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# Presentation Overview

- Bridge to Independence (B2i)
  - What is B2i?
  - How to qualify for the program?
  - How to participate in the program?
- Guardianships & Adoptions
- Young Adults' roles in the program
- Juvenile Court & Foster Care Review Board
- Transitioning IN and OUT of B2i
  - Barriers
  - Success
  - Collaborative Efforts
- Program Data



# About Bridge to Independence (B2i)

- 2013- Nebraska Legislature passed the *Young Adult Voluntary Supports and Services Act* which has become *Bridge to Independence (B2i)*
- B2i is voluntary program designed to help young people transition from foster care into adulthood
- B2i provides support/guidance through: assistance with medical health coverage, monthly stipend for living expenses, and one-on-one case management towards young adults' goals.



# B2i Vision & Mission

## Vision

- B2i Envisions a Nebraska where every young person who ages out of foster care will have resources and support they need to prepare them for adulthood and to positively contribute to their communities

## Mission

- Provide young people aging out of foster care a smooth transition into adulthood with developmentally appropriate support, youth directed services and a broad safety net that allows young people to learn the life lessons they need to become independent



# B2i Values

## Guidance

- Balancing the need to guide young adults while enhancing their self-sufficiency with self-determination.
- Providing guidance, advice and input for young people to take into account when making decision.

## Non-judgemental

- We understand that young adults will make mistakes and bad choices. It's a natural part of the process of becoming an adult. We cannot stop these mistakes, we can guide young adults to learn from them, and provide them with resources and guidance on how to make different choices going forward.

## Empowerment

- To help young people get up on their feet, so they can stand strong and walk confidently into adulthood
- Doing this while maintaining qualifications for B2i program



# B2i – how does one qualify?

## Eligibility requirements:

- Young Adult must have prior [abuse/neglect juvenile adjudication under Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-247 \(3\)\(a\)](#) or [equivalent adjudication under tribal law](#)
- ***Citizenship/lawful presence in the United States***
- ***In an out of home placement on turning 19 years old, OR discharged successfully to Independent Living***
- ***Entered into a guardianship at the age of 16 or older***
- ***Signing of the Voluntary Services and Support Agreement***
- ***Educational and Employment conditions***

Link to B2i eligibility and online application

[http://dhhs.ne.gov/children\\_family\\_services/BridgeToIndependence/Pages/Eligibility.aspx](http://dhhs.ne.gov/children_family_services/BridgeToIndependence/Pages/Eligibility.aspx)



# Participation Eligibility Requirements

- Education
  - Completing high school or equivalent program i.e. GED Program
  - Enrolled at least part time in college, community college, or a vocational education program (6 credit hours)
- Employment
  - Employed at least 80 hours per month (20 hours per week)
- Participating in a program or activity to remove barriers to employment (internship, volunteer, working with career center, etc.)
  - Young adult needs to have at least 40 hours per month completed in this category
  - Activities can be determined and approved between young adult their independence coordinator and supervisor



# Participation Eligibility Requirements cont'd

- A combination of any of previous activities such as Education/Employment or Education/Removing Barriers or Employment Barriers/Employment
- Young adult can be excused if they are unable to do any of the activities due to documented medical condition

[http://dhhs.ne.gov/children\\_family\\_services/BridgeToIndependence/Pages/Eligibility.aspx](http://dhhs.ne.gov/children_family_services/BridgeToIndependence/Pages/Eligibility.aspx)



# Guardianships and Adoptions

- Eligible for extended subsidy if:
  - Entered into a adoption or guardianship when the young adult was 16+
  - Must have active guardianship or adoption subsidy at the time of 19<sup>th</sup> birthday
  - Abuse/neglect adjudication at time of adoption or guardianship
  - Meet the educational or employment conditions
  - Be between the age of 19 and 21

[http://dhhs.ne.gov/children\\_family\\_services/BridgeToIndependence/Pages/Eligibility.aspx](http://dhhs.ne.gov/children_family_services/BridgeToIndependence/Pages/Eligibility.aspx)



# Guardianships and Adoptions continued:

- Young adults who were adopted:
  - Adoptive parent must sign an agreement that the funds received will be used to benefit the young adult
  - Young adult will not be assigned an Independence Coordinator:
    - Project Everlast
    - PALS
    - Branching Out
    - Other independent living programs

[http://dhhs.ne.gov/children\\_family\\_services/BridgeToIndependence/Pages/Eligibility.aspx](http://dhhs.ne.gov/children_family_services/BridgeToIndependence/Pages/Eligibility.aspx)



# Guardianships and Adoptions continued:

- Youth in a guardianship:
  - Ability to opt in to traditional Bridge program:
    - Work with an Independence Coordinator
    - Receive the B2i stipend directly
- Youth who do not choose to enter the traditional Bridge program:
  - Stipend would go directly to the guardian
  - Guardian must sign agreement that the money will be used to benefit the young adult
  - Young adult would not work with an Independence Coordinator
    - Project Everlast, PALS, Branching Out, other independent living agencies



# Transition into B2i

- Youth are typically assigned to the Independence Coordinator 6 months prior to turning 19
  - Start a relationship with young adult
  - Assist with developing a transition plan for 19<sup>th</sup> birthday (housing, supports, eligibility requirements, etc.)
  - Provide support and resources to the case manager to assist the youth with aging out of foster care
  - Ensure the youth has essential documents needed: ID/Driver's License, Social Security Card, State Certified Birth Certificate



# Roles and Responsibilities:

## ➤ Of Young Adult

- Meet with Independence Coordinator once a month
- Provide verification of employment/ education
- Create the Independent Living Plan with the Independence Coordinator
  - Youth driven: Independence Coordinator does not determine what the young adult's goals are

## ➤ Of Independence Coordinator

- Collaborate with the young adult in developing their goals
- Approve housing
- Provide support
- Assist with seeking out community resources- formal and informal
- Independent living education



# Barriers upon entering B2i

- Not having needed documentation at age 19 (birth certificate, social security card, ID or license)
- Not having drivers license- MUCH EASIER TO GET PRIOR TO 19!!
- Lack of support system identified by young adult
- Young adult not using resources offered to them
- Lack of independent living plan driven by young adult
- Lack of basic independent living skills - budgeting, scheduling medical appointments, meal planning, etc.
- Pending legal charges
- Mental health/substance abuse
- Transportation



# Court

Federal law requires that there be a judicial determination that participating in B2i is in the young adult's best interest and also requires that there be judicial oversight of the agreement between NDHHS and young adult

- Best interest order within 180 days of signing the Voluntary Services and Support Agreement
- Annual permanency review hearing required and must be held within 365 days of the original best interest finding
- Independence Coordinator submit court report and Transitional Living Proposal/Plan (TLP) to the court and legal parties
  - Young adult works with the Independence Coordinator to complete the report and signs the report prior to it being sent to court
    - Independence Coordinator documents efforts to collaborate in report if written without the young adult or the young adult does not sign the report



# Court

- Court report:
  - Statement of facts explaining why B2i is in the best interest of young adult
  - Summary of program eligibility
    - How is the young adult meeting education and employment conditions
    - Living arrangement
    - Citizenship
    - Statement of prior adjudication status
    - Date young adult signed VSSA
  - Reasonable efforts
  - Any other information the young adult or Independence Coordinator would like to court to consider



# Foster Care Review Board

Purpose is to ensure the young adult is working towards their goals and being provided with the opportunities and support to achieve those goals

- Completed every 6 months
- Review successes, barriers, ensure young adult has essential documents
- Can be completed by phone or in person
  - Young adult can choose who they would like to participate in the review or they can choose to complete it privately



# Medicaid

- Former Foster Care
  - Youth in foster care or independent living in Nebraska AND on Medicaid during their 18th year
  - Eligible for coverage until the age of 26
  - Not an option for youth in guardianship or adoption before 18
  - No Income requirements
  - Must reside in Nebraska to receive Nebraska Medicaid. Otherwise will depend on state in which residing
- Subsidized Adoption and Guardianship Assistance
  - Youth who enter subsidized federal guardianship or adoption after 16 AND meet criteria for B2i
  - Eligible for Medicaid until the age of 21
  - Income limit is \$228 for household of 1 for state funded guardianships and adoptions- must apply separately if state funded



# Young adults out of state

- Young adults can reside anywhere in the US and still be eligible for B2i
- Out of state young adults still require monthly face to face
  - ICPC available for states that have extension of foster care program
- Young adult residing in another state will need to apply for Medicaid in that state
  - Not guaranteed coverage due to former ward status- goes state by state
- Young adults must meet the employment/education conditions
- Independence Coordinator's will assist with finding Independent Living resources in the state young adult is residing in
- If residing out of state when turn 21- not eligible for ILS from Nebraska
- Not eligible for Opportunity Passport and other IL services in Nebraska if residing out of state



# Barriers in B2i:

- Healthy relationships
- Budgeting/money management
  - B2i cannot dictate how the young adult using their monthly stipend.
  - Attempt to educate, budget, plan for the future
- Stable employment
- Stable housing
- Mental health/substance abuse
- Transportation
- Legal charges
- Learning how to do things on their own- IC will not “do everything” for them



# Transition out of B2i

- Upon graduation (21<sup>st</sup> Birthday)
  - Provide a list of community resources the young adult can access
  - Refer to Project Everlast, PALS for Independent Living Specialist (if wanted)
- If terminated prior to 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday
  - Provide list of community resources
  - Let young adult know they can re-enter the program if they meet the eligibility requirements
  - Refer to Project Everlast, PALS
    - Refer to NFC Aftercare (Douglas/Sarpy County only)



# Success Stories

Kaylea:

At 18 Kaylea was residing with her grandmother. She was enrolled in college but not doing well and unsure what she wanted to do with her future. She ended up taking a break from school and obtained employment. She applied for and received the Aksarben scholarship. Kaylea used it to obtain her CDL license and has since completed her Associate's degree in Diesel Mechanics. Kaylea has also obtained independent housing, a car, and will be starting employment with a trucking agency the day after her 21 birthday. Kaylea has also been able to budget her money and has money saved for when an emergency situation comes up.



# Success Stories Cont'd

Terrance:

When Terrance entered B2i, he was jumping from job to job. He had dropped out of high school about a year earlier and had made an attempt to get his GED but wasn't really motivated to get it. Currently, Terrance has been employed at the Bike Union for about 6 months. He has become very motivated to obtain his GED and is working with a tutor through the Bike Union. Terrance was extremely closed off when he first started B2i but has since opened up and has no fear about reaching out for help or advice. He has recently reconnected with his former therapist. In addition to working and studying for his GED, he is also very motivated to get his learner's permit or driver's license so he can get a car. He is currently riding his bike to and from work (about 7 miles) but is already thinking ahead on how he will get to work during the winter.



# Success

- Is determined by the young adult and where they are at that point in their life
- ***Strong Emphasis*** on What does young adult want to achieve?
- Is defined more often as an Immeasurable outcome

- Getting a job interview for a job they are excited for
- Getting driver's license
- Getting a car
- Getting own apartment
- Continuing with college, completing high school, or Obtaining GED

- Seeking out their own mental health treatment
- Obtaining and maintaining sobriety
- Reconnecting with positive supports (family, friends, foster parents, teachers)
- Having the Judge from their juvenile case tell them good job



# Achieving Goals through Collaboration

Young adults' success can be attributed to variety of services & providers in Nebraska

- PALS, Education & Training Voucher (ETV), Payment of Drivers Ed- All Supported through Central Plains Center For Services
- Hope Chest and Foster Care Closet
- Project Everlast Councils, Opportunity Passport, The Need Based Fund- All supported through the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
- Youth Mart

<http://www.central-plains.org>



<http://omahahomeforboys.org/programs-services/branching-out-independent-living/>

<http://www.nebraskachildren.org/>

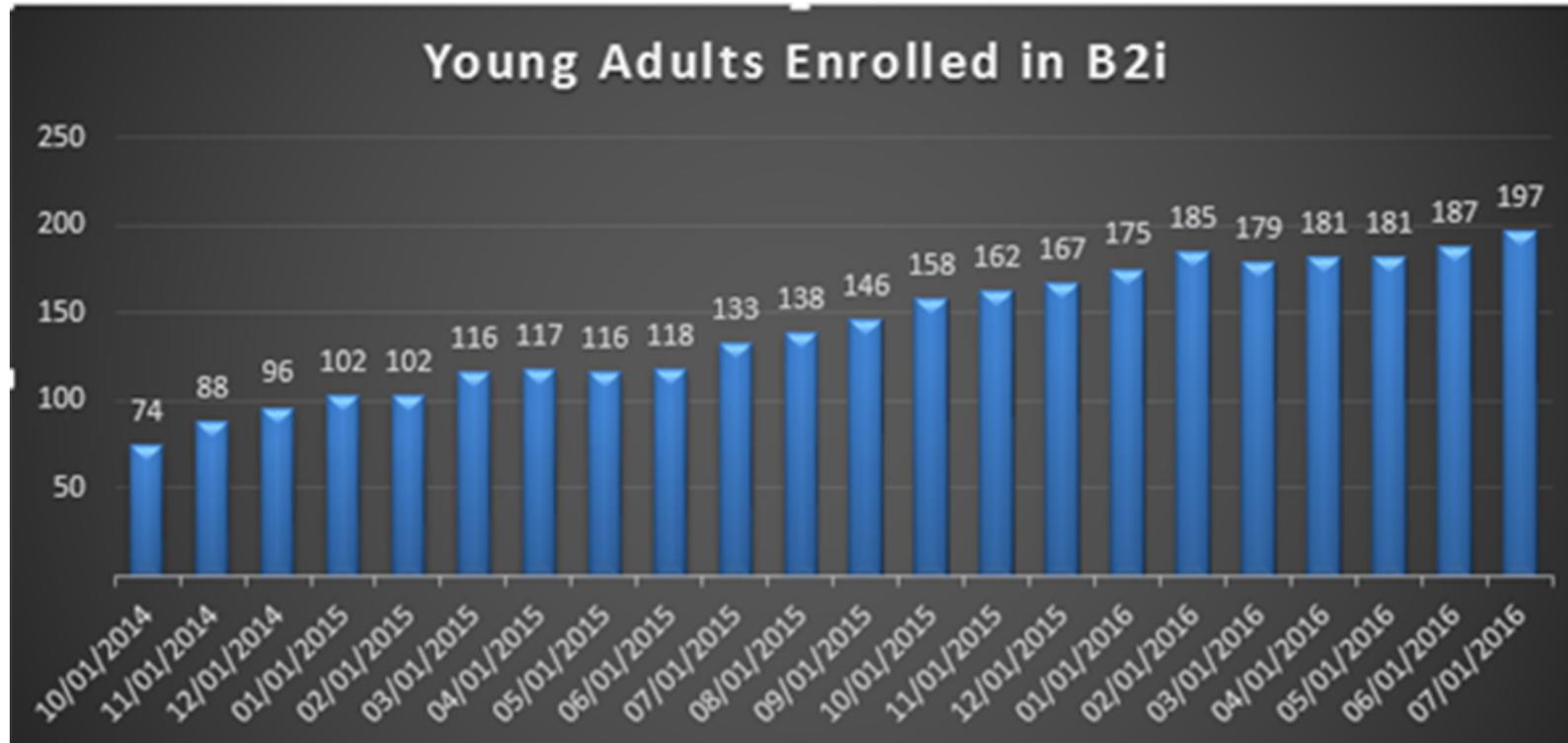


# Success through Collaboration

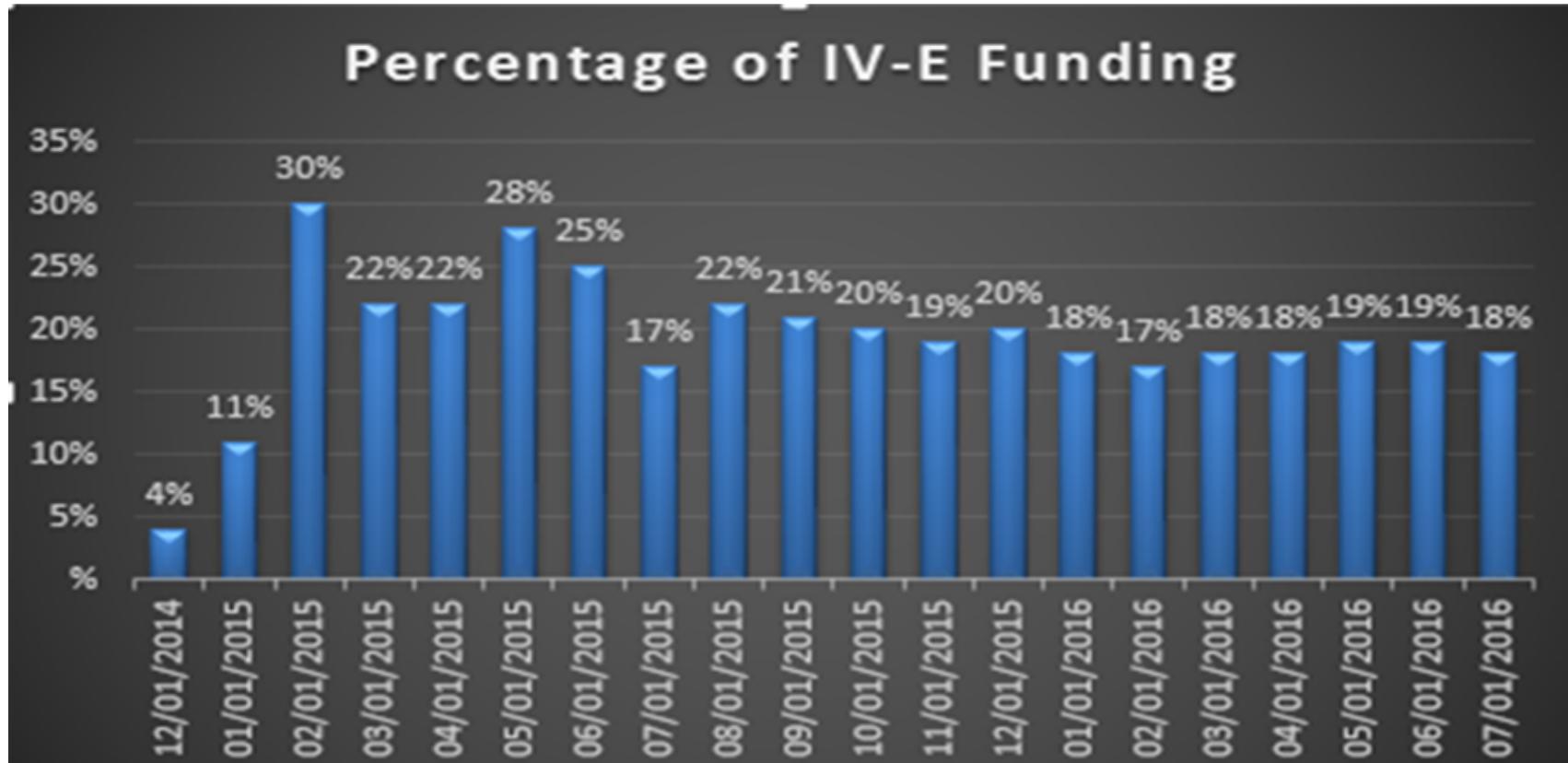
- Working with all members of team during a juvenile's open case such as Foster Agency, GAL, CASA, CFSS, Juv. Probation Officer, County Attorney, and the Court
- Working with educational program young adult is enrolled in, Universities, Community Colleges, Technical Schools, High Schools, Alternative Schools, Job Corps, etc.
- Behavioral Health Regions I-VI across NE
- Mental Health Providers/Programs
- Voc. Rehab
- American Job Center



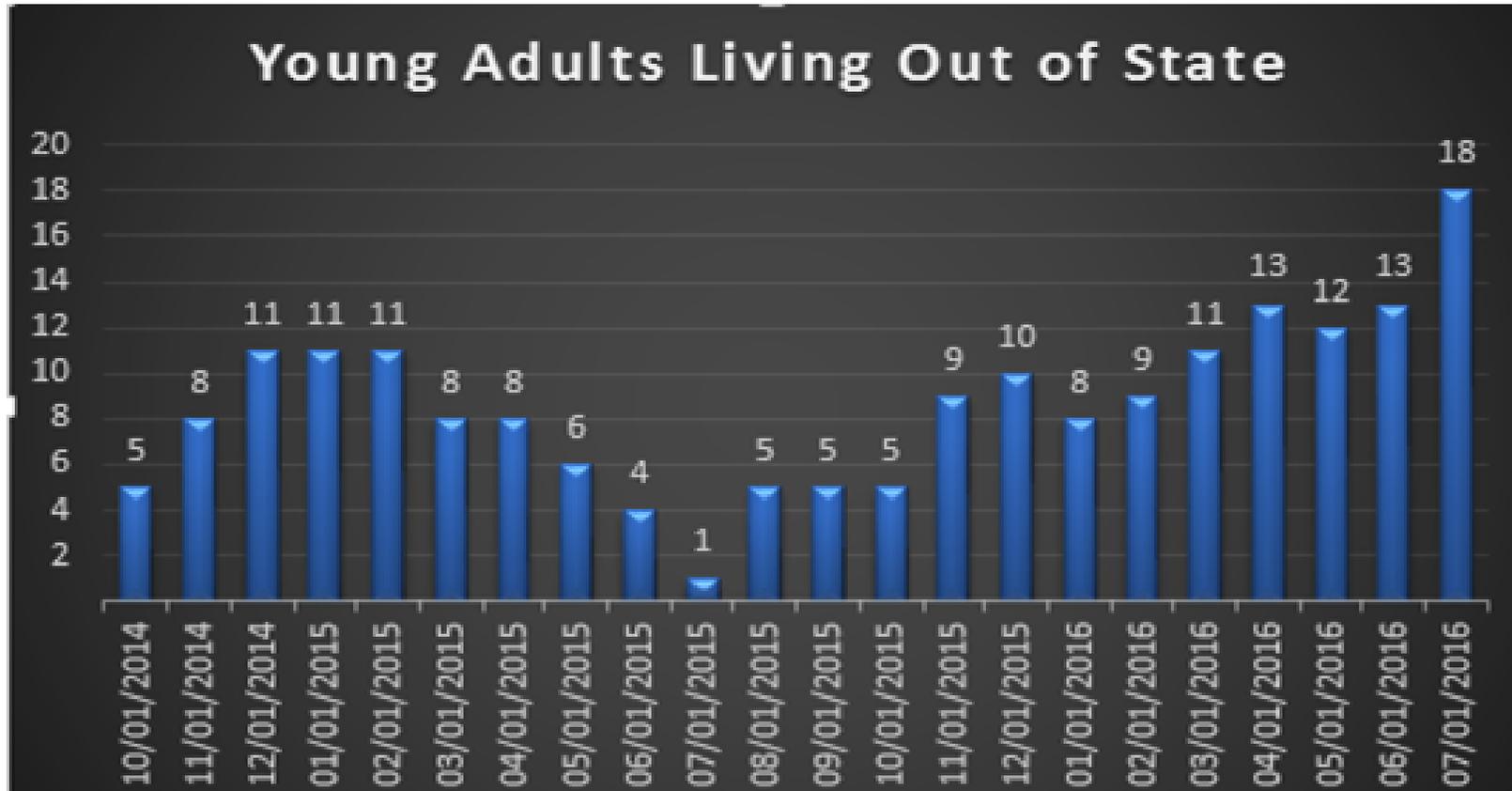
# of Young Adults in B2i



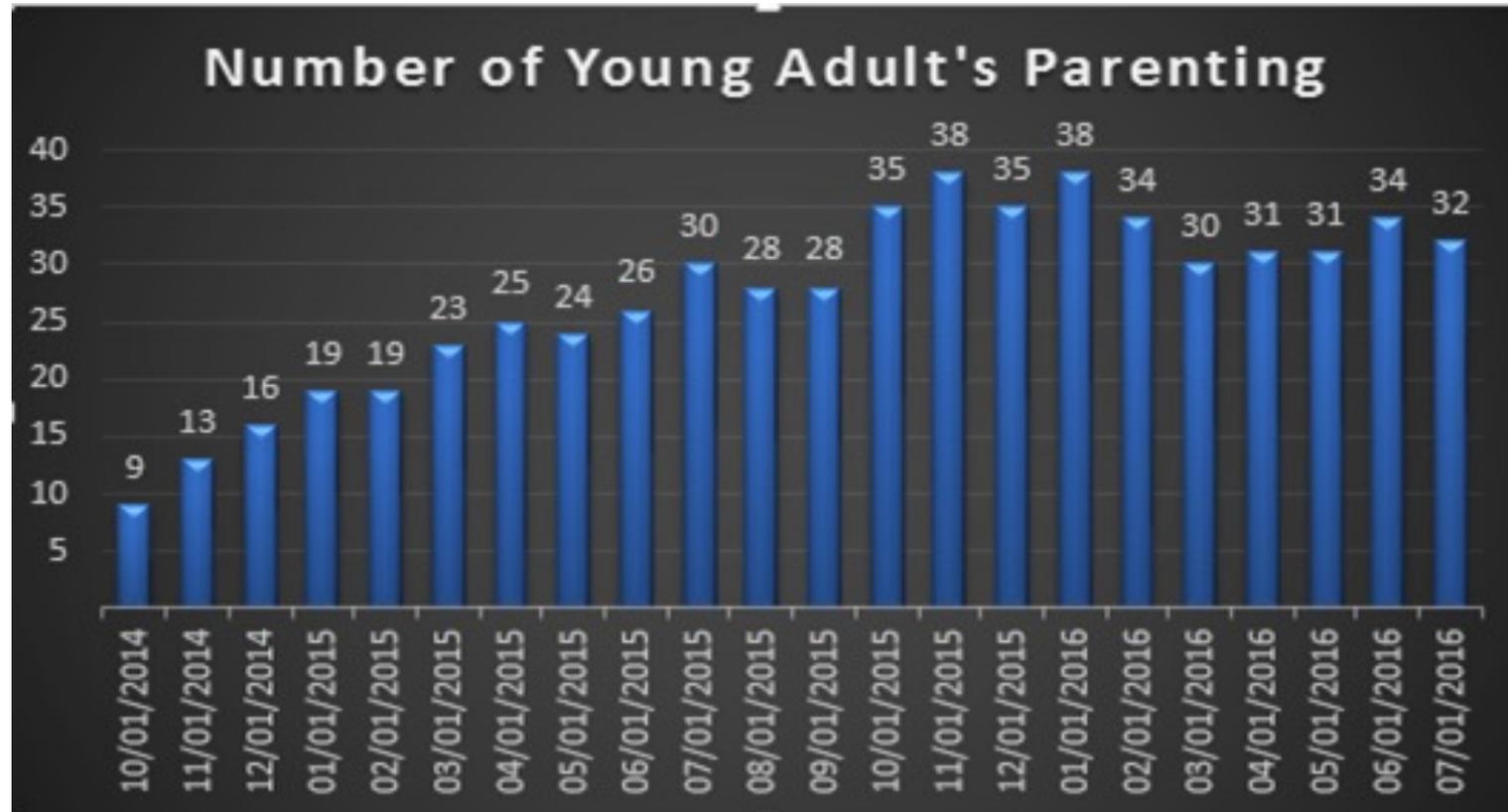
# Percentage of IV-E Funding



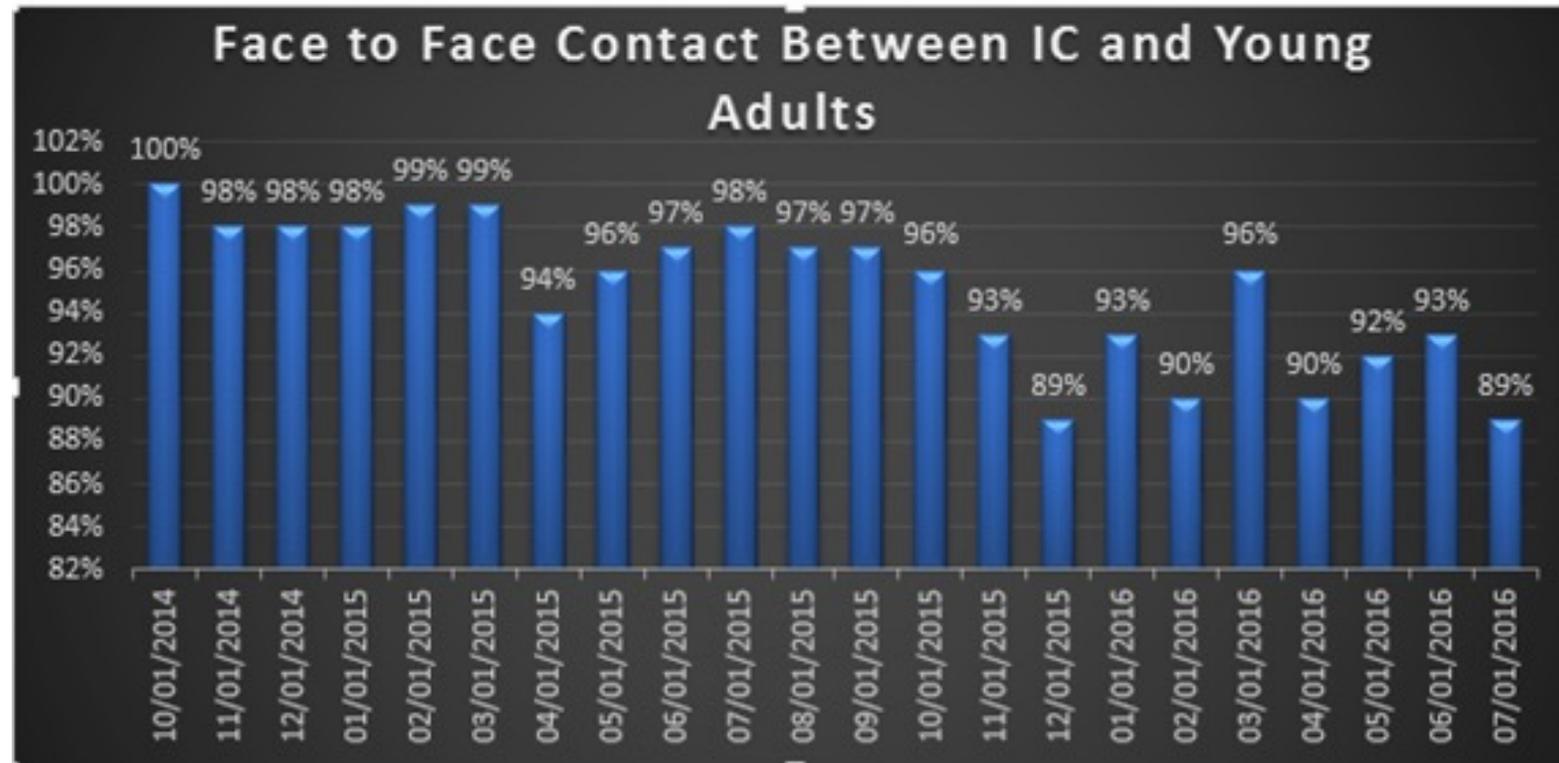
# Young Adults out of State



# Young Adults Parenting



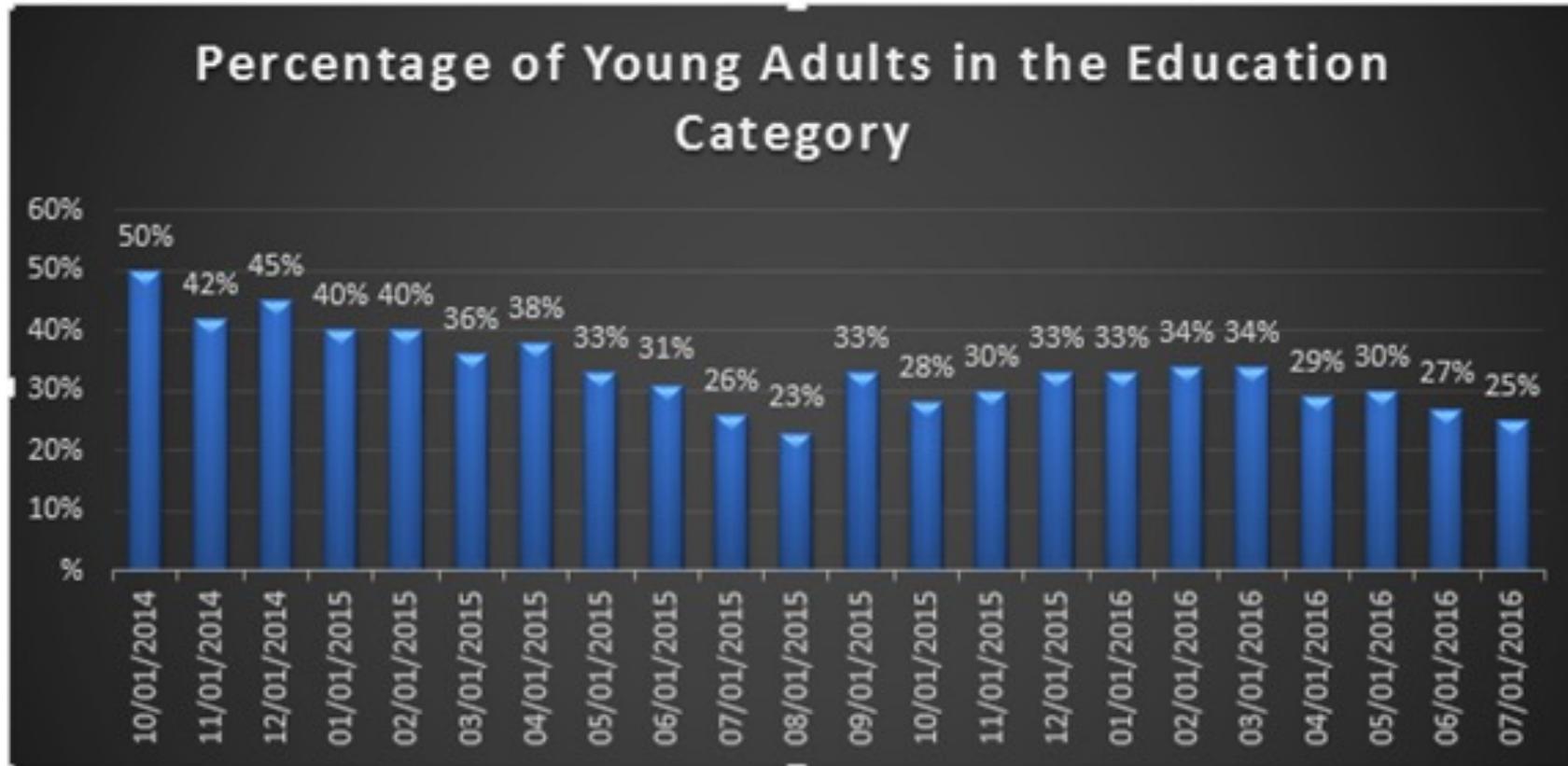
# Monthly Face to Face Contact



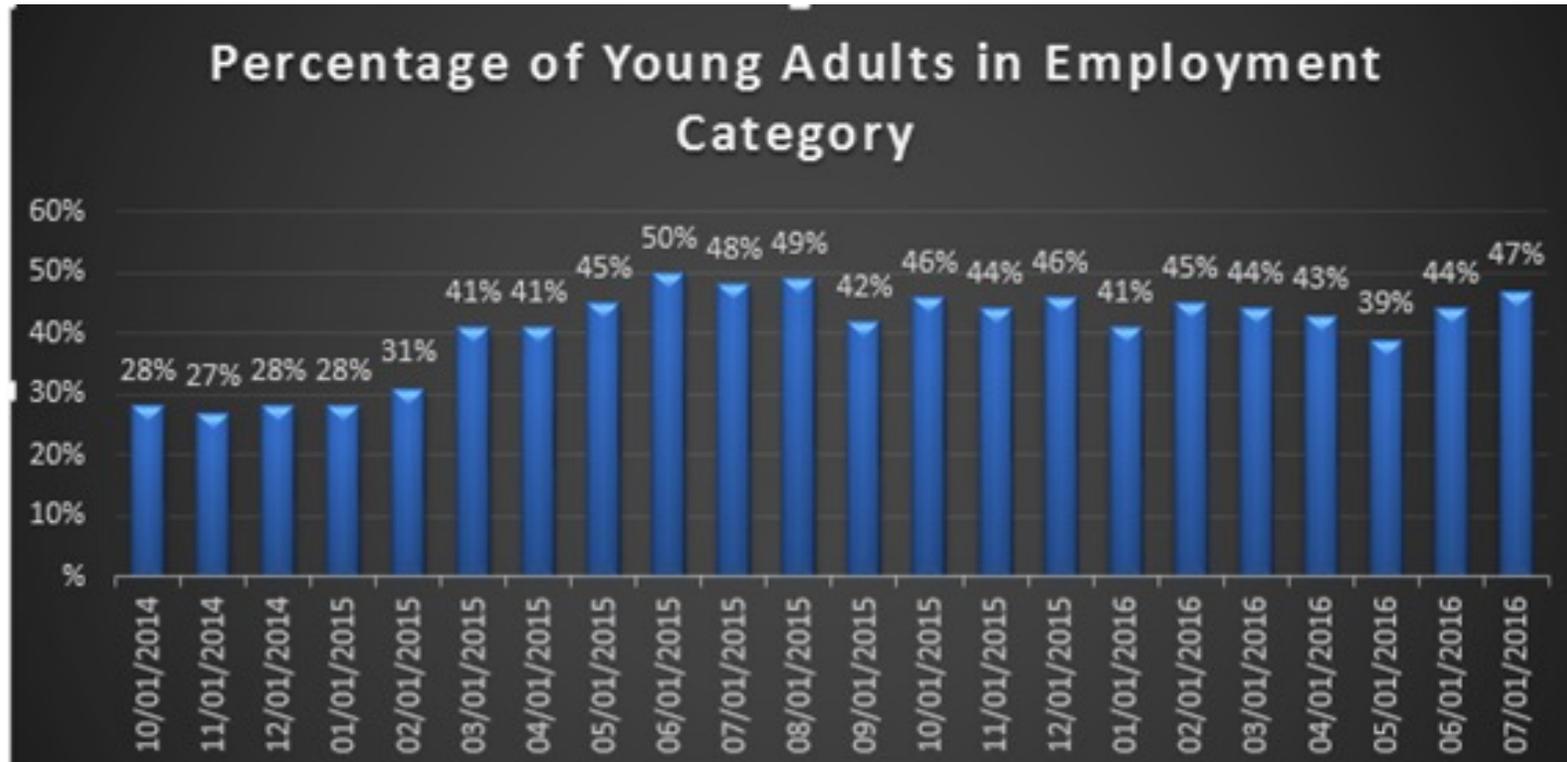
# Transition Living Plans (TLP)



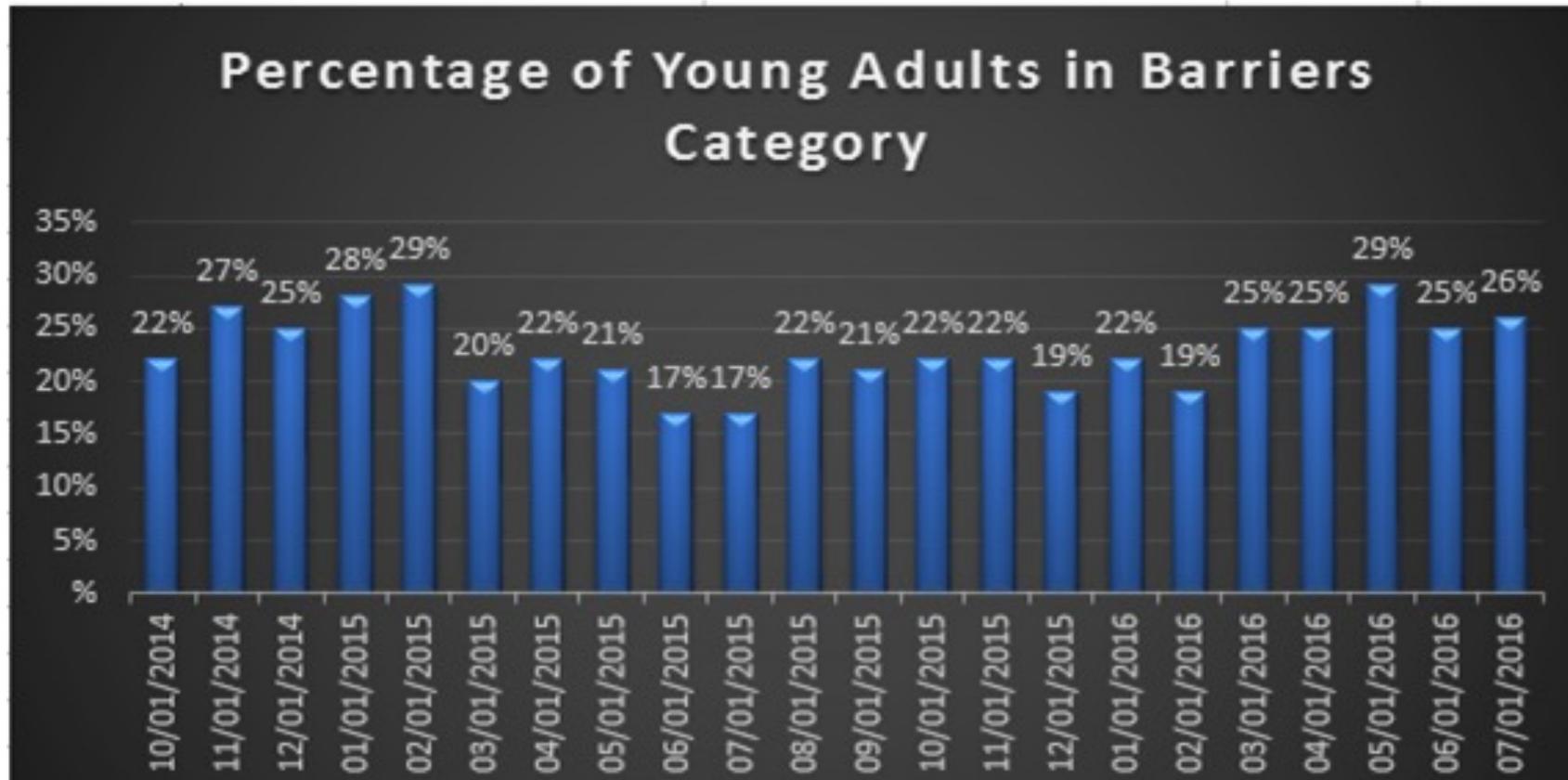
# Participation in B2i Categories



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# Youth Perception: B2i Questionnaire

➤ Is B2i different from being in foster care? (62/76 responded)

➤ Total Percentage

➤ Yes 57 92%

➤ No 5 8%

➤ If so, how? (63/76 responded)

➤ More independence and freedom

➤ Greater responsibility

➤ More helpful and hands-on

➤ “It’s a dialogue, not a lecture”

➤ Staff has an open and honest conversation; adults to adults

➤ Nobody is “babysitting or bossing you around” but you can tell staff cares

➤ You can live on your own and still have the extra support and guidance

➤ What were the challenges and fears of turning 19? (48/76 responded)

➤ Being alone and on their own

➤ Homelessness

➤ Financial instability (bills, rent, etc.)

➤ Gaining citizenship

➤ Supporting their family

➤ “Jumping into life with nothing”



# Data Cont'd- Project Everlast Surveys

Do you have enough people to count on when you need someone to loan you money in an emergency?			
	No one to count on	Too few people to count on	Enough people to count on
18 & under (n=185)	9.7%	28.6%	61.6%
19 & over (n=261)	28.0%	38.3%	33.7%
Total (n=446)	20.4%	34.3%	45.3%

Do you have enough people to count on when you need someone to give you good advice about a crisis?			
	No one to count on	Too few people to count on	Enough people to count on
18 & under (n=196)	0.0%	10.7%	89.3%
19 & over (n=277)	8.3%	31.0%	60.6%
Total (n=473)	4.9%	22.6%	72.5%

[If yes] Who are these supportive adults that you will always be able to turn to for support?			
	18 & under (n=191)	19 & over (n=227)	Total (n=418)
Birth parent(s)	42.9%	51.1%	47.4%
Caseworker (case manager, Independent Living staff, etc.)	52.4%	40.1%	45.7%
Extended family member(s) (e.g., aunt, grandparent, cousin)	47.6%	38.3%	42.6%
Adult sibling(s)	28.3%	19.8%	23.7%
Mentor/community member	22.0%	19.8%	20.8%
Former foster parent	21.5%	18.1%	19.6%
Teacher	25.7%	11.9%	18.2%
Legal guardian(s)	22.5%	7.0%	14.1%
Current foster parent	29.3%	1.3%	14.1%
Someone from my church/faith-based community	15.7%	12.3%	13.9%
Spouse	4.2%	19.4%	12.4%
Current/former group home or other program staff	10.5%	8.8%	9.6%
Adoptive parent(s)	10.5%	7.0%	8.6%
Other adults (not peers or significant others)	7.9%	9.3%	8.6%



# B2i Coordinators

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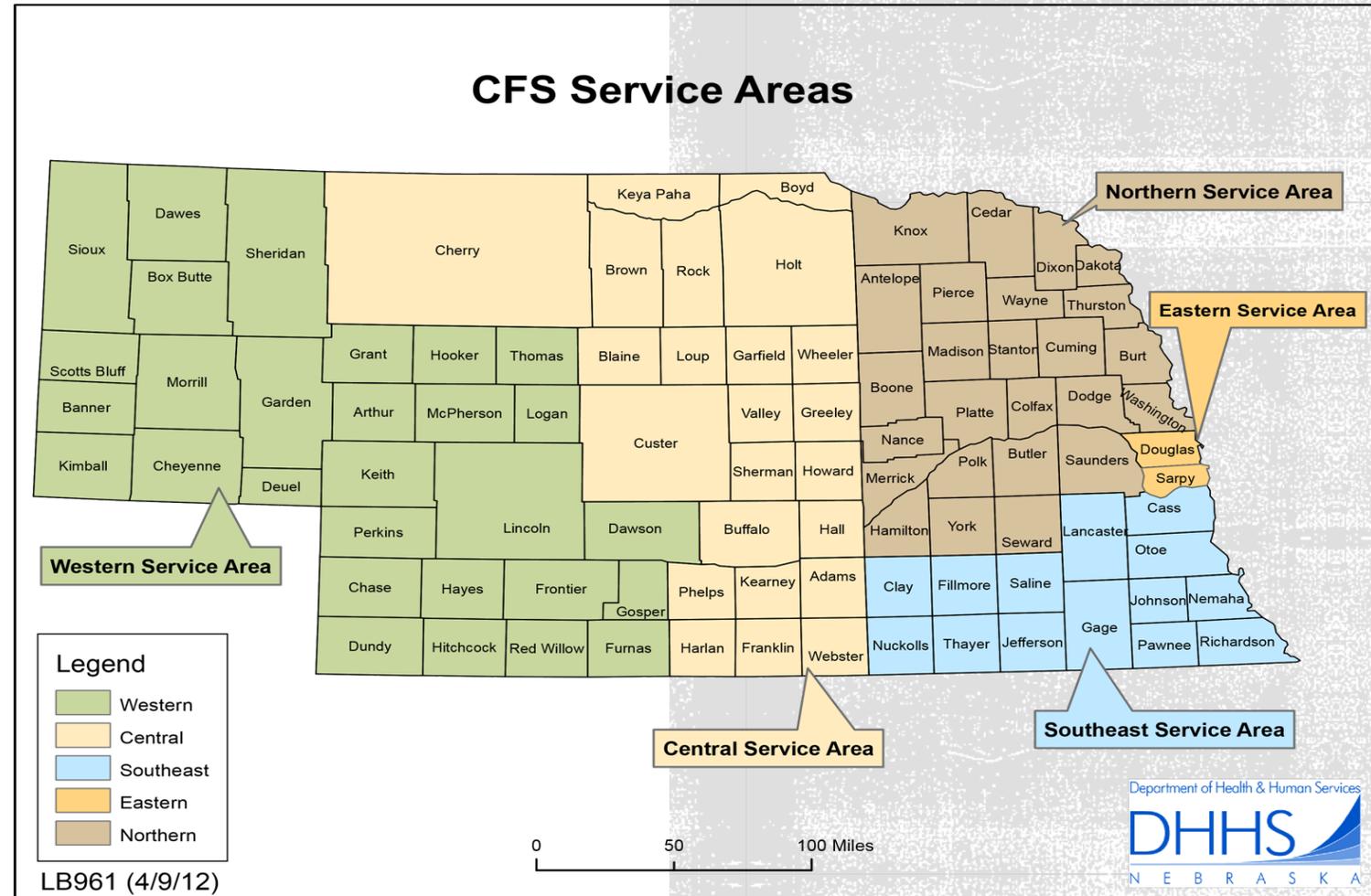
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Bridge to Independence  
NE DEPT. of HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

**THANK YOU!!!**

