



BRIGHT FUTURES FOR TEENS AFTER FOSTER CARE

THE PROJECT:

During Fiscal Year 2017-2018, 4,011 children and youth spent time in San Diego County foster care. Approximately 20% were transitional age youth (TAY), ages 16-21. Frequent moves, multiple school transfers, and a lack of sufficient guidance leave transitional age youth unprepared and undereducated during their transition to adulthood. Without appropriate advocacy services and consistent mentorship, transitional age youth are at risk for experiencing the following outcomes, per the National Foster Youth Institute:

- At age 18, 20% of foster youth will become instantly homeless
- At age 24, only 50% of former foster youth will be gainfully employed
- Only 3% of foster youth will earn a college degree in their lifetime

Voices for Children's Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program recruits, trains, and supports volunteers to serve as individual advocates for foster youth until permanency is achieved or the case has been closed. CASAs are often the only consistent, caring adult in a foster child's life. Through our TAY program, specially-trained CASAs guide youth through the various skills and services needed to successfully transition to adulthood:

- **Education:** CASAs advocate in Court for access to enrichment activities, tutors, or other programs advantageous to foster youths' education, setting them on a path to academic success. CASAs often times hold education rights for foster youth and attend teacher conferences, school open houses, and other education-related meetings.
- **Employment:** CASAs tutor foster youth on how to write a compelling resume, conduct a job search, complete a job application, and interview for a job. CASAs instill the notion that obtaining a job and developing basic financial skills leads to economic opportunity and prosperity.
- **Financial Management:** CASAs coach foster youth in financial matters such as how to open a bank account, create a budget, or plan towards a large purchase, like a car.
- **Housing:** CASAs help foster youth to find safe, affordable housing.

CASAs offer transitional age youth an unparalleled level of support, reducing the likelihood of poverty, homelessness, and dependency, and helping them to become self-sufficient, contributing members of the community. Focusing Philanthropy and Voices for Children launched the "Bright Futures for Teens after Foster Care" campaign with the goal to provide individualized advocacy services for 450 transitional age foster youth in San Diego County during Fiscal Year 2017-2018. We are pleased to report that due to the generosity of our donors, we exceeded that goal, and provided 494 transitional age youth with individualized advocacy through our CASA program.

FOCUSING PHILANTHROPY SPRING 2018 CAMPAIGN IMPACT:

Focusing Philanthropy played an instrumental role in our ability to assign CASAs to 494 transitional age youth during Fiscal Year 2017-2018. Voices for Children and Focusing Philanthropy’s “Bright Futures for Teens after Foster Care” campaign set out to raise \$300,000 through a matching challenge, where every \$1 raised by Focusing Philanthropy would be matched with \$2 raised by Voices for Children, until the campaign goal of \$300,000 was reached. The \$300,000 goal proposed to fund 120 new CASAs who would advocate for 200 transitional age youth. The campaign ran from April 1, 2018-June 15, 2018 and raised \$483,351.54; far surpassing our \$300,000 goal. In the end, seven major donors in San Diego responded, with gifts ranging from \$1,500 to \$102,416.10; totaling \$283,351.54. The funds VFC raised were matched with \$155,000 from Focusing Philanthropy, which was an additional \$55,000 more than pledged. The combined \$438,351.54 allowed us to recruit, train, and support 175 new CASA volunteers for an entire year. These new CASAs directly advocated for 292 transitional age youth, as CASAs were assigned to individual youth or sibling groups. Voices for Children is incredibly grateful for the support of Focusing Philanthropy and your organization’s belief in our mission. Through our partnership, we were able to provide 175 CASAs to youth in need, and as a result, forever change the lives of 292 youth in San Diego County foster care with the consistent, relentless advocacy of a CASA.

IMPORTANCE OF THE TRANSITIONAL AGE YOUTH PROGRAM:

The impact CASAs have on the lives of the foster youth they serve is immeasurable. With the intervention and support of a CASA volunteer like Miranda, foster youth like Norma are able to achieve incredible milestones:

CASA Miranda has been assigned to 18-year-old Norma’s case since July 2015. Miranda consistently visited with Norma, built a trusting relationship, and provided guidance as Norma began to grow more independent. Throughout her high school years, Norma’s personal growth was astounding. Norma finished her senior year of high school with a 3.51 GPA and enrolled in community college. As Norma was approaching her eighteenth birthday, she decided to participate in extended foster care (EFC) with support and encouragement from Miranda. Miranda began assisting Norma with creating a resume, applying for jobs, utilizing financial aid and scholarships for college, and preparing to take her driver’s test. Norma also began participating in independent living skills (ILS) training, where she is consistently setting goals, reaching them, and creating more to accomplish.

Today, Norma lives independently in an apartment as part of the transitional housing placement plus foster care (THP+FC) program. She is passing all of her community college courses, and recently completed an internship at Foot Locker Kids through the EXCEL program. Her high-performance at her internship resulted in a part-time job offer from Foot Locker Kids, which Norma graciously accepted. While Norma passed her written driver’s test, her next goal is to pass the behind the wheel portion, with Miranda’s guidance. Norma says that CASA Miranda has been instrumental in her success, and that her advocacy and guidance has enabled Norma to accomplish things she never thought were possible.

Voices for Children is so grateful for the support of Focusing Philanthropy and your investment in our CASA program. Together, we have changed the lives of 492 of the most vulnerable youth in San Diego County. Thank you.