

**Independent Living Resources, Inc.  
411 Andrews Road, Suite 230  
Durham NC 27705**

## **Final Research Report:**

### **SBIR Phase II**

**Educational Opportunities for Youth in Foster Care**

**On Your Way.Org**

**On Their Way – DVD, Guidebook, Activities Book**

**SBIR Grants:**

**#1R43HD44347-01**

**#2R44HD44347-02**

**#5R44HD44347-03**

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## Section One – Overall Summary

All three phases of Grant #HD44347 were completed by December 31, 2007. Phase III, started immediately thereafter and marketing of the On Your Way resources is the primary focus. The final project products were an Internet website: *On Your Way* – [www.onyourway.org](http://www.onyourway.org); for youth, *On Their Way*, DVD and Guidebook; for caregivers, *On Your Way Activities Book*; for youth workers, and *On Your Way*, CD-ROM; for youths. In Phase II, all goals were accomplished and the research study was completed as planned. Major accomplishments were completion of proposed products and research, and one additional book – *On Your Way Activities*, which was not included in the original work plan.

**A. Phase II** - During Phase II problems were encountered with web programmers and their ability to develop code that was “open” and with a level of usability for ILR staffs to be able to take over for future changes, updates, etc. It became increasingly clear that it would be necessary to change our initial programming approach and develop a new team that could enhance our capacity to monitor and update all web aspects of On Your Way.Org. In Phase II we held one youth and one adult focus group during each of the two years.

**Focus Groups** – Two adult and two youth focus groups were held during Phase II. The youth groups were very helpful in developing a look and feel for the website and CD-ROM. Based on focus group youth’s reactions to the initial design we completely revamped the look of the website and CD-ROM. The CD was originally intended to be sold at low-cost to promote the website and DVD. Both youth focus groups recommended that we give the CD out free to promote the website. Both groups felt that social workers and agencies would either not buy the CD, or if they did, would not distribute the CD’s to youth. We decided based on these comments to “jazz” up the CD with flash and music to make it lively and attractive to youths in foster care. In addition, both groups were emphatic that the site should be free of charge for youths. They felt very firmly that social workers and agencies would be slow to purchase the site for them and that youths would not be able to personally afford the site at any amount. There was also a discussion of the availability and use of credit cards. This would be a problem for youths who would discover the site and not be able to pay the fee at that time. Rather, they would have to contact their social worker or caregiver to get them to pay the fee, during which time they would lose interest. This was a major issue that the project team thoughtfully worked on for a few months. The final solution was to provide the site for free for youths, but to imbed items (books, CD’s, DVD’s, etc.) throughout the site that could be purchased. The team added a shopping cart capability by connecting the existing ILR e-Commerce site to the On Your Way website to facilitate purchases.

**Adult Focus Groups** - The adult focus groups were used to determine the look and feel of the DVD and Guidebook and feedback on the willingness of foster parents

(and other caregivers) to promote and work with youths in exploring the *On Your Way* website's eight sections. The first group was held in August, 2006 and the focus was on the website's look and feel. The second group was held in September, 2007 with the added focus on development of the DVD and Guidebook for caregivers. The first group was very supportive of the website and the whole approach to foster youths and post-secondary education. The second group was also very supportive of the website and its intended approach for youth. In addition, this group was very interested in the DVD and guidebook and recommended a price point of \$19.95. Three additional pseudo adult focus groups were added in September 2007 at the National Independent Living Conference in Denver. ILR staff ran three informational workshops on the project and the materials that would result. Feedback was very strong in support of the website and materials.

**Overall Feedback** – During and after all of the formal and informal presentations about the *On Your Way* program participants repeatedly expressed their support for the materials being developed in the project. To date, we have received hundreds of inquiries about availability of the materials. This interest spurred ILR to open the website up earlier than expected and a number of youths have started developing their onsite profiles and drawing down information and resources that are available at [www.onyourway.org](http://www.onyourway.org). This all bodes well for future interest in the materials.

**[WWW.OnYourWay.Org](http://WWW.OnYourWay.Org)** – The site is set up with eight sections. The menu and stills from some of the sections are shown below.

**ONYOURWAY.ORG**



**onyourway.org**

My Profile My Links My Schools Contact Us

Welcome back ADMIN.  
[Logout](#)

Secure Site

Welcome to OnYourWay

- Planning My Education
- What I Like to Do
- What Are My Choices?
- How do I Pay for It?
- Who Can Help Me?**
  - What Kind of Help?
  - Where Can I Find Help?
  - Foster Youth Groups
  - More Foster Youth Groups
  - Continuing Education**
    - Tutoring and Support Services
    - Learning Styles Website - How Do I Learn?
    - A Learning Style Inventory
    - Mentoring Programs
    - Career and Student Services
    - Disability Services
- Staying Healthy to Succeed
- Where Will I Live?
- Getting Connected
- Administer OnYourWay.com

### Who Can Help Me?

#### Continuing Education

Continuing education classes can be found at the community college. BUT the classes are not always AT the community college. Sometimes classes are in other schools, businesses, or community centers. Continuing education can be....

- Classes you didn't take in high school
- Ways to get and keep a job
- How to make a resume
- GED study classes
- Language classes
- Much more....

These courses can get you back on track!

Then you can set goals to take community college or university courses.

**Adult High School Diploma** - Getting a high school diploma at a community college.

**GED (General Education Diploma)** - A stepping stone to getting more education.

**Job Readiness** - Skills like interviewing, resume building, and work ethics.

**English as a Second Language (ESL)**

Something I may need to learn through Continuing Education is:

[Save Page](#)  
[Continue](#)

**ONYOURWAY.ORG**

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Welcome to OnYourWay  
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## Schools

**Here's a quick look at your responses about schools and career preferences.**

We will use this information to sort through public and private schools to find some places that may be right for you.

**Are there any educational programs you're already interested in attending?**

sfdt, sdfg, sdfg  
sdfg sdfg

**When it comes to choosing a school, which of the following is most important to you?**

- Location
- Academic programs (majors, vocational/trade, etc)
- Other programs (co-op, ROTC, distance learning)

**What kind of education do you think you need for the job or career you want?**

- One-year certificate
- Continuing education courses in field of study
- Associates degree

**If you had to pick a career or job right now, what would you choose?**

Click the link to the College Navigator:  
<http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>  
 and follow the steps to sort colleges using your information above.

**Tips to Use the College Navigator**

- The sorting questions are listed on the left.
- Be sure to open "more search options" to include that information.
- Click "Show Results" after answering the search questions.
- You will receive a list of schools that match your request.
- Once you receive you list of schools, pick some that you want to explore further.
- Insert the website of selected schools into the fields below so you have all your information right here.
- If you want to continue searching, the College Navigator is always ready.

**Favorite School Selection(s)**

School Name	School Website	Why I like it

[Save Favorites](#)

**onyourway.org**

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Welcome back ADMIN.  
Logout

Do you have sound on?  
Yes No

Secure Site

- Welcome to OnYourWay
- Planning My Education
- What I Like to Do
- What Are My Choices?
- How do I Pay for It?**
  - Where's the Money?
  - Creating a Budget
  - My Budget**
  - What's the Difference?
  - Financial Aid
  - Financial Aid Links
  - Putting It Together
- Who Can Help Me?
- Staying Healthy to Succeed
- Where Will I Live?
- Getting Connected
- Administer OnYourWay.com

### How Do I Pay for It?

#### My Budget

Now, enter the **monthly** amounts you think (or know) it will cost to get you through your educational program.

If you don't know the amount, use your best guess. You can always come back to change it.

If you know the exact **yearly** tuition cost, divide it by twelve.

Category	Description	Amount
<b>Housing/Rent</b>	Monthly cost for your apartment, dorm, boarding home, etc.	150
<b>Food</b>	Grocery store or fast food restaurants, delis, convenience stores, school meal plan, etc.	75
<b>Laundry</b>	Cost of Laundromat, dorm laundry machines, or dry cleaning.	10
<b>Utilities</b>	Water, electricity, heat, cable, Internet, etc.	25
<b>Tuition</b>	Determine the annual cost and divide by 12.	500
<b>Books and School Supplies</b>	Assume at least \$75 unless you know otherwise (notebooks, pencils, paper, computers, printer cartridges, etc.).	75
<b>Phone</b>	Cell or house phone.	100
<b>Car Payment or Bus Pass</b>	You'll need some way to get around.	250
<b>Gasoline</b>	If you choose to have a car.	150
<b>Car Insurance</b>	How much each month?	100
<b>Medical Costs</b>	Prescriptions, over the counter meds, co-pays, doctor and dentist visits, etc.	200
<b>Entertainment</b>	Includes time with friends, dates, concerts, movie/game rentals, etc.	50
<b>Clothing</b>	New and replacement clothing.	100
<b>Other</b>	Like childcare, fees for clubs at school, sports uniforms, etc.	50

**onyourway.org**

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Do you have sound on?  
Yes No

Secure Site

Welcome to OnYourWay  
Planning My Education  
What I Like to Do  
What Are My Choices?  
How do I Pay for It?  
Who Can Help Me?  
Staying Healthy to Succeed  
**Where Will I Live?**  
✓ Getting Started  
✓ Places to Live at a College or University  
✓ **Planning for School Holidays and Vacations**  
✓ Your Housing Needs  
✓ Community Living Options  
✓ Housing Language and Documents  
✓ Ways to Stretch Your Housing Costs  
✓ The Back-Up Plan  
✓ Housing Plans  
Getting Connected  
Administer OnYourWay.com

## Where Will I Live?

### Planning for School Holidays and Vacations

\*\*\*Plan ahead\*\*\*

- Look at your school calendar to determine when dormitories are closed
- Contact your foster/adopted parent or social worker **MONTHS** in advance to create a plan for where you could stay
- Contact Student Services and ask what housing options will be open during the break (You may have to explain your situation if you cannot go home)
- Ask the Housing Office what "year-round" options may be available
- Ask the Housing Office what other options exist for students during closings

**ACTIVITY:**  
I plan to live at  during school holidays and vacations.

[Continue](#)

**Apartment Hunt**  
A valuable resource for you in finding and renting an apartment.

Apartment Hunt Curriculum - DVD  
\$168.98

**onyourway.org**

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[Logout](#)

Secure Site

Welcome to OnYourWay  
Planning My Education  
What I Like to Do  
What Are My Choices?

- ✓ Work!
- ✓ Jobs I've Had
- ✓ My References
- ✓ Job Shadowing
- ✓ Education and Training
- ✓ My Education/Job Training History
- ✓ My Educational Goals
- ✓ Creating My Resume
- ✓ Putting It Together
- ✓ Which Way Do I Go?

How do I Pay for It?  
Who Can Help Me?  
Staying Healthy to Succeed  
Where Will I Live?  
Getting Connected  
Administer OnYourWay.com

## My Resume

### Cara Williams

555 Foster Street  
Durham, NC 27705  
919-555-5555

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**Objective** To secure a promising position that offers both a challenge and a good opportunity for growth.

**Experience** **Durham Pre-School, Durham, NC, June 2004 - August 2004**  
**Toddler Room Assistant:** move children to different play areas; read to children; assist with snack; prepare play areas and clean up; help parents with pick up;

**Parks and Recreation, Durham, NC, Spring Break 2006 -**  
**Junior Camp Counselor:** daily attendance; duties as assigned; clean up; help with games; arts and crafts;

**Education** **Jordan High School, Durham NC, August 2005 - June 2007**  
 Graduated: June 2009  
**Interests:** Tutoring, Library Volunteer  
**Honors:** Best Tutor Award

**Carrington Middle School, Durham NC, -**

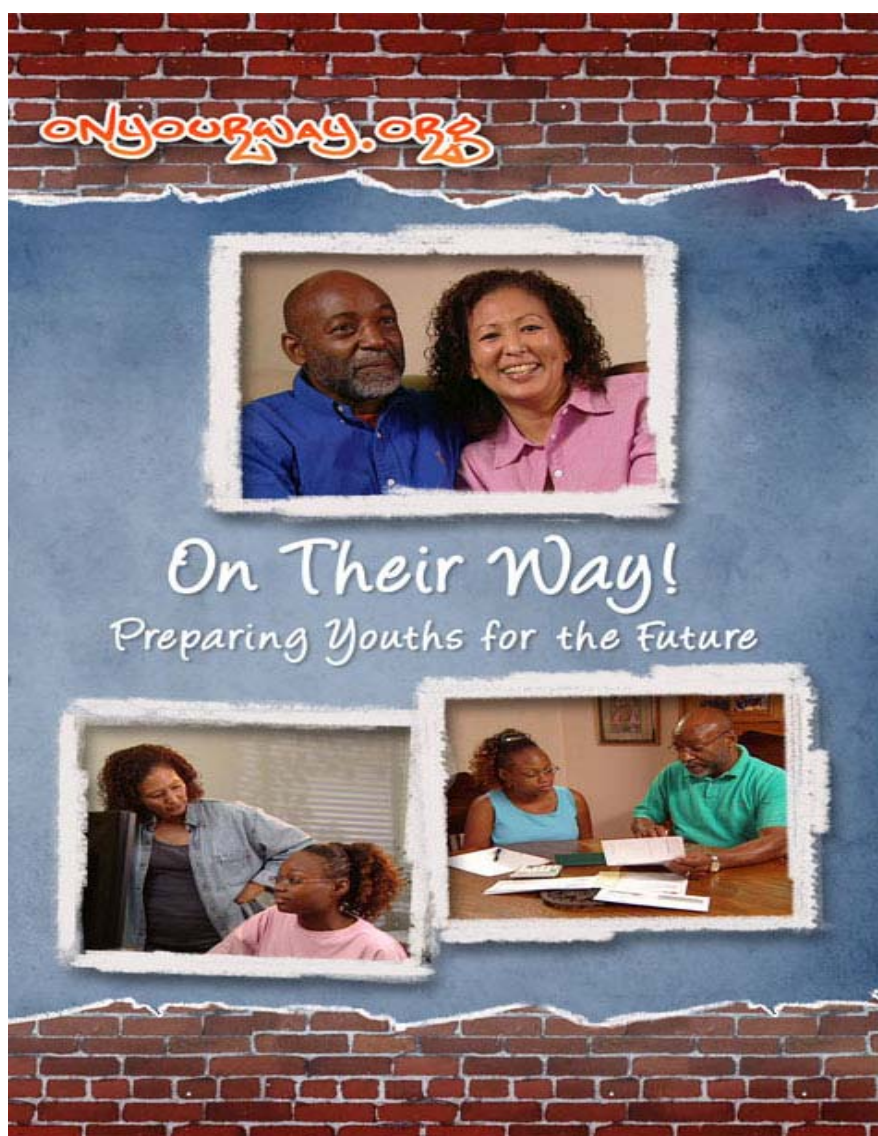
**Jordan High School, Durham NC, -**  
**Interests:** Tutoring Library volunteer

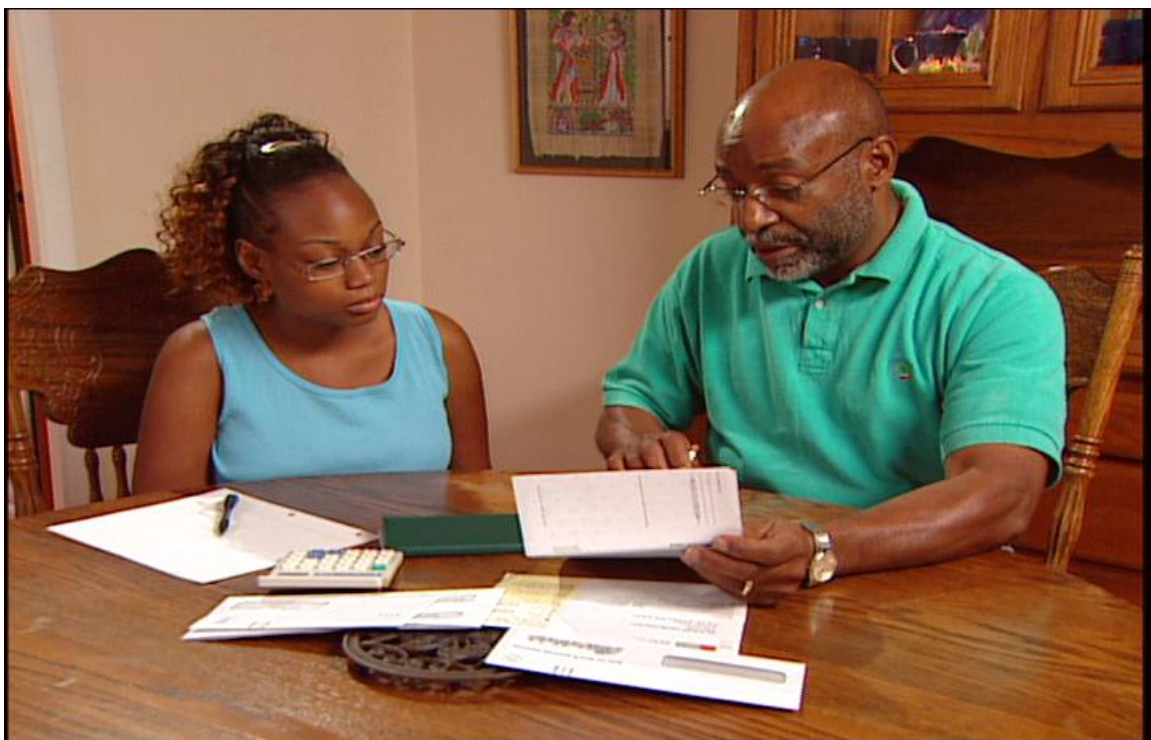
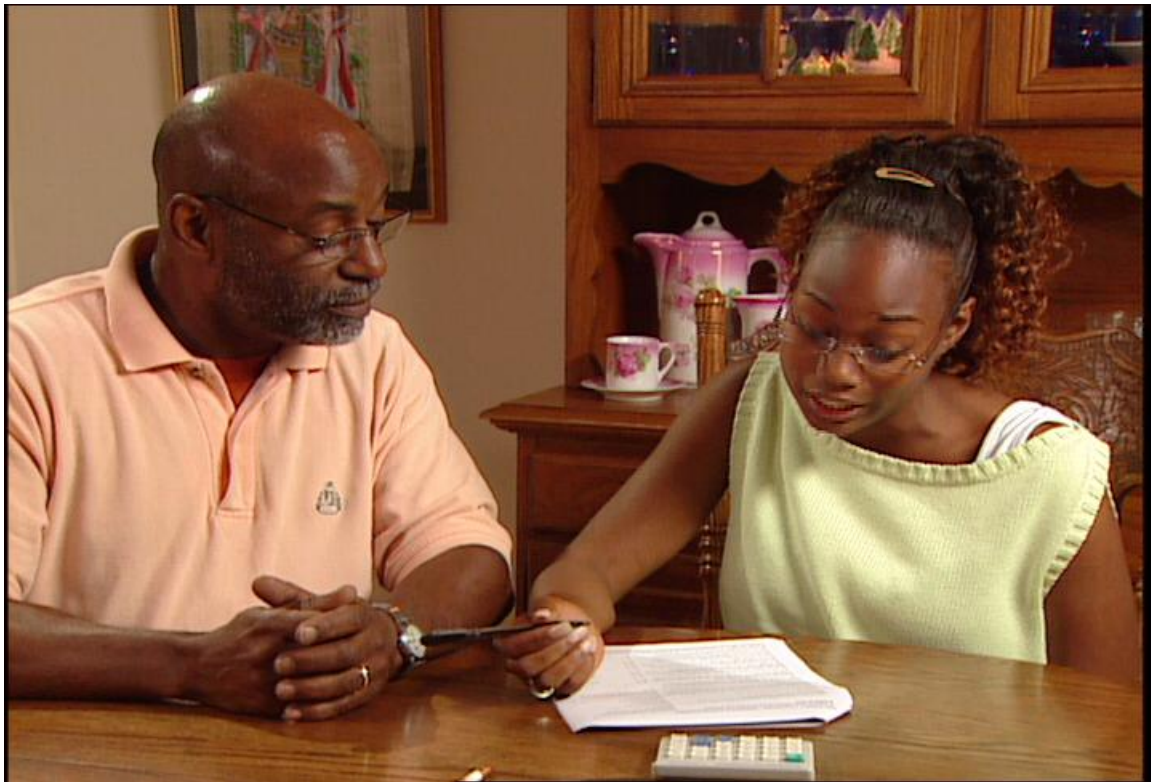
**Job Training** **Tutoring, Jordan High School, October 2005**  
**Skills:** how to communicate ; organization; giving positive feedback; following instructions; maintaining a schedule;

Ms. Trish Covington  
444 Retired Teacher Avenue  
Durham, NC 27705  
919-123-4567  
tcovington@onyourway.org

Ms. Sue Littlechild  
123 Preschool Way  
Durham, NC 27705  
919-333-3333  
preschool@onyourway.org

**On Their Way DVD and Guidebook** – The DVD was completed and tested with focus groups and a number of foster parents and caregivers at numerous meeting and trainings held by ILR both within North Carolina and nationally. Throughout this process a title was formulated for the guidebook – *On Their Way! - Preparing Youths for the Future*. The guidebook is 48 pages and fits inside the front cover of a DVD case. The book is printed on glossy paper and is broken into 12 sections. Each section is set up for caregivers to involve young persons in the home in discussions about post-secondary education whether or not they are using the On Your Way website. Five special features are consistent for each section. The features are; Understanding Adolescents, Message, Things You Can Do, On Your Way Website Features, and Dinner Discussions.





**Research Efforts** – Section Four contains project research results from years two and three of Phase II. Some of the major findings were that it was difficult to keep track of foster youths due to movement within the child welfare system (both planned and unplanned) and other barriers to participation that included lack of foster parent commitment. During Phase I we were able to set up fairly strict parameters for youth involvement and thus were able to meet with youth at meetings, conferences, etc. This allowed for greater participation and completion rate than in Phase II. In Phase II we were asking youth to participate at their own pace (with some limitations) and were working to have caregivers more involved in supporting youth efforts to work through the [onyourway.org](http://onyourway.org) website. Thus, we had a much higher attrition rate for these two years. In trying to solve the problem, when we completed a first grouping of almost three hundred youth signups, we then enlisted a totally new group of two hundred more. This latter group was beyond what we had originally planned, but it still saw a very high attrition rate. We were able to get youth signed up and started on the site, but invariably we saw relatively few complete all eight segments. Section Four of this report contains the research analyses.

**Phase III** – Our Phase III efforts have begun in earnest. We have developed and printed 18,000 brochures that list the three components of the [onyourway.org](http://onyourway.org) program. We have created a pricing structure that allows materials to be purchased individually or as a package. The website for foster youth is free, but resource materials are strategically placed throughout the eight sections and a shopping cart like mechanism is in place that takes a potential buyer to the ILR main site to complete the purchase. Individual prices are \$15.95 for the *Facilitator's Activity Book* and \$19.95 for the *On Their Way DVD and Guidebook*. The package price for both items is \$29.95. ILR converted the CD-ROM to a promotional disk that would raise the interest level of youthful viewer's to encourage them to visit the site. Our tentative plan is to use the CD as a promo for the next year and then to sell it in bulk for further distribution by interested parties. We will evaluate that plan during the next year. We also added the materials to our e-Commerce site and will be placing it prominently within our next catalog which will be distributed later this spring.

### **Phase I Final Report – March 1, 2004-August 31, 2004**

#### **Specific Aims**

In Phase I we developed and evaluated the use of a CD-Rom for foster youths, the conceptual framework for a DVD and text (for youths and adults) and a Web-based informational system (for youths and adults). This multimedia package is intended to connect foster and group home residents (youths), foster and group home parents (primary caregivers), other caregivers, and professionals (youth serving adults) with information and resources to make post secondary opportunities more attainable for foster youths. The approach uses an innovative, interactive multimedia format in which viewers hear from foster youths about what can be accomplished educationally after high school. The multimedia program promotes use

of a website to develop a personal profile and gather information on educational opportunities that are available after high school and that match a user's profile.

The evaluation study focused on computer technology and the initial piece of media development (CD-Rom) for reaching target groups (foster youths and primary caregivers). This was accomplished by testing feasibility with a range of youths and adults and survey data gathered to determine the ability of these groups to access and use computers, the Internet, and multimedia materials in a range of settings (urban and rural).

Several objectives guided our research activities:

1. Raise awareness among foster care youths and their caregivers regarding the accessibility and affordability of post secondary opportunities.
2. Devise a system for disseminating currently fragmented information regarding admissions, scholarship and loan information available to the target group.
3. Develop and evaluate the feasibility and potential effectiveness of multimedia programming in reaching foster care youths and their caregivers/parents in both rural and urban and family and group settings.
4. Gather data on the number of caregivers and youths who have the ability to access computers, DVD and CD-Rom players, and the Internet.

A challenging objective was to determine the target groups access to equipment and the Internet for use of multimedia materials. Initially, we planned on randomly selecting and surveying adult caregivers and youths by mail. However, as described below, our initial experience with adult caregivers led us to survey youths in a different manner. We surveyed youths at two conferences (one focused on the southeast region of the US and the other on the State of North Carolina) and three foster youth adolescent independent living meetings held at three separate county sites in North Carolina. This survey method gave us greater assurance that youths in the 13-22-age range would be covered and allowed us to save time and resources by running focus groups both during and immediately after these events. In addition, this approach allowed us to add CD-Rom "viewing" sessions as part of the evaluation study. These sessions guaranteed that approximately 130 foster youths in the target age group would view and use the prototype CD-Rom.

### **Product Development**

The project team, which included William Griffin, principal investigator, Nancy Carter, program coordinator, and Melinda Medina, youth coordinator, developed the CD-Rom and website in several stages. To begin the team developed a basic storyboard for the *On Your Way* CD-Rom and website. Originally, we proposed twelve topic areas for presentation in two media forms, a CD-Rom and website. As the topics were reworked by the team and educational consultant a consensus was reached to fold the 12 topics into eight that would eventually become main navigational bars on the CD-Rom and website. The eight topics would become access points to take users into areas that would have multiple subtopics supported by extensive databases (to be developed in Phase II). These eight topic areas were

further refined during the feasibility study and focus groups, so that in Phase II there will be seven topics and navigational bars used as portals to information databases. During this process, the topics were reworked numerous times to develop clarity and interest for the user.

The team then worked with media consultants at Horizon Video Production and 3on Media to develop the technical aspects of the programming storyboards. This process produced the *On Your Way* logo, two video scenarios, CD-Rom screens, navigation bars, topic pages with summary statements, and website design and structure.

### **Videos**

The project team outlined and scripted content for each of the two videos through an iterative process. The PI wrote the original script concepts; the PI, program coordinator, and video executive director then developed full scripts for both videos. Next the video producer was asked to review the scripts and assist in determining final scripting for site videotaping. The team also developed cast requirements including minority and gender representation.

The PI met with agencies that had an interest in foster youth and developed a list of foster group and family care home locations that could be used for videotaping. Visits were made to eight locations and in concert with the video producer and a foster care program director chose two group homes in Raleigh, North Carolina under the auspices of Haven House, Inc., for videotaping. Casting calls were held for actors to determine a “fit” with the team’s vision of foster youth. Tapes were made of casting calls and actors were picked from these “cuts” for roles.

Two scenarios were shot on location, one involving six young men and a counselor playing basketball. The second, involved three young women and a foster mother, talking in a bedroom while doing each other’s “hair.” The basketball scene and script had extensive dialog between the young men and counselor. The dialog was centered on one young man’s brother who was going off to “school” after high school and existing confusion about his source of finances. The dialog was used to provide information about a federal program that is available to foster youth called “ETV” or Educational Training Voucher Program and to make connections to the *OnYourWay.org* website – by use of the CD-Rom. In the second video, a similar attempt is made by making connections between one young lady’s boyfriend going off to school and her (and the other girls) trying to figure out how he “got money to go to school.” The foster mother assists by telling them about other foster youths and scholarships they received and showing them a brochure about the *OnYourWay.org* website. The foster mother concludes the video by scheduling an online session with them for later that evening after they finish (pizza) dinner. The eleven actors used in both videos were four Caucasians, two Hispanics, one Asian, and four African Americans. Seven were male (boys video) and four were female (girls video).

### **Website/CD-Rom Screens**

Once the team had agreed on video concepts a website specialist was brought onboard from Horizon Studios (3on Media). We were determined to create a look and

depth of materials that were engaging and state-of-the-art for foster youths. Our approach was to move from initially raising awareness and providing general information to providing users with detailed personalized information for making plans to extend their educational experience after high school. Once this vision was established, the team began structural development of the media elements connecting the CD-Rom and website. First, the *On You Way* logo was developed. This logo will be used as the opening screen on all media materials and as the major identifier of the program.



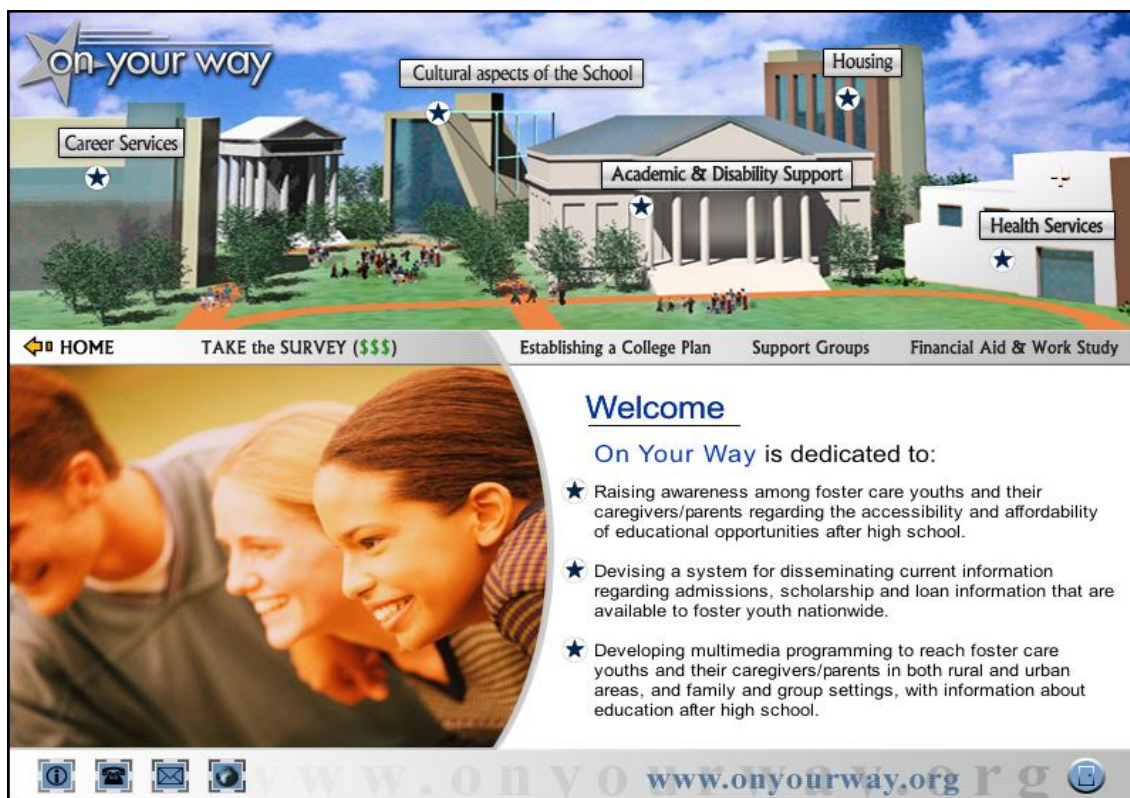
### **On Your Way - CD-Rom Version 1.0 – Opening Screen**

The CD is intended to develop viewer interest in the *OnYourWay.org* website. After inserting the CD (self-starting) and viewing the *On Your Way* opening screen, the logo fades into a second screen and the viewer is given a message to “please select a video to continue.” Stills from *Video One – Boys Basketball* (2:47) and *Video Two-Girls Discussion* (2:04) are displayed on the screen. Viewers click on one still shot and both videos automatically play in sequence. After the videos are completed viewers are led to a Welcome screen. The viewer can also choose to skip the videos and go directly to the Welcome screen. This aspect is for repeat users of the CD-Rom when the program is fully operational.



## Welcome Screen

The welcome screen has a rendering of an educational campus (image below) with navigation bars. The bars can be used to gain access to information on a topic. The “Take the Survey (\$\$\$)” navigation bar was to be used in our original plan to mail youths surveys and CD’s (see complete explanation under *Youth Surveys* below). We have retained this section to use in Phase II research. In Phase II the survey navigation bar will take adult and youth participants to post website use surveys and evaluations. CD Version 1.0 contains general bulleted statements about *On Your Way*. In Phase II, narration, video vignettes, and additional text will be added.



After clicking on a navigational bar, viewers are led to topic specific screens. For Version 1.0 there was general information on each topic and each screen ended with a “Click here to learn more,” link to the website *onyourway.org*. In Phase II, these links will be activated to connect users to the operational website.



The upper halves of the welcome and topic screens change from day to night and stars come out in the sky before returning to a daytime display (this repeats). The bottom row has buttons that lead viewers to general information, telephone and e-mail contacts, and the web. The [www.onyourway.org](http://www.onyourway.org) on this row can be “clicked” to go directly to the website. The icon on the lower right allows viewers to exit. Exiting leads to credit displays for ILR, Horizon Video, 3on Media, and NIH SBIR funding information. In Phase II clicking through on a topic page will lead to the website and information supported by extensive SQL 2000 databases.

### **Evaluation Tool Development**

Originally, it was planned that two educational consultants and a methodologist would assist in the development of the evaluation tools. At the point of funding one educational consultant had move to Texas and the project team felt that restricted the consultant’s ability to be involved. It was decided that Dr. John Painter a statistician from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a consultant to ILR on other projects, would substitute. Dr. Painter is an expert in the interpretation of education data and has worked with a wide range of education databases. Dr. Painter in concert with Dr. Raymond Kirk (methodologist) and Kemal Atkins (educational consultant) assisted the PI in development of three surveys. Two surveys (one adult and one youth) were developed to ascertain respondents’ access and use of technologies related to Internet use, demographic data, and data that paralleled two national studies – PEW Internet and American Life Project (2001) and Foundation and National Telecommunications and Information Administration (US Department of Commerce - 2002). A third survey (youth and adults) was developed to determine responses to the prototype CD-Rom (Version 1.0) during alpha testing.

The project PI worked extensively with Drs. Kirk and Painter to develop the instruments described above. The preliminary drafts were presented to the remaining project team members for comment and redesign. Initially, the adult survey was developed and mailed to 560 adult study participants (see Adult Survey Summary Section below). Subsequently, the youth survey was developed. During the development period for the youth survey a decision was made not to mail surveys to youth. It was felt that the mailings would place a unnecessary burden on youth to complete informed consents, have an adult co-sign, and return those before they could receive the CD-Rom for use and then payment for participation. In addition, we realized that the website would be very limited at this time (alpha test) and users could become frustrated by the lack of in depth information.

The project team developed an alternative plan. By utilizing the upcoming youth conferences and meetings we could have all the necessary pieces in one place; youths, adults who could co-sign consent, and payments for youth to participate. In addition, this approach would give us the ability to increase survey response rate, set up computers to show the CD, allow greater intra- and inter-group interaction, and more spontaneous individual and group feedback on the multimedia materials. The PI and Drs. Kirk and Painter then designed a CD-Rom viewer's rating/survey to be administered after youth had viewed and used the CD. Drs Kirk and Painter also designed a data base (using SPSS) collection system for reporting study results.

### **SAYSO - Strong Able Youth Speaking Out**

Project staff met with the SAYSO board of directors (22 youths) during the first week of June 2004 at Sandhills Community College in Pinehurst, North Carolina. (All but five of these youths were in foster care. The five non-residents had resided in foster care before emancipating. All were under 23 years of age.) The SAYSO board had previously agreed to assist the project team in Phase I by getting their members involved in the evaluation research – completing surveys and reviewing the prototype CD-ROM.

During the board meeting the project PI laid out the plan for mailing materials to 280 SAYSO members. After much discussion, a suggestion was made to substitute the mailing by providing surveys to youths at two conferences, co-sponsored by SAYSO, and that were to be held in the next few months (July and August 2004). The board thought we would be able to get a stronger youth response and participation by using conference attendees. In addition, this method would allow us to hold *On Your Way* viewing sessions at the conferences. Board members would assist project staff in setting up a booth or room with computers to allow both individuals and groups to see the CD in action. After much discussion the project team decided to change the evaluation plan and work with SAYSO to accomplish the survey research and add viewing sessions. The SAYSO board also voted to create a subcommittee to specifically work with the project team on post-secondary educational opportunities for foster youth. This subcommittee would also be responsible for providing support during the two conferences. For the project team

this was an unplanned benefit. The SAYSO youths were very enthusiastic about the *On Your Way* concept and the premise of assisting foster youths to plan for education beyond high school. As explained below this was a real plus for Phase I.

### **CD-ROM Disk**

In Phase I a mini-disk (3") was developed and tested with youth (see below and Appendix A). We determined that youth liked the smaller CD size, but the overall compatibility with CD-Rom hardware (computer CD players) limited use of the device (some CD players could not play the mini-disk). For Phase II a regular full-size CD-Rom will be used to solve the player compatibility problems and provide for additional data storage – allowing us to further enhance CD Version 2.0. (Appendix A contains a full size CD so that reviewers will be able to play the program on their existing computer equipment.)

3on Media and ILR staff conducted alpha testing during Phase I. The *On Your Way* CD did not have all its functionality, but it did have the core functions and was able to accept inputs and generate base outputs. Alpha testing was taken into the field and tested with a variety of youths in different settings. Originally, alpha testing with youths and selective adults was to be accomplished through focus groups and mailings of CD Version 1.0. Feedback was to be through surveys and telephone contacts. After a great deal of discussion the project team decided to alter the alpha testing plan. It was felt that altering the plan would ensure that we tested Version 1.0 with a balanced range of youths – ages 13-21. It also ensured that we could guarantee minority and gender participation. In addition, it was felt that by utilizing different settings and groupings we could also add a direct and immediate feedback loop. All of this would save time and costs for the project.

Alpha testing of the prototype was accomplished at two youth conferences and one local county level independent living (IL) youth meeting and with four focus groups (one adult and three youth). This was an increase of one focus group from our Phase I proposal. We also had not proposed, "viewing sessions" for Phase I.

The first conference was a Southeastern US youth advocacy conference (Advocacy In Action) held at the Sheraton Imperial Hotel and Conference Center in Research Triangle Park, NC, in June of 2004. The conference had 170 youths from six states in attendance that ranged in age from 16-23 years of age (NC, SC, KY, SD, FL, and VA). The second was a Link-UP youth conference for younger North Carolina foster youths (13-15) held in Hickory, NC. This conference had 42 youths from seven counties in Central and Western NC in attendance. The local IL meeting was held in Durham County, North Carolina and 11 youths in attendance. Two youth focus groups were held in the evening after the Advocacy In Action had concluded it day's activities and one adult and one youth focus group were held during the Link-Up conference. Each conference youth was paid \$5 for completing the survey, informed consent form, and viewing (and in some cases using) the CD-Rom. Each focus group youth was paid \$10 for participating in the meeting. Adults were not paid.

### Summary of Youth Survey

The ILR Program Coordinator made a presentation at the beginning of each of the two conferences asking for attendees to complete a survey that was included in the “packets” they received when registering at the conference site. Throughout the two-day Advocacy conference and one-day Link-Up conference, appeals were made to youth to finish their surveys and go the CD display table in the lobby to sign up to view the CD-Rom. Participants were told that they would receive \$5 for viewing and completing a short post-viewing survey about the CD and website.

Participants were asked to hand-in their completed surveys at the main registration table or when they came to view the CD-Rom (place them in a designated box). Youth were told the surveys were anonymous, that they did not have to put any identifying information on the sheets.

The project PI coordinated signing up CD viewers, making sure there were collection boxes for surveys, and that each youth had completed a signed consent form. All youths who were under 18 years of age had to be accompanied by an adult who had legal responsibility for them during the conference. This made the task of getting informed consent much easier than through a mailing. Each youth who viewed or used the CD on one of the onsite computers completed a consent form before being allowed to participate. Each was paid \$5 after completing the post-viewing survey.

The PI identified two groups of youths at the advocacy conference and one group of youths at the Link-Up meeting to participate in focus groups. The groups were held after the conferences had ended for the day. A boardroom was used for two meetings and a church fellowship hall was used for the third. Each youth was paid \$10 for participating in the focus group. Each group meeting lasted approximately one hour. The following is a breakdown of the focus groups makeup:

Group #	Female	Caucasian	African American	Hispanic	American Indian	Total
1-Youth	4	1	3			4
2-Youth	6	4	2			6
3-Youth*	5				5	5
4-Adult	5	2	3			5
						20

\*This group had two adult female American Indians involved.

Group #	Male	Caucasian	African American	Hispanic	American Indian	Total
1-Youth	3		2	1		3
2-Youth	2	1	1			2
3-Youth	4				4	4
4-Adult	2	1	1			2
						11

Youth Group #3 was added because the Advocacy Conference had a small contingent of American Indian youths attending from South Dakota. The project team thought it would be beneficial to add a focus group of American Indian youths from the Midwest. Two adult chaperones for this group sat in, but did not participate in the discussion.

**Information About Survey Groups\***

In addition to the conference groups three other sites were used to gather surveys.

1. Onslow and Cumberland Counties, North Carolina – The two county independent living coordinators approached the project team and volunteered to use their local youth groups to complete consents and surveys if we thought it could be helpful. We agreed and received approximately 20 surveys from those groups (8 and 12 respectively).
2. Durham County - The coordinator from this county requested that we come and show his youth group the CD and have them complete the follow-up survey. The PI and program coordinator visited this group at an evening session in July. There were 11 youths in attendance. We received both youth and CD post-viewing surveys from this group.

\*There were no cash payments for these volunteer groups.

Durham Youth Group **	Male	Caucasian	African American	Hispanic	American Indian	Total
		1	2	1		4
	Female	Caucasian	African American	Hispanic	American Indian	Total
		3	4			7

\*\*Five adults were present for this meeting.

Overall, 153 youths responded to the survey on their experience with computers, using the Internet, and options for disseminating information about post high school educational opportunities. Percentages reported below are based on the number of responses to a specific survey item, which is usually not the total number of surveys (153). If the departure from 153 is more than 15 the N used for the percents is reported. 86 youths viewed the CD-Rom and completed the post-viewing survey. See CD-ROM Summary Section below.

**Interest in College and Educational Materials**

The overwhelming majority of Youths responding to this survey believe that continuing their education after high school (Q1) is “Essential” (78.4%), 13.7% agreed that it is important but not essential, 2.7% believe continuing their education is not too important or not important at all, with seven of the one hundred fifty three respondents reporting “Don’t Know” (4.6%).

Most youth report that they plan to continue their education after high school (Q2). Nearly two thirds of the respondents (64.7%) report that they would like to attend a four-year college, 15% a community college, and 13.1% a technical school. One respondent reported no plans to continue his/her education, and 6.5% did not know what their educational plan is after high school. Of those reporting (Q3A-C) whether someone in their family had attended community college, technical school, or four-year college; most reported community college (54.7% of 117 responses), followed by four-year college (53% of 116 responses), then technical school (45.4% of 97 responses).

Eighty-six percent reported that they would like to receive information about educational opportunities after school (Q4). When asked about useful ways for making this information available 86.6% (of 112 responses) reported via a web site would be useful, 83.8% (of 98 responses) a manual, 79.2% DVD (of 96 responses), 75.5% a CD (of 98 responses), and 68.5% (of 89 responses) report VHS would be useful.

### **Use of Technology, Computers, and Internet**

Most respondents did not answer Q6 "Do you own or have easy access to a computer?" instead many answered 'Yes' to one or more of the subsequent questions. The number of 'No's was calculated by counting only those who answered 'No' to q6 (n=19) plus those who skipped every 'Yes-No' sub-question (n=3). This leads to total 'No computer' N of 22. The percent of those with a computer is 85.6% (131/153), and 14.4% do not own or have easy access to a computer. Subsequent percentages for the sub questions (Q6A-C) are computed using the N of 131.

Of the 85.6% (n=131) who reported owning or having easy access to a computer 50.3% reported having Internet access, 81% reported that the computer has a CD player, and 58% reported that the computer has a DVD player.

In terms of owning or having easy access to a DVD player and TV (Q7), 89.3% reported they own or have easy access to both; 88.6% reported they would rather use a DVD player instead of a VHS player (Q8).

With respect to using a computer at home or school (Q9), 36.3% report using a computer everyday, and a nearly equal percent (31.5%) a couple times a week. Only 5.5% report they never use a computer or that it does not apply (2.6%). Similarly, 29.2% reported using the Internet everyday (Q10), and 27.1% a couple times a week. Again only 10.5% reported never using the Internet and 4.6% that it does not apply.

Of those responding, 53.6% reported that they go online at home (Q11), or school (27.1%). For those with Internet access from their residence (Q12), 61.5% (of 109 responses) use Dial-up as opposed to high speed (38.5%). 77% of Internet users have e-mail (Q13), most (62.7%) do not worry about being contacted by a stranger while online (Q14). However, over 20% worry a lot about seeing or reading things on line that are undesired (Q15). Half of the youths surveyed reported having rules about being online (Q16).

### **Demographics**

Most respondents reported (Q17) living in a Foster home (41.4%), 28.3% live in a Group home, 15.9% in a relatives home, 1.4% in a residential facility, and 13.1% in

“other.” Most were female (68.6%), ranging from 12 to 23 years of age (with an average of just over 16. Accordingly, the last grade completed most typically ranged between 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, with the average being 9<sup>th</sup> grade. About half (51%) were black, (26.1% white), with 14.2% Hispanic.

### **Summary of “On Your Way” Post-Viewing CD Survey**

The “On Your Way CD Survey” is a customer satisfaction survey administered to foster youth during two conferences held in Raleigh/Durham and Hickory, North Carolina, and a group meeting in Durham, North Carolina. Eighty-six foster youth were shown the CD and website and then asked to complete a twelve-item survey. No demographic data were collected. Results of this survey indicate that the format of the CD and website were overwhelmingly appealing to these youth.

One hundred percent of the youth surveyed liked how the site looked (Q4), and would use the CD and web site once completed (Q9). Over 94% liked the Title (Q1) and nearly 83% liked the music (Q2). Perhaps most importantly, nearly 98% thought the CD or website would be helpful to them (Q), and an equal percent thought the topics listed on the homepage would be of interest to them (Q). Again, nearly 98% of respondents would tell a friend about the CD (Q0), and over 96% would tell a friend about the web site (Q1). Prior to viewing the CD only slightly over half (53%) of the respondents reported knowing about ETV (Q7), which is a central message of the prototype CD and site.

With regard to specific aspects of the site, about 92% liked the intro video of the girls talking on Friday night (Q5), and 97.7% liked the intro video of the boys playing basketball (Q6). Information presented (50% liked) and layout of the site (57%) were the most appealing aspects of those listed (Q12). Youths who participated in the CD feasibility study were overwhelmingly positive in their response to the materials. Many youth told us that they did not need to be paid for watching the video and that they were totally engaged by CD, videos, and website. Youth were excited about the multimedia package and looked forward to seeing the full package when it is available.

The project team concluded that it was a very positive move to change our approach to include the conferences as forums for viewing the CD and getting feedback directly from youth. We think if the prototype CD had been mailed it would have been frustrating for youth to use the materials on their own with no immediate feedback from project personnel. In Phase II the beta test will provide participants with multimedia materials that have greater levels of functionality. The beta test will allow youth (and adults) to visit the website, develop a profile, and start to generate personal feedback on education opportunities after high school.

### **Adult Surveys**

Adult survey participants (primary caregivers) were drawn from the membership rolls of the North Carolina Foster Parent Association (NCFPA) and the Children and Family Services Association NC (CFSANC). Random numbers charts were used to choose the names from the rolls. A total of 560 participants received a mailing with a respective association cover letter, ILR project letter, consent form, survey, and

stamped return envelope addressed to ILR. The return rate was approximately 24.6% (n=138). An initial mailing of 360 was followed by a second for 200. Each respondent was paid \$15 by check after they mailed back the signed consent form and survey.

### Summary

138 adults responded to a survey about the best way to provide information about educational opportunities for foster youth following high school. Upon analysis, it became apparent that not all respondents were caregivers of foster children. This determination was made on the basis of two questions: (Q1) the **respondent's stated role, and** (Q2) the **number of children in their care**. If on Question 1 an individual listed 'Other' as their place for living or working with foster children and the listed role was something not initiative of someone working directly with foster children (see "Roles dropped from survey" table in statistics section); and the number of children in their care was zero or more than seven then that record was dropped from the survey, resulting in an adjusted N of 120.

Percentages reported below are based on the number of responses to a specific survey item, which is usually not the total number of surveys (120). If the departure from 120 for a single item is more than 12, the N used in the denominator of that item is reported. Most respondents reported that they either live or work with Foster children (Q1) in a Group Home (41.7%), Residential facility (35%), or their own home (25%). Most respondents (55%) reported that they work with seven or more youths between ages of 12-17.

### Access to Computer Equipment and the Internet

Access to a computer was prevalent, 87.5% reported owning or having easy access to a computer (Q3). Of those with easy access, 90.8% are connected to the Internet, 80.8% have a CD player, and 51.7% have a DVD player. Most also have easy access (Q4) to a DVD player and a TV (87.5%), and (Q5) many would rather use a DVD player than a VHS player (65.8%). Nearly ninety-four percent (93.9%) reported using a computer everyday or a couple times a week (Q6) and nearly ninety percent (89.4%) reported using the Internet everyday or a couple times a week with 100% reporting they used the Internet at least a couple times a month (Q7).

With respect to where people went online (Q8) most go online from home (75.8%), and 31 of the 46 responding 'other' or 26% of the total sample. Just over 9% report going online at school and 14.2% from a library or community center while no one reported using an Internet café, web TV, or cell phone. Of those with Internet access from their residence (91 respondents answered this item) most use dial-up (60.4%) and the balance use some form of high-speed connection (39.6%).

Most respondents (47.5%) replied 'Does not apply' to the item concerning how often they used the Internet with one of their children, 23.3% reported using the Internet with a child a couple times a month, 21% reported once a week, 21% a couple times a week, and 6.7% everyday (Q10). Almost half (49.2%) reported that their children go online to use email (Q11). Three items addressed the issue of whether these adults felt comfortable letting their children use the Internet. The first item, (Q12) speaks to the child being contacted by someone they do not know, of the

eighty-four responses 57.1% report that this worries them some or a lot. Adults seemed more worried that the children will see or read inappropriate material online (Q13), seventy percent of the ninety-four adults responding were worried some (33%) or a lot (37%). Accordingly, the vast majority (93.9) of homes have rules about when and for how long children can go online (Q14).

### **Role of College and Dissemination of Information About Educational Opportunities**

Most respondents considered continuing the child's education after high school (Q15) essential (75%) or important (20%). When asked whether their foster child plans to continue their education after high school (Q16A-E) most expected their child to attend a community college (53.3%) or four year college (51.7%), and slightly fewer technical school (46.7%); however about twelve percent (11.7%) reported their child had no plans for college and nineteen percent reported they did not know. (Note: respondents could check all that applied for this item).

When ask about useful ways for getting out information about educational opportunities after high school (Q18) all methods were overwhelmingly acceptable to those who responded: manual (92.2%), VHS (85.1), website (83.9%), DVD (81.6%), and CD (73.8%). When ask about their interest in purchasing a low-cost DVD player (Q19) about one third (30%) indicated they would do so.

### **Demographics**

Most respondents were Female (64.2%), ranging in age from 23 to 69 (averaging about 45). Many of them had post-graduate degrees (25.8%) or were college graduates (30%); the remaining had some college (25.8%), vocational education (7.5%) or high school degrees (6.7%). Most respondents were Caucasian (60.8%) or African American (31.7%), only two individuals reported being of Hispanic decent.

### **Overall Evaluation Summery**

In summary, our original research questions were focused on the ability and desire of foster youths and caregivers to access and utilize a Internet based multimedia program on post secondary educational opportunities. We are able to determine from our survey response that a majority of participants do have access to the technology needed to utilize a multimedia program and the desire to learn more about educational opportunities after high school. We also learned that:

1. Most youths and adult caregivers use computers at home and with some regularity (52/75%).
2. The foster youth's desire to go on educationally past high school is as high (78% view it as essential) as the general population (64%). (Yet we know that in reality only 14% of foster youths follow-thru on these desires.)
3. There is a desire for more information on post-secondary education opportunities in all forms, including multimedia.
4. Marketing – only 30% would purchase a bundled package of materials with a DVD player, but that all forms of media used to supply information were acceptable (73-92%).

The one research question that we could not evaluate clearly was behavioral changes through use of the materials and sustaining those over time. We knew this going into Phase I and as suggested in our initial proposal and by reviewers, we will undertake a research study in Phase II that is strongly focused on this aspect. Our basic conclusions are that both youths and adult caregivers are very interested in post-secondary educational opportunities and any materials they can use to gather more information. The enthusiasm of youths who participated in the Phase I feasibility and evaluation study was overwhelming. The response from 86 youths and 20-30 adults who used and viewed the *On Your Way* CD-ROM was overwhelmingly positive. Not one youth disliked the program, videos, music, etc. The SAYSO youth advocacy board was extremely supportive as were the social workers, foster parents, groups home staffs and two caregiver association representatives we worked.

### **Final Progress Report Phase II -Year One**

Educational Opportunities for Youth in Foster Care

2R44HD44347-2

PI: William V Griffin

#### **A. Specific Aims**

The aims for this project have not changed and will remain the same for the next year of funding – July 1, 2006-June 30, 2007.

#### **B. Studies and Results**

The first eight months of the project have been devoted to development of the Internet website [www.onyourway.org](http://www.onyourway.org) (outlining, mapping, programming); gathering of data and databases for web integration; scripting, casting and filming of video segments; meeting, publicizing, and developing materials for project subjects (300 youths and 150 adults); and testing of functionality and website ease of use (T1). The first two sections of the prototype, *Planning My Education* and *What I Like To Do*, plus the secure data entry aspects for development of a personal profile by foster youths (subjects), are complete. These sections, for foster youths and adult caregivers within the same households, will be rolled out for testing on May 1, 2006 (T2). Development of six additional sections will be completed over the next seven months. Two topics will be rolled for each subsequent two-month period (T3-T5).

Research design formatting and development of online data surveys was initially developed on a parallel website. After initial testing the data gathering activities were moved online within the [www.onyourway.org](http://www.onyourway.org) website. A database was developed to gather pre- and post Internet website use and within subject sections. The website was programmed to allow for electronic monitoring of onyourway.org use, completion of survey(s), reviews of topics and knowledge gains, viewing of videos and animation, development of personal profiles, and notification of completion and payment of subject honorariums. Programming was designed to allow for use by both

dial-up and broadband users. Animation, video, and audio segments are active, laid over site wireframes, geared for use by technologically low and hi-end functioning computers (dial-up and broadband).

Video and animated segments utilize a physical, racial, and ethnically diverse group of actors and characters. Persons of color represented over 75 percent of the cast and the main animated character is a representation of an African American male. A disabled person (wheel-chair bound) was included in youth oriented videos.

### **Obstacles**

Programming for the website was the most difficult aspect and required very detailed activities. Finding and gaining permission for use of existing educational databases, interest inventories, and learning style self-assessments was a major obstacle. Integrating these materials into a user friendly, youth oriented (low reading level) website was formidable. We have overcome all the major aspects of these and during the research phase we will further develop the capacity of the website to become a vital repository for foster youth's personal, education, and career oriented information.

We are within 30 days of our original timeline and can recoup those days within the next few months. The major developmental aspects are now in place and additional topic areas will be built on that foundation. All of our video scripts, the complete site map, and 50 percent of site content have been developed.

### **Research Phase –Subjects**

We are now recruiting subjects in earnest for the research groups. Starting May 1, 2006, both adults and youths will be able to access the website. Our goal of 300 youths and 150 adults is still very reasonable and we expect no problems in developing that aspect of the study. We will run our focus groups in May and either August or September. In addition, we have presented the concepts of the site/study and onyourway.org storyboards to two professional conference groups and will present to a third at the end of April 2006 (North Carolina Foster Parent Association 2006 Statewide Conference). With our heavy involvement in foster youth and caregiver activities over the coming months we will have many opportunities beyond our proposed research to determine reactions to the new website and its content.

### **Diversity**

The Human Subjects Enrollment Table for this report lists 30 subjects to date and nothing other than gender. We have held back recruitment of subjects until we had a solid date for youths and caregivers to go online. We felt to do otherwise could increase our attrition rate. We are starting to accelerate recruitment efforts and will have our full compliment of subjects within the next four to five weeks. We cannot determine racial or ethnic composition until subjects' logon and establish their online accounts. These logons will occur over the four to five week period for T2. Our plans are to monitor user data daily and to recruit where necessary to ensure the appropriate range of representation during the next five weeks – before we move

from T2 to T3 (first two website sections (T2) available for viewing - to the second two (T3) of eight for viewing). We have access to many agencies for recruitment and due to the existing overrepresentation of minorities and females in the foster care system we do not expect any problems with recruiting within these two groups. We will undertake special efforts to ensure that we have a representative male population – this will be more of a problem within the adult caregivers population than it will be within foster youth candidates.

### **C. - D. Significance and Plans for Next Year of Funding**

Our plans for the coming year and beyond are to continue to gather data on the use of the Internet website and users' responses over time. This ongoing data collection effort will allow us to develop formidable data that presently do not exist. These findings will be published and should have impact on fellow researchers and practitioners. This effect will carry over to youths and caregivers and educational aspirations of both groups. The onyourway.org website deals with many aspects of foster youths health, both physical and mental. The site will allow youths to retain both their personal and family health histories and have links to resources that promote healthy lifestyles.

During the second year we will fully developing the DVD and Guide for foster youth caregivers and the CD-Rom for foster youth. Both of these items will complete an initial package of materials under the On Your Way banner.

### **Research Results**

The research design called for the collection of quantitative data by conducting pre/post module surveys of the participating children to determine their baseline and post-module levels of knowledge and attitudes, as well as the strength of conviction of their responses. There were also qualitative questions asked at the end of each module to ascertain whether the children could translate the content module into appropriate responses, and whether they could generalize the module content.

The design also called for gathering similar information from foster care providers (foster parents) serving the children. Unfortunately, very few foster parents participated in any of the post-module data collection activities, and none completed the entire sequence. Therefore, no foster parent/provider analyses were conducted. In fact, the attrition rate for foster children was close to 50%, and indicated to the design team that this population of children is very difficult to track or to maintain contact with through the foster care providers. Although foster children may move from placement to placement, or even transition to independent living situations while still in the care and custody of the state, they always have a caseworker in charge of their case.

In part, the experience with the non-participation of foster parents and attrition of children from those foster homes led the design team to conclude that the more appropriate market for this product is the foster care workers with direct case management responsibility for these children. Subsequent to that decision, occurring approximately three-quarters of the way through the project, the materials were

presented to foster care workers at state conferences and the response was very positive. The focus of project development and marketing since that time has shifted to foster care service providers and case workers, and the response continues to be very positive.

This section presents the results of both the quantitative and qualitative data from the foster children, and is presented in that order. Due to the low numbers of children who completed both the pre-test and post-test items on all modules (n=34), the quantitative analyses should be viewed as suggestive, rather than conclusive, with respect to measured changes. The qualitative data were more useful for product revision prior to finalization and marketing. They also suggest that children learned more than the quantitative data indicate. Although the “n” was much smaller than the design called for, the foster child data were subjected to the proposed analyses, and their results are presented.

The knowledge gained, and attitudes expressed were examined by comparing the responses to the pre-test questions to those same questions asked after the modules had been viewed by the foster children. Attitude and confidence questions employed a Likert Scale strategy using 7-point scales. The mean differences were computed as Difference = Post Module (posttest) scale responses minus Pre Module (pretest) scale responses, so that a positive score indicates positive gain. The knowledge items were dichotomous (coded as 1=correct and 0=incorrect) so that the data presented in the tables in this section equates to the proportion of correct answers, and the “mean gain” on those items is actually the difference in the pre/post proportions.

In addition to asking the children to respond to specific content questions, there was also a self-assessment question at the end of each module that asked them to indicate how much they had learned about the topics covered in the preceding module (e.g., how much have you learned about options for getting more education after HS?). The same 7-point Likert scaling strategy was employed for these questions as was used for the attitude and confidence questions. For these questions the scale anchors were “Nothing” to “Quite a lot.”

Pretest- posttest items also were organized into four composite scales: Attitude (8 items), Confidence (8 items), Knowledge (11 items), Weighted Knowledge (8 weighted items). One item was a text response and was not analyzed. The composite scales represent the summed scale responses across all modules for each participant. Analyzing scales greatly reduced the number of statistical tests while increasing variation in outcome measures. **Knowledge items** were recoded into correct – incorrect format and a total sum scale was created. **Attitude** and **Confidence** were likewise summed to form an overall score.

Although differences in household composition (i.e., the number of foster children living in each house) was considered to be a potential variable of interest, and was part of the original design, the non-participation of foster parents resulted in insufficient data to examine household variables on youth scores. All statistical tests were conducted using SPSS Mixed Model procedures, which accounts for multiple

youth from the same household. Results from the analysis of youth data are presented in the Tables 1 through 8.

Analyses of data from Modules 1, 4, and 5 showed most improvement between pre- and post-test questions. Overall, attitudinal questions showed the greatest improvement while the (un-weighted) knowledge questions showed very little change, and no significant changes. However, when knowledge items were weighted with the confidence the respondent has in their response (presented as a weighted knowledge scale in Table 8), the weighted knowledge items show significant improvement. This suggests that although the foster children were providing answers to knowledge questions that were correct, they were not as sure of their answers before viewing the modules as they were after they had interacted with the instructional materials in those modules. In retrospect, the level of difficulty of questions was too low; that is, the questions were too easy. For example, it is likely that these foster children had heard that there were ways to obtain financial resources for college, or that more education was necessary to obtain a high-paying job, but they did not have enough knowledge about sources of financial aid or enough knowledge about the types of jobs requiring more education to feel confident in their answers.

Module 1 focused on attitudes about pursuing post-secondary education and knowledge about options for so doing. It also presented information about interesting jobs and careers that might be available to youths who do not pursue post-secondary education. Collectively the data in Table 1 suggest that the youths who completed the items were already thinking about continuing their education after high school before signing on to the On-Your Way website, and no significant change was noted. However, after completing this OYW module youths knew significantly more about different types of colleges and training programs, and also significantly more about the value of education to future employment options.

The Module 1 self-assessment of knowledge gain questions yielded a mean scale score of 4.55 (median = 4) indicating the respondent thought they had learned somewhat more than a moderate amount of information about educational options after high school.

**Table 1: MODULE 1 Analysis of Pre-Post change (Youth only)**

Type	Module 1 Items	Post-test Average	Pre-test Average	Mean Gain (N=34)	Significance (2-tailed)
A	1) How much thought have you given to continuing your education after high school?	5.6	6.0	-.35	.39
A	2) How much do you know about different types of colleges or job training programs?	4.9	3.7	1.23	.01*
A	3) How important is it to get more education after high school in order to get the job you want?	5.5	6.1	-.55	.04*

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Modules 1) How much have you learned about options for getting more education after HS?	31	4.55	4.00	1.670

Module 2 focused on aptitude assessment, viewing jobs as careers or avocations rather than simply a means to earn money, and expectations of youths to have jobs that they enjoy. There are no significant differences in the pretest/posttest answers to the questions represented in Table 2. Examination of the scale responses suggests that the children were selecting responses close to the anchors of the scales, thus limiting the amount of potential movement after experiencing the module. These children also expressed fairly high degrees of confidence in their answers, so weighting the knowledge questions with the confidence scores did not have an effect.

In response to the "How much have you learned..." question for Module 2, the mean response was 4.74, essentially "a lot." Given the number of "correct" responses to the knowledge questions and the high degree of confidence expressed in their answers, it is interesting that they credited the module with conveying this much information.

**Table 2: MODULE 2**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Module 2 Items</b>	<b>Post-test Average</b>	<b>Pre-test Average</b>	<b>Mean Gain (N=34)</b>	<b>Significance (2-tailed)</b>
K	4) Are there tests you can take that will tell you what types of jobs you would be good at?	.85	.94	-.08	.15
C	5) How sure are you about your answer to #4, above?	5.7	5.5	.20	.61
K	6) Is a job something that you have to do just to make money, not because you enjoy it?	.58	.67	-.08	.37
C	7) How sure are you about your answer to #6, above?	5.5	5.6	-.05	.59
A	9) How likely is it that you will have the job you want 10 years from now?	5.4	5.1	.26	.32
		<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
	Modules 2) How much have you learned about considering what you are good at and turning it into a job or career?	31	4.74	5.00	1.731

The content from Module 3 focused on preparing applications for employment and identifying human resources that could be tapped for assistance in doing so. There were significant gains in knowledge relating to preparing for entry into the world of work, insofar as preparing personal resumes was concerned. Virtually every child said that they knew adults who would write personal reference letters, and all listed 4 adults both at the pretest and the posttest. Since 4 persons was the maximum number of persons that could be listed, no significant changes could occur for these two questions.

In spite of nearly all children answering the knowledge question correctly and having full lists of persons who could write references, respondents did indicate that they learned more than a moderate amount from the module, with a mean response score of 4.62 (median 5) on the 7-point scale. As was true of module 2, the knowledge questions appear to have been too easy, or elementary, whereas the actual content of the module did, in the children’s estimation, impart a substantial amount of useful information.

**Table 3: MODULE 3**

Type	Module 3 Items	Post-test Average	Pre-test Average	Mean Gain (N=34)	Significance (2-tailed)
A	10) How much do you know about writing a personal resume?	5.0	3.6	1.32	.00*
K	11) Do you know any adults who you are sure would write a reference letter for you to help you get a job or get an apartment?	.91	.97	-.058	(solution not found)
K	12) If you answered “yes” to number 11, how many adults could you ask to be a reference for you?	4.0	4.0	.03	.19
		<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
	Module 3) How much have you learned about choices you might have to continue your education after HS?	34	4.62	5.00	1.741

Module 4 focused on financing post-secondary education, and upon eligibility to attend based upon academic records of the participants. This area of inquiry was one where respondents appeared to have little accurate information, as evidenced by the significant improvements on several items. After experiencing Module 4, respondents had significantly more knowledge about the costs of college or trade school; they knew significantly more about obtaining financial resources to pay for college; and they knew more about the types of opportunities available to them given their academic histories (i.e., grades). The “degree of confidence” questions both showed increases, with the increases falling just shy of statistical significance.

The self-assessed knowledge-gain question for Module 4 indicated that participants learned a bit more than a moderate amount, with a mean response score of 4.68 (Median 5) on the 7-point scale.

**Table 4: MODULE 4**

Type	Module 4 Items	Post-test Average	Pre-test Average	Mean Gain (N=34)	Significance (2-tailed)
A	13) How much do you know about the costs of going to college or trade school after high school (tuition, books, housing, etc.)?	5.3	4.2	1.05	.002*
A	14) How much do you know about getting money to pay for college?	5.3	4.2	1.08	.002*
K	15) Do your grades have to be mostly As and Bs in order to get financial aid or scholarships?	.55	.35	.20	.05*
C	16) How sure are you about your answer to # 15, above?	5.1	4.6	.50	.11
K	17) Are there special sources of financial aid just for foster youths?	.85	.82	.02	.71
C	18) How sure are you about your answer to # 17, above?	5.5	4.7	.73	.17
		<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
	Modules 4) How much have you learned about getting money to pay for college, trade school, or job training?	34	4.68	5.00	1.788

Module 5 presented information on learning styles and how to get help to stay in and progress successfully through school (even secondary school). With respect to one of the knowledge questions, respondents appear to have had a good understanding of places to go for help with school related matters, and the post test question on that point was not different from the pretest. However, a significantly larger proportion of respondents understood the differences between an auditory learner and a visual learner, so the content on learning styles was apparently successful. Furthermore, respondents had more confidence in their answers at the posttest, although the differences fell short of statistical significance.

Module 5's self-assessed learning question indicates that the module's content was successful conveying a moderate amount of information to participants about succeeding in school, even though they had a fairly good pretest level of knowledge (Mean - Median response score = 4.5).

Table 5: Module 5

Type	Module 5 Items	Post-test Average	Pre-test Average	Mean Gain (N=34)	Significance (2-tailed)
K	19) Do you know about places you can go where you can get help to succeed in school?	.85	.85	.00	.87
M	20) If you answered "Yes" to #19 above, how many places can you think of?	4.7	4.1	.62	.10*
K	21) Do you know the difference between an auditory learner and a visual learner?	.88	.58	.29	.003*
C	22) How sure are you about your answer to #21, above?	5.5	5.2	.29	.40
		<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
	Modules 5) How much have you learned about getting help or assistance to succeed in school?	34	4.53	4.50	1.581

Module 6 focused on health-related issues. Respondents were aware that their risk of getting sick or injured actually increases after they exit foster care, and the slight increase in confidence in their answers at the posttest was not significant. However, respondents had significantly more knowledge about health insurance at the posttest, and the self-assessment question of knowledge gain yielded a mean posttest score of 4.91 (Median 5), equating to "a lot" of knowledge gained relating to staying healthy and obtaining health care.

Modules 7 and 8 are combined in Table 7 due to the irretrievable loss of data relating to the knowledge questions for Module 8. Module 7 focused on obtaining and managing a place to live, including apartments, dorm rooms, and the like. Module 8 focused on the closely related topic of becoming connected to the community in healthy and pro-social ways. None of the knowledge or confidence questions were significantly different at posttest than pretest, but the self assessment of knowledge at post test showed large gains on both questions.

With respect to finding housing and obtaining housing while in school, respondents had a posttest mean score of 4.65 (Median 5). A similar mean score was obtained with respect to getting connected to the community where you live (mean = 4.68, median = 4.5)

The overall curriculum question took on a slightly different form. Respondents were asked if, after having completed all eight modules, they were more likely to go

on to pursue post-secondary education than before. Specifically the question reads: "Do you feel that you are more or less likely to go on to get more education after high school?"

**Table 6: MODULE 6**

Type	Module 6 Items	Post-test Average	Pre-test Average	Mean Gain (N=34)	Significance (2-tailed)
K	23) Does the risk of getting sick or injured increase, decrease, or stay about the same after you leave foster care?	.29	.26	.03	.7
C	24) How sure are you about your answer to # 23, above?	5.2	5.0	.147	.5
K	25) How much do you know about getting health insurance after high school?	4.6	3.5	1.08	.006*
		<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
	Modules 6) How much have you learned about staying healthy and getting medical help when you need it?	34	4.91	5.00	1.545

The structure of the scale was altered for this question, with the scale anchors being "Much less likely" and ranging through an "Unchanged" midpoint to "A lot more likely." The mean response was 5.65 (median 5.5), indicating that respondents were "quite a bit more likely" to get more education after high school than before.

Finally, the composite scales for attitude, knowledge and confidence are presented in Table 8. The analyses show that attitude about getting additional education after high school improved significantly, and that when the knowledge items were weighted by their posttest confidence scores, knowledge also increased significantly. The un-weighted knowledge scores did not increase significantly. However, the self-assessment questions of knowledge gained that were asked at the conclusion of each module suggest that a large part of the apparent lack of significance is due to the level and structure of the questions. The content of the knowledge questions appears to have been too easy, in spite of focus group feedback that they were on target, and the structure (dichotomous yes/no format) did not provide enough potential to detect variance within range. Participants credited all eight modules as having conveyed much more knowledge to them than the research questions were able to detect. Another reason that the differences were not

significant is likely that the small number of subjects did not provide adequate statistical power. The extraordinary difficulties encountered engaging and retaining the participation of foster children through their foster parents was a surprise to the design team, and resulted in a major shift in marketing to foster care workers and child care programs.

**Table 7: MODULE 7 & 8**

Type	Module 7 Items	Post-test Average	Pre-test Average	Mean Gain (N=34)	Significance (2-tailed)
K	26) Is it True or False that when you live in an apartment the rent covers all your living expenses except food?	.70	.70	.00	(solution not found)
C	27) How sure are you about your answer to #26, above?	5.2	5.2	.00	.69
K	28) Do most colleges or trade schools provide year-round housing if you are a full-time student?	.29	.44	-.14	.34
C	29) How sure are you about your answer to # 28, above?	4.7	.4.2	.56	.16
K	30) Is it true that once you are done with high school the foster care system cannot help you any longer?	.58	.85	-.26	(solution not found)
		<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
	Modules 7) How much have you learned about where to live, during the time that you are in school?	34	4.65	5.00	1.555
	Modules 8) How much have you learned about getting connected and involved in campus life?	34	4.68	4.50	1.646
	Final) Do you feel that you are more or less likely to go on to get more education after high school?	34	5.56	5.50	1.440

**Table 8: Summary of pre-post comparison of composite scales by type of question**

<b>DIFFERENCE IN...</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P – value</b>	<b>Mean Gain</b>
Attitude	34	.06	5.1
Knowledge	34	.80	.08
Confidence	34	.30	2.3
Weighted Knowledge	34	.01	8.5

**Qualitative data**

Due to the shortcomings of the quantitative data, the qualitative information gathered at the end of each module take on additional importance. The qualitative questions follow the same general line as did the quantitative questions, but were open-ended. For example, instead of asking “How much do you know about writing a personal resume?” and scaling the responses from “Nothing” to “A lot,” the qualitative question asked the respondents to “List four things that you need to have in your personal resume when trying to find a job.” Instead of asking respondents if they knew credible adults who would write a positive recommendation for the participant, respondents were asked to list three persons (by title or position, not by personal name) who would write the reference letters. The purpose of asking these questions was to find out if respondents actually possessed the desired knowledge, and/or if they could generalize the knowledge to other areas related to the module’s content. Although there was occasionally missing data (or non-responsive answers) data were available for 34 respondents.

Relating to Modules 1 & 2, about 2/3 of the participant (22 of 34 respondents, or 65%) correctly listed three appropriate and different types of persons who could help plan to get a job or to continue in school, such as doctor, social worker, counselor, teacher, lawyer, guardian ad litem, and coach. All but a very few had at least one or two “correct.” Some of this participants listed “parents” which may be a resource for some of these children, but not all. A small minority (4 of 34, or 12%) either didn’t understand the question, or simply ignored the instruction in the question that requested types of persons rather than given names of persons. Over all, respondents seemed to have a good idea about persons who could help them advance either their employment or educational goals.

Participants were also asked to list 2 things that they liked to do that they could probably be paid to do, and two things that they think they’d like to do but would need more education to do. They seemed to understand quite well the difference, with 65% of respondents identifying age-appropriate chores that they could do for money, such as yard work, baby sitting, caring for the elderly, walking/grooming pets, cleaning house, washing cars, washing/setting hair, tutoring, etc. Of the remaining 35%, about half (18%) identified at least one chore that they might get paid to do. Among the remaining 18% were respondents who simply did not answer the question,

listed inappropriate chores (e.g., medical work) or typed in gibberish text. The second part of the question (things they might like to do but would need more education to turn them into jobs) reflected an understanding of the difference between “chores for pay” and career-oriented avocations. For many respondents (about half) the career-oriented avocations were logical extensions of their previous choices. For example, babysitting or caring for children was elevated to pre-school teacher, teacher, nurse; cleaning/setting hair became cosmetologist. For others the connection was not as linear, but for the most part, choices were appropriate (photographer, model, scientist, deaf interpreter, engineer, auto mechanic, and the like. About 20 % (7 respondents) either did not answer the question, listed gibberish, or listed inappropriate (e.g. cheerleader) or vague answers (e.g., help people). For the most part, the respondents were able to differentiate between things they could do right now and make some money, and those things that were linked to educational credentials or simply needing more education to be successful.

In relation to Modules 3 & 4, the majority of respondents (29 respondents, about 85%) were also able to list four appropriate things that needed to be on their resumes, including names, phone numbers, education, past job histories, references, etc. Only 15% (5 respondents) did not answer this question in a way that demonstrated knowledge of the purpose of a resume, and they were respondents who did not take the questions seriously (they were the same respondents who did not answer previous or subsequent questions in a thoughtful or appropriate manner).

Youths were asked to identify sources of financial aid that are specifically for foster children. Just over one third of respondents (35%, 12 respondents) successfully identifies those sources (e.g., Educational & Training Vouchers), but an additional 38% (13 respondents) successfully identified other legitimate sources of financial aid, such as Pell Grants, scholarships, student loans. A few respondents (18%, 6 respondents) did not answer the question seriously, leaving only 9% (3 respondents) who apparently tried to answer the question seriously but could not identify realistic sources of aid.

Modules 5 & 6 focused on learning styles, obtaining help to stay in school and to succeed in school, and on health-related issues. Respondents were quite able to identify 4 sources of assistance to help them succeed in school. Responses covered not only academics, but financial, social and personal support. Again, there was a small number of respondents who did not answer the question seriously (18%, or 6 respondents), but virtually all others identified several sources for personal support (e.g., guidance counselors, social workers, mentors, parents and other family members), financial support (e.g., loans, grants, scholarships), and academics (e.g., teachers, tutors, career and student services).

A large majority (85%, or 29 respondents) took the Learning Style Assessment that was part of the module. All of them reported their “preferred learning style (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) and most were able to identify the connection between their assessed style and their experiences in learning: visual (e.g., “I remember things I can picture,” “I learn better by seeing the information,”); kinesthetic (“I learn better when I touch and do rather than having someone explain it.” “I learn better

doing things than listening.” Interestingly, the eight auditory learners (24%) were least able to relate their styles to their learning experiences, deferring to the learning style program (e.g., “Because the program told me so.” “I got a 5 on the test.”), rather than connecting the style to personal experience. This may be, in part, because the On Your Way website material is largely visual and kinesthetic, although there were “auditory” explanations and examples given the participants in every module.

The same 6 (18%) respondents who did not identify sources of social and academic support did not identify sources of medical help. All other respondents (82%) were able to identify three such sources (e.g., hospital, emergency room, clinic, health department, dentist, nurse, ob/gyn, etc.). Three quarters (76%, or 26 respondents) were also able to list three reasons that they would need medical attention, including preventive services (e.g., pre-natal care, check-ups) and serious accidents/incidents (e.g. gun shot wound, broken bone). There was also a mix of mental health-related issues (e.g. suicidal thoughts, depression). Clearly the information from the module was received by participants and was accessible after completing the module.

The final two modules, Modules 7 & 8, focused on obtaining and managing various living situations (e.g., apartment, dorm room) and getting connected to the community in positive, pro-social ways. Two thirds (68%, 23 respondents) clearly integrated the material on selecting a place to live. They were asked to list three things that they had to consider, other than the cost of rent, when selecting a place to live. The large majority of this 68% of respondents listed things like location, condition of building, availability of public transportation, crime rate in the neighborhood, availability of washer/dryer, etc. The respondents not included in this group (32%) were about evenly split between those that did not grasp the question, and those who did not answer at all, or answered nonsensically.

A follow-up question asked for two additional things that respondents would have to budget for, and the “engaged group of 29 respondents (85%) demonstrated mastery of this with a variety of accurate responses (e.g. food, utilities, security deposits, entertainment, phone, furnishings, etc. Two thirds of respondents (68%, 23 respondents) were able to identify places that they would look to find an apartment (e.g./ news paper, internet search, realtors, apartment guide), however there was apparently some ambiguity in the question as some respondents (24%, 8 respondents) listed the communities or names of towns nearby. This question was less successful at ascertaining the mastery of the respondents.

The final question had to do with getting connected to the community. A majority of respondents (59%, 20 respondents) correctly listed activities or mechanisms of interaction that are appropriate, such as joining social clubs or study groups, play sports, volunteer, join sorority or fraternity, and so on.

It is unfortunate that the non-participation by “care-giving adults,” the attrition of many youth respondents, and the somewhat unsuccessful attempts to measure quantitatively the objective knowledge, attitude and confidence measures resulted in an inability to draw firm conclusions about knowledge increases, and to attribute the

qualitative information with the knowledge gained by the youths during their interactions with the web site. However, the experience of conducting the study during implementation of the project was very instructive with respect to the appropriate mechanisms for engagement and retention of foster youths. The realization that foster parents, for all the good that they may do in caring for these children, are a weak link with respect to using these types of resources to help their charges transition to successful adulthood, led to a complete revision of the marketing plan and the development of the final work products so that they focus on the agency care providers who have case management responsibilities for the youths. The compressed timeframe for processing the entire curriculum in the On Your Way site was a byproduct of the design and implementation of the test version of the web site. In practice, using the foster care social workers as the mechanism for engagement, and lengthening the duration of the youths' interaction with the material should result in improved engagement, retention and learning/internalizing the material presented on the web site. Early sharing of these work products with foster care social workers has resulted in eager anticipation of availability of the resource.

### **Report Summary**

This report will be submitted to National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in March 2008 and will also be posted electronically on the National Institutes of Health Electronic Research Administration website - eRA Commons.