

# Research Group Shopping Plan to Evaluate Impact of Federal College Grants to Foster Youths

By John Kelly, July 31, 2014

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**A group of researchers has put together** a plan to gauge the impact of federal college grants to current and former foster youth, and is currently seeking funding and research partners in multiple states.

The group – which includes Wayne State social work professor Angelique Day, Amy Dworsky of Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago and Amy Salazar at the University of Washington – already has eight states on board to participate, and that they are geographically diverse enough to proceed if no other state expresses interest.

The Chafee Educational Training Voucher (ETV) program is a \$45 million-per-year piece to the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, which since 1999 has funneled money from the Department of Health and Human Services to states in order to assist youth who are aging out of foster care into adulthood.

The ETV program was added to basic Chafee transition funding in 2002, and provides grants of up to \$5,000 to current or former foster youths that are attending college. But little is known about the extent to which foster youths access ETV or the effects of ETV receipt on persistence or graduation.

“This is years in the making,” said Day, in an interview with *The Chronicle*. An original proposal made to the W.T. Grant Foundation proposed to assess ETV in Michigan, Day said, but was rejected because the scope was too small.

The plan is to match ETV information provided by the states to National Student Clearinghouse records in order to answer six primary research questions:

- What percentage of the young people who age out of foster care enroll in a post-secondary educational program?
- What percentage of the young people who enroll in a post-secondary educational program apply for an ETV?
- What percentage of the young people who enroll in a post-secondary educational program receive an ETV?
- Is there a pattern of dropping out for students who become ineligible for ETV in the middle of their college journey?
- Is there a difference in graduation rates between young people who receive an ETV and young people who do not?
- Does the amount of semesters in which ETV was received predict graduation rates?

Day said her suspicion is that receipt of ETV funds will not strongly correlate with positive outcomes.

“Oregon has...spent more time than anyone else” examining the impact of ETV, she said. The preliminary finding is that there could be better outcomes for ETV, that financial aid alone is not the ticket to ensuring best possible outcomes.”

**John Kelly** is the editor-in-chief of *The Chronicle of Social Change*.

TAGS: affordability, aging out, Chafee, college, education, ETV, evaluation, Federal funding, grants, higher education, Research News, Transition

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