocational training in a diverse array of high growth business sectors including culinary arts, security, office skills, document management, home health, hospitality and total facilities management.

Workforce Development. Fedcap provides work readiness activities and pipelines to living wage jobs. Through our Employer Based Training approach—we have built strategic partnerships with diverse business sectors, providing them with trained and skilled staff. We also provide an array of post placement supports. Last year alone we placed 8,000 people in jobs with significant 90-day, 180-day and one-year retention rates.

Occupational Health. Fedcap provides consumers with critical supports required to achieve optimal success in the workplace directly through an outpatient mental health clinic in the Bronx, a Partial Day Treatment Program in New Jersey and our Clubhouse in Manhattan. In addition, we support workers' occupational health through linkages and referrals to housing assistance, child care and transportation.

Economic Development. Fedcap develops and operates businesses that help improve the economic status of citizens in impoverished communities. We own and operate four commercially viable businesses that provide Total Facilities Management, Office Services and Mail Solutions, Manufacturing and Home Health Care. The businesses, located in communities throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, employ 1,500 individuals. We are currently in the

process of launching a security business that will employ veterans and are exploring a division devoted to youth entrepreneurial opportunities.

The Community Impact Institute (CII). Fedcap's work in the four practice areas is informed by the Community Impact Institute (CII), created in 2009 to operate as the agency's "discovery" arm. Through research, surveys, focus groups with diverse consumers of services, literature reviews, and convenings with government, business and community leaders, the CII is Fedcap's laboratory for designing and testing services and supports and developing the value propositions that serve as the foundation for new program initiatives. The Community Impact Institute of Fedcap sponsors two Solution Series annually on topics impacting the self sufficiency of individuals with barriers. In 2011 we focused on veterans, in 2012 we focused on the previously incarcerated and our February 2013 Solution Series focused on Changing the Story for Youth transitioning from foster care.

II. Changing the Story Through Washingtonians for Children

When Fedcap launched WFC, the Child and Family Services Agency identified that there were 100 or more youth who were currently in college. Of those, 78 were attending UDC, Trinity and PGCC. Thanks to funding from the Freddie Mac Foundation, Fedcap was able to hire a Director and two college coordinators (who had aged out of foster care and successfully graduated from college), find office space, establish a WFC website, refine the interventions/supports to be offered, and began to work with CFSA to make connections with each of the youth in college.

Based on conversations with CFSA, we decided to focus on the 78 youth currently attending UDC, Prince George's Community College and Trinity. Our goal was to ensure that these youth achieved significantly better college graduation rates than those who went before them.

Through ongoing interaction with CFSA, open houses, focus groups, conversations with CASA-DC as well outreach through social media and word of mouth we were able to connect with 70 of the 78 youth in college. Of those, 60 expressed some level of interest. Understanding that youth who age out of care rarely want to be seen as needy or to have more system involvement than they already have, we strategically messaged our offerings in such a way that youth understood the following:

- Enrollment in WFC was totally their choice;
- Our offerings of support were fully dependent on their identified needs/interests;
- There was no expectation of the level of involvement—whatever they needed or wanted we would seek to provide;
- Our interventions were strength based—and that our perception of them was that they were the 10% that succeeded not youth who have deficits or who are somehow flawed because they spent time in foster care.

Focus groups with youth and their caregivers identified desired supports that mirrored what we have heard in other jurisdictions; support in academics, more significant connections with caring adults to get them through the “tough times,” assistance with internships, help preparing for and finding jobs to help fund miscellaneous costs.

Based on research, literature search, evidence based practices and Fedcap's own experiences in New York City, New Jersey and New Hampshire, we identified and successfully tested the following interventions:

- **Get Ready!™** --Our experience has taught us that many of the skills that young people naturally learn within family settings are underdeveloped in youth in care. For example, youth in care have developed value systems and beliefs about themselves that are counterproductive and impact success. They have few if any self-marketing and networking

skills. They often struggle with feedback from adults—constructive or otherwise. Over the course of the past several years, Fedcap has been actively working with youth, advocates, business and marketing firms to design a curriculum for youth and young adults that is interactive, self paced and designed to “fill the gaps” in youth development that were missed as a result of spending critical developmental years in foster care. The curriculum, entitled **Get Ready!™** combines educational techniques, skills development and self-esteem building experiences that provide youth with the foundational skills needed to succeed in college and employment environments. Youth experience **Get Ready!™** at their own pace and based on their own specific needs.

The six modules of **Get Ready!™** are highlighted below:

Learning About Yourself	This module focuses on self-awareness, helping individuals become aware of their values, beliefs, attitudes and perceptions and how behaviors resulting from those beliefs affect success. Situational judgment exercises have been designed to assist youth in developing appropriate responses to life stressors.
National Work Readiness	This module provides an overview of the National Work Readiness Site through which individuals can achieve National Work Readiness Certification.
You Have the Solution!	This module focuses on problem solving and decision-making, helping participants simplify overwhelming situations by identifying useful, objective problem and goal statements. It then assists them to develop skills such as active listening, conflict resolution, and effective communication.
Personal Branding	This module focuses on understanding and being able to effectively market one’s skills and abilities. Through the innovative process of Personal Branding, participants define exactly what makes them different and unique. While there are many efforts focused on self-improvement, Personal Branding suggests instead that success comes in part from self-packaging, leading to an indelible impression that is distinctively their own.
Post-Secondary Pathways	This module focuses on career exploration and going to college. Through it, individuals explore and evaluate career interests and training needs and develop their post-secondary pathway.
Networking by Design	This module focuses of building the skills required to effectively network within both personal and professional circles. Individuals learn how to network, connect to resources and effectively communicate in networking conversations.

Every young person involved in WFC has completed at least one module of **Get Ready!™** and most have completed three or more. There feedback to us is that they have especially appreciated the Personal Branding process, resume development, crafting their 30-second elevator pitch and learning effective strategies to accept feedback.

Academic Tutoring and Support.

Because young adults in child welfare systems have experienced educational instability, we find that many struggle with even the basic math, English and science course. This struggle contributes to the young person’s sense of isolation and low self-worth

Through the efforts of CFSA, a pool of community-based agencies was identified as referral sources for youth with academic needs.

Jodi is a 19-year-old freshman at the Community College of the District of Columbia. Jodi was excited to hear about the mentoring and tutoring services provided by WFC, and within less than two months of her enrollment has been paired with a professional mentor and math tutor. Get Ready!™ helped her develop improved time management skills and Personal Branding helped improve her self image. Jodi is taking advantage of all resources available to her to help her succeed.

Eighteen youth asked for academic supports—each citing significant issues with math and reading. We have linked each youth who asked for support to our community partner—and we actively follow up to ensure that youth are getting what they need.

- **The Step by Step Guide for Getting to College and Graduating.** We learned that many of the youth had no idea how to prepare to enter college and what to expect when they got there. Small things such as the kind of sheets to buy, how to manage their first night with their roommate, were just as daunting as how to find their classes and purchase books. As a result, Fedcap worked with a group of college youth who aged out of foster care and successfully graduated from college to build this 12 chapter guidebook.

The guide is available both on-line and in hard copy and has been provided to every student in the program. Every young person in the program has indicated that they wish that there had been something like this available to them earlier—and now consider it “their bible”.

- **Partnership With Colleges---**We rapidly learned that even if a young person with a child welfare history makes it into college, the majority of colleges and universities are not prepared to support them in being successful. As a result, in concert with CFSA Director Brenda Donald, we reached out to UDC, Trinity and Prince George’s Community Colleges—working to establish a Memoranda of Agreement that outlined responsibilities of CFSA, WFC and the college.

WFC has developed Memoranda of Agreement with Prince George’s Community College, UDC and Trinity College. Each college expressed significant interest in the success of this population and working with us to provide consistent, in-college supports.

- **Re-Enrollment Activities**

As indicated previously, many of the youth who enter college do not make it past their freshman year. This is part of the national narrative of youth leaving foster care who enter college and WFC was committed to changing this pattern. While we had not anticipated that this would be a significant part of our efforts it has been. Youth who heard of WFC have contacted us and asked for help to re-enroll. Sometimes this takes the form of advocating for them with the college, sometimes it takes the form of assistance in applying for college loans, and often it requires spending time with the youth working to understand what went wrong the first time and how they can plan for a different outcome.

WFC worked with CFSA and our mentoring partners and through these contacts as well as word of mouth, we have actively reached out to youth who left college. We have successfully assisted 6 youth in re-entering college and we are currently working with an additional group of young people who express a desire to re-enroll. This has proven to be a challenging task and has provided us much insight into the tremendous obstacles that youth face after having a difficult first year, dropping out and then deciding to re-enter college.

- **Connect2Careers™** -- Fedcap has leveraged our successful history of creating and sustaining relationships with employers into a highly successful career exploration approach entitled Connect2Careers™. During these speed dating-like sessions, youth are exposed to diverse-usually 35+ professionals and businesses –as a way to practice their informational interviewing skills and to explore career options.

Through Get Ready!™ youth come to the session with a polished resume and business cards in hand.

Jake is a very motivated and driven young man. During our initial interaction with him at our Meet and Greet at the Office of Youth Empowerment (CFSA), Jake was interested, listened and asked questions about what WFC had to offer. Jake completed the Get Ready!™ curriculum and was very excited about participation in our Connect2Careers™ event. He came dressed very professionally and was prepared with a polished resume and business cards. Jake left Connect2Careers™ with several professional contacts and a new confidence in his ability to present himself.

During our WFC Connect2Careers™ session we had 20 business representatives attend including representatives from financial, construction/engineering, criminal justice, media and education service areas. Seven business representatives volunteered to become mentors and coaches to specific young adults with whom they had connected to during the event. Others agreed to serve as sites of our High Impact Internships. Others offered to interview youth for full time jobs.

- **High Impact Internships.** To be competitive in the job market, young people need meaningful work experiences and the resulting personal connections that come from high-impact internships. For youth in care who have few if any financial supports, paid internships are a necessity. Fedcap developed tools to educate the business community about the benefits of (and necessity for) engaging these youth in high impact paid internships and marketing strategies to build local pipelines that connect young people with supportive employers. Thanks to the investment of CFSA we are able to provide paid, meaningful internships to youth in the program.

When learning about our High Impact Internships, Sam was very eager to learn about potential placements. Because of his interest in Management, PR, and Communications, Sam was introduced to Restaurant Associates –where he will hopefully intern this summer within their corporate headquarters in DC.

To date, 20% of youth in the program have requested and are actively applying for placements in High Impact Internships. We believe that this number will significantly increase, as we get closer to the summer months. We are engaged in multiple communication strategies to ensure youth are aware of this opportunity.

Jordan is a freshman at PGCC studying fashion design and business management. Currently, she is taking fashion design courses and will begin her general education classes in fall 2013. Jordan is one of WFC's candidates for WFC's High Impact Internship Program to help her learn more about the professional aspects of running a business. To help Jordan, to achieve her goals, we recently helped her connect with a mentor through CFLS.

- **Mentoring: Connection to A Network of Caring, Knowledgeable Adults**

We believe that all young adults need security, guidance, encouragement and positioning to be successful. During this year, Fedcap has worked to engage youth who are currently in college and to serve as a mentor of sorts for each young person. In addition, we have worked to find knowledgeable and caring adults to support the young people in the

program who are without existing supports. We have done this by connecting them to existing mentoring agencies. Because we understand that it is critical for youth to learn how to develop a network of caring adults we encouraged mentors to actively assist their mentees in developing a significant network of support and to teach their mentees how to leverage that network.

Many of the youth we work with did not have a supportive adult in their life at the time of enrollment in the program. A significant number were satisfied with the role model and mentoring of our college coordinators Phyllis Willis and Jamal Stith; reaching out to them to talk through issues and for a “shot in the arm” from time to time. Others really like the idea of having a formal mentor. We have connected these 18 youth to one of our mentoring partner agencies, who subsequently “matched” the young person with a mentor.

- **Aspirational Opportunities and Connection** --We seek to augment the “functional” training provided by the child welfare system with more “aspirational” experiences designed to “shake things up” and leave a lasting impression. Experiences are deemed aspirational because they 1) expose young adults to people, places and opportunities outside of their current access or understanding and 2) invigorate and expand their view of life’s possibilities. Our goal is to ignite a spark of curiosity and interest in exploring new things; and begin to “flip the script” on their often narrow perception of life’s possibilities. In doing so, we will inspire them to dream bigger and strive to achieve their full potential despite the challenges of having lived in foster care.

WFC co-sponsored an inaugural event in conjunction with Casey Family Programs and Great Expectations of Virginia. Youth were able to attend the inauguration and a reception following. Youth expressed amazement in their ability to experience this possibly “once in a lifetime event”. They discussed how inspired they were by the President’s comments, by the size of the crown and by the power of the day.

III. Year 2: Expansion of Outreach and Programs

During the next year we will focus our efforts on three populations:

- Youth currently enrolled in WFC
- Youth in their senior year of high school throughout the District to make initial contact and to support their college entry efforts
- Youth in 9th through 12th grade enrolled in Maryland schools.

Currently youth who reside and/or attend school in DC are recipients of multiple citywide efforts to increase high school graduation and college entry.

Youth in Maryland, however, while included in many worthwhile efforts, are not part of a coordinated effort to support them in graduating from high school and entering college. As a result of funding from AmeriCorps and Deerbrook Foundation we have added four (4) ReServist Success Mentors (see description of ReServe below) dedicated to delivering a focused approach to preparing up to 120 youth for college.

ReServe, a Division of Fedcap, seeks to enhance the lives of older adults and strengthen their communities. ReServe matches continuing professionals age 55+ with rewarding part-time service positions at nonprofits and public institutions in order to strengthen their communities while earning a modest stipend. ReServists provide direct service and capacity building assistance. Through our social impact initiatives, we offer targeted solutions to pressing social challenges.

The chart below depicts the numbers of youth currently attending 9th -12th grade in Maryland who are living in foster care under the supervision of the Child and Family Services Agency.

High School Enrollment	Maryland
9th Grade	52
10th Grade	37
11th Grade	39
12th Grade	30
Totals	158

Our efforts will include the core interventions described earlier in this document as well as a more formal focus on helping youth build the “resume” for college through community and school activities as well as academic achievement.

Additionally, Fedcap recently applied for a grant from the Hilton Foundation to implement **PrepNOW! A Guide for Foster Parents --Helping Youth in Care Go to College and Graduate**. If awarded this grant, Fedcap will work with child welfare leaders to expand PrepNOW! to all of its Change the Story locations around the country including Washington DC.

About **PrepNOW!**

For the past few decades the vast majority of foster parents have been trained using one of two curricula: Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (PS-MAPP) and Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE). Both curricula are highly effective in improving child safety and promoting permanency. However, they stop short of helping foster parents prepare the youth in their care prepare for college. Our research, literature scans and conversations with child welfare directors around the country suggest that there is no formal, structured approach to helping foster parents and others who work with youth in care, help these youth aspire to and prepare for college.

This omission has the effect of limiting expectations for youth in care by not making higher education an explicit goal for those children.

Both the PrepNOW! curriculum and its delivery systems will be designed to enhance caregivers’ motivation and capacity to prepare youth in their care for college. It will present these goals as a natural extension of - rather than a departure from- their current roles and focus on safety and permanency. The course content for **PrepNOW!** will provide caregivers the motivation, information and tools needed to assist prepare youth for college and beyond. Content will be presented in small groups and in individual one on one settings using an interactive, web-based on-line learning tool similar to Get Ready!™, Fedcap’s highly regarded web-based learning tool for youth. While some of the collateral materials will be derived from Get Ready!, most of the content will be original as will its structure and style. The content will be adjusted to respond to the specific responsibilities and capacities of caregivers and attorneys/advocates.

The content is structured within the following modules:

- ❖ Values
- ❖ Motivation
- ❖ Skills
- ❖ Knowledge