

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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CTG Completes Project with NYS Office of Children & Family Services to Help Improve Foster Care

The Center for Technology in Government at the University at Albany (CTG) and its partners have completed a data-gathering project for the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) that will lead the technological development for implementing the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). The federally-mandated NYTD is designed to collect information nationally on youth preparing to leave the foster care system so that the system can be improved.

New York State OCFS partnered with CTG to implement the first five years of the NYTD outcomes survey, including conducting data collection for the first full cohort of the NYTD youth. This partnership enabled OCFS to leverage CTG's more than 20 years of applied research and technology innovation experience within government agencies.

"The Office of Children and Family Services has worked with the Center for Technology in Government for the past five years to implement the National Youth in Transition Database in New York State," said Laura Velez, Deputy OCFS Commissioner of Child Welfare and Community Services. "CTG's dedicated efforts have been pivotal in helping OCFS understand how independent living services are being administered and whether they are helping young people achieve success. OCFS is honored to have partnered with CTG to implement this worthy initiative."

The NYTD was established by the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in 2010 in response to more than 35,000 youth leaving foster care each year with little to no information regarding their outcomes once they exit care. To address this need, ACF and the Children's Bureau requested that all states track and report on the independent living services offered to youth ages 14-21 who are transitioning from foster care. In New York State, the five-year collection process consisted of CTG, with assistance from the Center for Survey Research at Stony Brook University, collecting data from New York's foster care youth at age 17, again when that cohort turns 19, and a final follow up at the age of 21. Data collected from the NYTD surveys, including employment status, education level, health care status and more, can help inform policy and practice surrounding transition planning, anticipating the needs of youth once they leave care, and understanding what circumstances may predispose a foster youth to certain outcomes such as incarceration or homelessness.

Throughout the early stages of the project, a persistent challenge was that many youth were reluctant or unaware of the NYTD survey, posing a hurdle to CTG when trying to maintain communication with this youth and build a trusting relationship. Youth in this population also tend to move frequently or change their contact information, on which CTG relies to conduct follow-up surveys. Recognizing the need to create a new component to the NYTD project to mitigate this challenge, CTG and OCFS created the NYTD Peer Caller Program, which included incorporating current youth in foster care in leading outreach efforts to the youth being surveyed. CTG found that trust and empathy were critical in getting foster youth engaged in completing the surveys, and having the peer callers serve as the face of the NYTD outreach efforts greatly improved the program's ability to build relationships with participating youth. This initiative, which received the UAlbany President's Award for Exemplary Public Engagement, resulted in a 70% increase in NYTD connections maintained with youth in-between follow-up surveys, ultimately giving CTG more reliable and accurate contact information to use in future survey attempts.

When the data collection from the first complete cohort closed, CTG partnered with OCFS to identify a new project lead to build upon the technological infrastructure, liaisons network, and NYTD brand that CTG had constructed over the past five years. Given their expertise in the area of child welfare and their positive working relationship with OCFS, CTG invited the Center for Human Services Research (CHSR) at the University at Albany to assume responsibility of the NYTD project once CTG's contract ended in November 2015.

CTG, established in 1993 by then Governor Mario Cuomo, has more than 20 years of experience working with government leaders worldwide, encouraging them to think strategically about technology and find innovative solutions to pressing public problems. For more information on CTG projects or partnerships, view more of their

website (www.ctg.albany.edu).

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