

California Foster Workforce Development

MODEL POLICY FOR PRIORITY HIRING AT COUNTY
AND STATE LEVELS



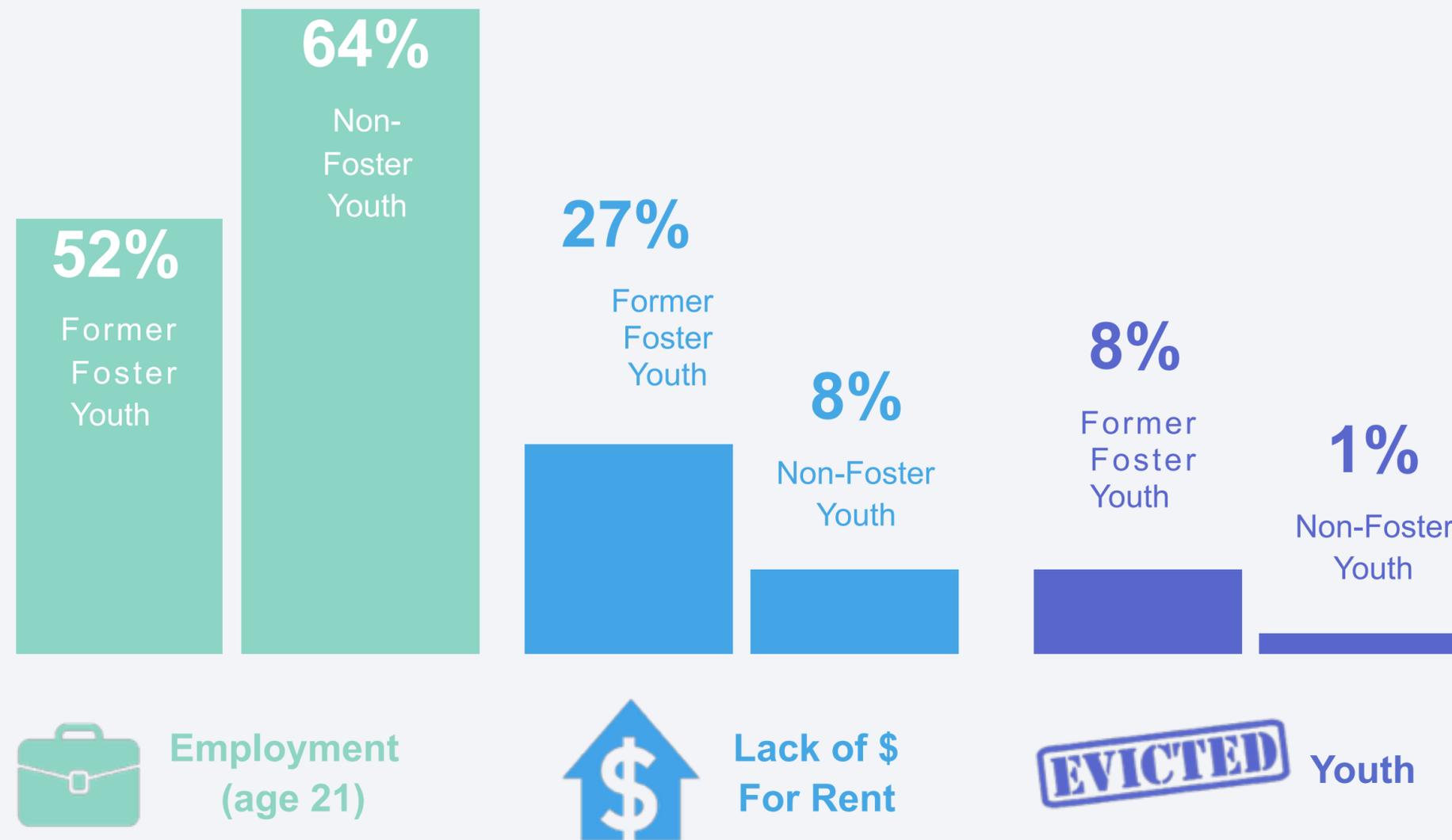
Aging youth out of foster care are **underemployed or unemployed.**

In most states, when foster youth turn 18, they are no longer covered by the system. These adolescents typically do not fare well when compared with other teens living with their families. The result being these children are more likely forced to live by themselves without support, stop their education, be homeless, go on welfare or get arrested.

The cost of doing nothing will have consequences on taxpayers and our foster youths outcome. With employment our aging foster youth will likely avoid the social ills listed and overcome adversity.

Context

Chapin Hall Center for Children Study



Youth aging out of care are vulnerable to poor economic outcomes

Data indicates that there is an absence of effort to address the career and employment issues that face youth in care. Proactive career development, employment opportunities and extending foster care services beyond 18 are fundamental in establishing a successful future for youth in care.

Employment Challenges

Finding Connections & Prioritizing



Connections & Prioritizing Employment are Key for Workforce Development

Most often adolescents find their first job through family or community these connections, because they have been removed from their families, communities and schools and placed into the care of the state and county government.

Also, due to court orders and other system requirements a youth in foster care may have to seek court permission to apply for jobs or engage in career exploration programs, delaying their entrance in the workforce.

Historical Improvements

2001

The Foster Youth Employment Training and Housing Task Force developed a framework for collaboration with local workforce development and foster care systems.

2004

The Walter S. Johnson Foundation funded several California counties to implement the Gateway Project College and Career Pathway Program

2006

The County of Santa Clara was honored with a top award from the California State Association of Counties for its Emancipated Foster Youth (EFY) Employment Program from among 260 entries throughout California.

2007

As part of the Governor's Career Technical Education Initiative, the California Community Colleges utilized the experiences and lessons learned under the Walter S. Johnson Gateway Project to develop and launch Career Advancement Academies (CAAs) in three regions throughout the State.

Several California counties have recognized the importance of continuing to support the foster youth formerly in their care by prioritizing employment opportunities for these young people

Policy Recommendation Summary

1

Hire eligible youth into already available entry level jobs.

2

Implement policies that give explicit hiring preference to youth.

3

Facilitate job skill development that leads to permanent employment in alignment with ILP

4

Hire youth into full-time, permanent and benefitted positions throughout county and state departments

5

Require Youth be informed of rights to sealed juvenile records and prohibitions on being asked about their records

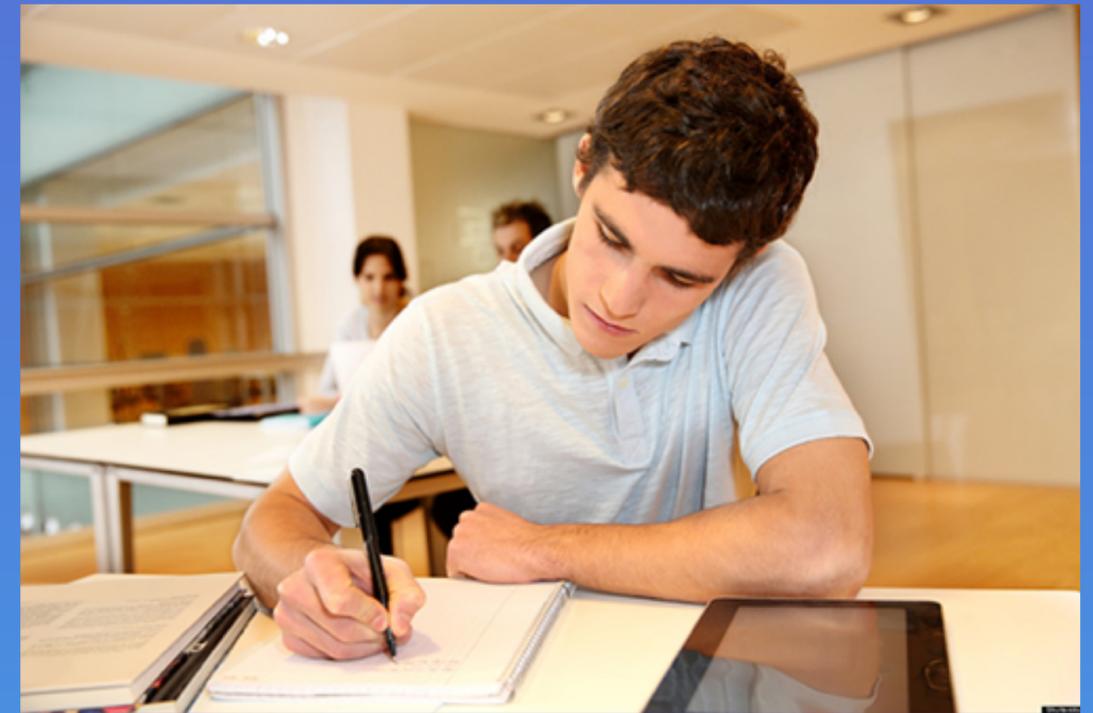
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Inform youth of right to be given preference by state agencies for internships and student assistant positions

Recommendation Description

California foster youth are ill prepared to become self-sufficient by the time they age out of care:

*According to Chapin Hall, findings from the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study 2014, **less than 20% of transition-age foster youth feel prepared** to be independent and succeed. With limited and sporadic employment during their time in foster care, it is not surprising that by age 24 over 50% will be unemployed and those employed will be earning on average only \$7,500 a year. The result is **50% will spend time homeless and 70% will be on some form of government assistance.***



Recommendation Description



Counties across California can **increase** workforce development and employment opportunities for current and former foster youth by:

- 1.** Hiring eligible, current or /recently emancipated foster youth into open entry-level jobs that are already currently available.
- 2.** Offering open positions at the county/city/state level to qualified foster youth/emancipated foster youth – necessitating no new 'jobs,' to be created, and no new budget to be appropriated.
- 3.** Based off results from the State of Texas's model, **Santa Clara County's**, and various state policies – it is known that this policy leads to successful results.

Success Story

Santa Clara Case Study

The Importance of Continuing Support

The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors established a policy that former foster youth would be given an opportunity to **secure employment with the county**. The policy creates a special application process for benefitted, entry level positions with the county.

Goal: Hiring managers are encouraged by the child welfare and human resources departments to request candidates from this pool for interviews, and applicants are given three days to respond to invitations to schedule and interview. Those hired enter as unclassified and receive full health benefits. After three months of successful employment the youth can come permanent.



EMPLOYMENT



COUNSELOR



PRIORITY
EMPLOYMENT
OPPORTUNITIES

Success Story

Santa Clara Case Study

Outcome

The policy and practice have been well received. Many former foster youth are working for Santa Clara County in various positions as the county is a major employer. Over time, the program has been expanded to include twenty-two entry-level classifications, representing more than one thousand entry-level positions across the county.

The Santa Clara employment program should be expanded to all governmental bodies including cities, counties and the state.

27
Have been hired since the program started



2 Resigned
3 Terminated
3 Working in same position
19 Transferred/promoted into higher level positions

Recommendation Description

1. Develop programs that offer internships and part to full-time employment



Short Term Paid: LA
Long Term Paid: LA, SD, San Mateo
Permanent: LA, Santa Clara
Semi-Permanent Full Time: LA, Riverside, Merced, Mariposa, San Bernardino

2. Make current employment programs more successful



Advise on juvenile records and background checks.
Advise on preference by state agencies and student assistants.
Implement soft skills and hard skills into ILP practices.

1: Develop programs that offer internship, part or full-time employment for current and former foster youth, using current models as a guide

A. Short Term Paid Internships (Los Angeles)

These short-term (i.e. 120 hour, 300 hour) internships offer current and former foster youth the opportunity for paid work experience in county departments, non-profit, public and private companies. While positions are typically for summer employment, these work experience internships can exist throughout the year and are paid for by county child welfare, department of education, individual disability education act funding, workforce investment boards, or other youth serving programming. Interns are hired after an interview and may be provided a job coach or additional training during the program to develop the core competencies they need to succeed in the workplace. County departments participate voluntarily in the program, and there is not a dedicated path to permanent county employment at the end of the internship. Youth who wish to apply for permanent county positions must go through the normal competitive hiring process and meet those eligibility criteria. This type of internship would be open to youth ages 16 and up.

B. Longer Term Paid Internships (San Diego, San Mateo, Los Angeles)

These internships offer current and former foster youth the opportunity to work in an entry-level position in a county department for 6-18 months. Positions may be part or full-time. Interns are hired after an interview and may be provided a job coach or additional training during the program to learn professional and interpersonal skills. County departments participate voluntarily in the program, and there is not a dedicated path to permanent county employment at the end of the internship. Youth who wish to apply for permanent county positions must go through the normal competitive hiring process. This type of internship would be open to youth ages 18 and up who have already completed high school or equivalent.

C. Pathway to permanent, full-time employment (Santa Clara, Los Angeles)

This type of program offers current and former foster youth a pathway to permanent, full-time employment in a number of county departments. Youth are hired into the program after an interview for an entry-level position in a county department. Once hired through the program, youth are eligible to apply to a permanent county position by successfully passing an employment examination within a set period of time (3 months in Santa Clara and 24 months in Los Angeles). In Santa Clara, participating youth are hired as permanent employees as long as they pass their employment exam. In Los Angeles, participating youth must go through the competitive examination process (which includes a ranking of exam scores), but they compete only against other participating youth, not the general public.

Both programs offer supportive services to youth as they apply for the program, and Los Angeles's program provides job coaching and life skills training to youth during the program. In Los Angeles, each county department is required by the Board of Supervisors to host a youth from the program, but in Santa Clara, participation by county departments is voluntary.

In addition to the above opportunities, county HR departments may want to collaborate with the Independent Living Program (ILP) to provide job skills training to current/former foster youth who are hired for county jobs/internships. This allows HR to tap into an existing resource, instead of re-inventing the wheel. LA County has done this and could advise other counties on doing so.

Strategies

California should replicate Santa Clara County

California should **increase access to workforce development and employment opportunities for foster youth** transitioning from the foster care system by replicating statewide the Santa Clara County Emancipated Foster Youth Program that provides public sector, entry-level job opportunities to untrained, economically-disadvantaged youth transitioning out of the foster care system.

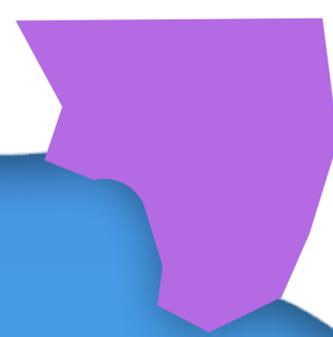


Strategies

Los Angeles County should replicate Santa Clara County

Los Angeles County should **increase access to workforce development and employment opportunities for foster youth** transitioning from the foster care system by replicating statewide the Santa Clara County Emancipated Foster Youth Program that provides public sector, entry-level job opportunities to untrained, economically- disadvantaged youth transitioning out of the foster care system.

Los Angeles County

A map of California is shown in the background, with Los Angeles County highlighted in a purple color. The rest of the state is in a light blue color.

D. A limited number of semi-permanent, full-time positions within the Child Welfare department (Los Angeles, Riverside, Merced, Mariposa, San Bernardino)

Five counties have programs that hire former foster youth as full-time employees in the Child Welfare department to serve as peer advocates for foster youth or assist social workers with case management. The number of positions tends to be limited (most counties have no more than 7 employees in this role), and the employees work only within Child Welfare. While the position is not time-limited, it is also not supposed to be permanent and employed youth are expected to transition to other employment in 3-4 years. Youth are typically hired through an interview and need not take an employment exam for this position. There is not a dedicated path to other county employment through this position.

2: Implement Strategies to Remove Barriers to Success in Employment Programs, such as:

A. Advise and facilitate current and former foster youth to have their juvenile records sealed and inform them that employers cannot ask them about juvenile court records, but most corporate employers will require a voluntary background check

Judges, attorneys, social workers, counselors, and others who have contact with youth in the dependency system should advise youth of their rights regarding juvenile records under current law and any changes to law that occur over time. These professionals should be prepared to assist current and former foster youth seal their juvenile records where possible and expunge their non-sealable juvenile and adult records. These professionals should make available Judicial Council forms to complete the sealing possible. These professional should inform all current and former foster youth of the importance of sealing and/or expunging their records and the impact that an unsealed record may have on their ability to earn gainful employment. These professionals should also be available to answer questions a youth or young adult may have about record sealing.

Employers are not permitted to ask applicants for employment to disclose information concerning an arrest or detention that did not result in a conviction. This provision was recently expanded with the addition of Labor Code Section 432.7 (AB 1843) that prohibits an employer from asking an applicant for employment to disclose, or from utilizing as a factor in determining any condition of employment, information concerning or related to an arrest, detention, processing, diversion, supervision, adjudication, or court disposition that occurred while the person was subject to the process and jurisdiction of juvenile court law with specified exceptions for employment at health facilities.

However, since most corporate and government employers conduct background checks and requests as a condition of employment a candidate to voluntarily submit to such a check, a juvenile and/or adult record can be uncovered. It is paramount that counties have processes in place to ensure that current and former foster youth understand the impact having a record may have on their ability to earn gainful employment and provide them with guidance on how to ensure their records are sealed and/or expunged. If neither can be accomplished, counties should advise their youth of alternative employment opportunities including, but not limited to, employers who do not conduct background checks and employers who work with recidivism candidates.

B. Inform current and former foster youth that they must be given preference by state agencies hiring interns and student assistants

Effective January 1, 2017, Government Code Section 18220 requires: “(a) State agencies, when hiring for internships and student assistant positions, shall give preference to qualified applicants who are, or have been, dependent children in foster care. The preference shall be granted to applicants up to 26 years of age. (b) For purposes of this section, ‘preference’ means priority over similarly qualified applicants for placement in the position.” All counties should advise youth in foster care regarding this provision of the law. The California Human Resources Department (CalHR) is developing guidance for state agencies to implement this statute.

2: Prepare foster youth for employment and success in the workplace with comprehensive job skills development that focuses on critical soft skill development in addition to the hard skills of interviewing, resume writing and job search.

Within current Independent Living Program practices, counties should implement comprehensive job skills training leveraging evidence-based and evidence-informed curriculums tailored to foster youth that are both trauma-informed and focus on soft skill development (e.g., work ethic, effective communication, dealing with critical feedback, integrity, teamwork, critical thinking).

Strategies for Local County Implementation: Hiring Current and Former Foster Youth

Government Code Sections 19800-19810 require counties and the state to establish personnel standards in regulatory form necessary “to assure state conformity with applicable federal requirements.” These standards are broad, flexible guidelines reflecting generally accepted personnel practices that provide for meeting the federal and state requirements by local agencies and are applicable to both Approved Local Merit Systems and the Interagency Merit System directly administered by the State Personnel Board.

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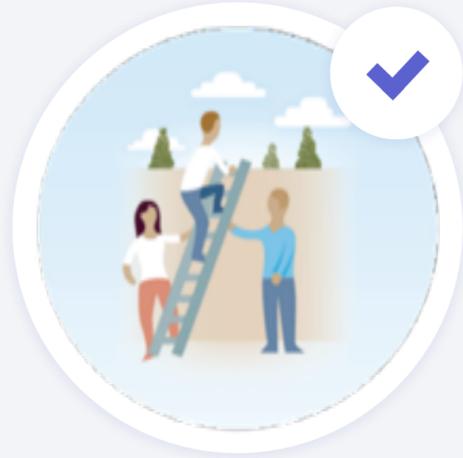
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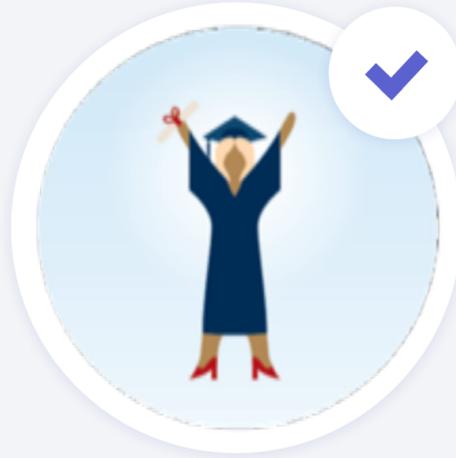
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Key Benefits



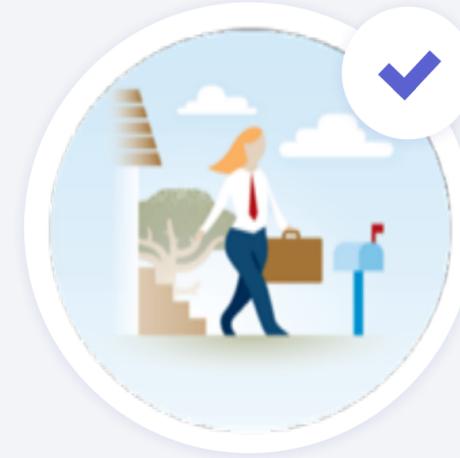
More ...

... young people connected to caring families, caring adults, and support networks



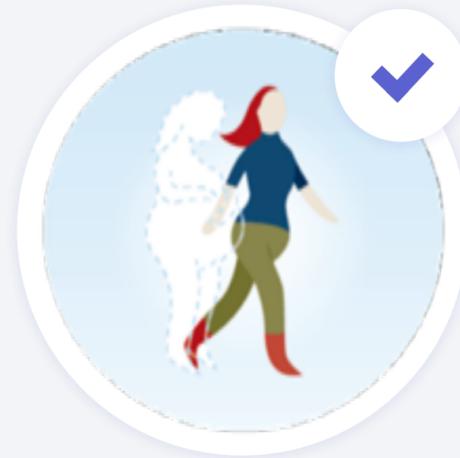
More ...

... young people completing high school, vocational training, and college.



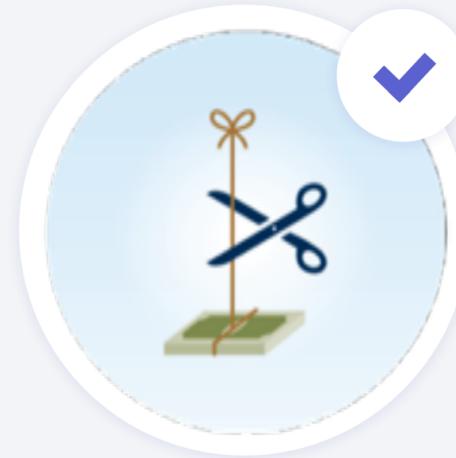
More ...

... people employed.



Fewer ...

... unplanned pregnancies



Lower...

... healthcare costs.

Questions?

California

**Foster Workforce
Development**