

FACT SHEET: AGING OUT



Daniella Anderson Rin Hover and Veasna Rin Hover
Photo Credit: Courtney Bennett

Campaign Overview / Key Issues

The overall purpose of the AGING OUT outreach campaign, which is designed and managed by Outreach Extensions, is to expand public awareness and dialogue, as well as work in partnership with public television stations and organizations engaged in improving outcomes for youth in foster care. Primary outreach audiences include service providers, child welfare officials, leaders in the business and banking community, policymakers, civic leaders, teens in foster care, and the general public.

The campaign focuses on three areas that recent research – and many young people themselves – tell us are particularly important in improving outcomes for youth leaving care: *education*, *employment*, and *connection to caring adults*. The campaign also urges communities to give special attention to the needs for youth leaving foster care to have *access to physical and mental health services* and *safe, stable housing*. (Note: The tragic death of Risa Bejarano after the completion of AGING OUT made the addition of this second set of priorities essential.)

Stations and their local partners will develop customized plans that meet the specific needs of their local foster care communities. The process will engage emancipating/emancipated youth; empowering these youth and supporting youth leadership will be important aspects of the campaign.

Series / Broadcast

Navigating the transition from adolescence to adulthood is challenging for even the most mature and privileged youth. For three young people in New York and Los Angeles, making the transition to independent living is considerably more difficult as they “age out” of the foster care system and suddenly discover, for the first time, that they are on their own.

AGING OUT chronicles the daunting obstacles that alumni of foster care encounter as they try to fend for themselves. Not only do many lack family support, they usually leave the foster care system with meager financial resources, no stable home, and little preparation to survive on their own. AGING OUT follows three young people as they become parents, battle drug addiction, face homelessness, and even end up in jail. But, despite their struggles, the film also shows these teenagers using the resiliency they developed during their years “in the system” to take control of their lives.

A Production of Public Policy Productions, Inc., for WNET/New York, AGING OUT is written, produced, and directed by Roger Weisberg. Vanessa Roth is the co-producer/co-director. It aired on PBS on May 26, 2005.

Funders

The outreach campaign is supported by a grant from the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (JCYOI), a national foundation whose mission is to help youth in foster care make successful transitions to adulthood. The Annie E. Casey Foundation provides targeted funding to specific *Making*

Connections sites. Funding for AGING OUT (documentary) was provided by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Casey Family Programs.

Campaign Media Tools and Resources

1. Grant Application Package

An introductory packet informed stations about the AGING OUT documentary and campaign, including background information on foster care/emancipation, and grant application/reporting documents. Extended descriptions of the youth in the film and their stories helped stations understand

the issues they face. The majority of stations selected to participate in the campaign attended an orientation meeting scheduled a day in advance of the annual meeting of the National Center for Outreach in March 2004. Panel members who introduced the project included Daniella Anderson Rin Hover, one of the young adults in the documentary, and Gary Stangler, executive director of JCYOI.

2. Station Grants Program

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative is providing funds to support the following three categories of grants/campaign activities:

JCYOI Co-Located Station Grants: Selected stations, which are in JCYOI grantee sites that are also part of *Making Connections*, will receive JCYOI grants to support local outreach activities. JCYOI will designate the primary local partners with which these stations will plan, implement, and evaluate their projects. Stations, however, will also invite the local AECF site teams and communication specialists to participate. Local community partners and stations will define specific issues and work toward customized solution-based actions.

Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (JCYOI) Local Grants: JCYOI is already working in selected cities to expand opportunities for youth in foster care who are making transitions to adulthood. To support this mission, the AGING OUT grants will bring public television stations together with the local partner selected by JCYOI. Local campaigns will be customized to address the priorities of JCYOI, partners, and stations.

Key Market Grants: Important markets for the production will be cultivated to conduct outreach activities. These may include cities in which the youth lived during filming as well as sites associated with research efforts.

Three to five additional sites/projects will be funded by The Annie E. Casey Foundation. These **MCMOI Only Grants** will conduct campaigns in association with the *Making Connections* neighborhoods and site teams.

A total of 18 eighteen stations have received AGING OUT grants, and their projects are progressing. Three additional stations are expected to submit proposals.

3. Discussion Guide

Outreach Extensions collaborated with the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative in developing *A Discussion Guide for Youth, Communities, and Employers*. Sections include Youth Engaging Youth – Ideas for Engaging Young People, Engaging Members of the Community, and Engaging Employers, Training Professionals, and Educators. Discussion questions and ways to take action are provided for each section. The guide also offers strategies to support youth discussion and resource materials.

4. Video Shorts

Producer Roger Weisberg created five video shorts, each presenting the story of one youth. In addition to the three youth in the film, David Griffin, Risa Bejarano, and Daniella Anderson Rin Hover, shorts are provided for Thomas Hudson and Keely Lopez. Approximately 20 minutes in length, the videos provide options for local campaigns. Brief descriptions of the stories were sent to stations.

5. Web sites

Viewers/users interested in AGING OUT can find information on three Web sites. The WNET/PBS site covers the documentary, while information on the outreach campaign can be found on the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative site and the Making Connections Media Outreach Initiative site. JCYOI developed site-based resource materials on foster care emancipation.

6. Public Radio Documentaries/Program Segments

Selected stations may submit applications to produce a local public radio documentary/program segment that highlights local aging out issues. Stations may be joint licensees or have a track record of partnering with a public radio station in their markets.

7. Communications / Technical Assistance

Outreach Extensions provides customized technical assistance to all stations conducting local grant-funded campaigns. Stations are informed about campaign activities and resources (including research related to aging out) via e-mail on an ongoing basis. Stations may request the participation of Daniella Anderson Rin Hover in their local events.

8. Book / Book Tour

A book co-authored by Gary Stangler, executive director of JCYOI, is a resource for the campaign: Martha Shirk and Gary Stangler, *On Their Own: What Happens to Kids When They Leave Foster Care* (Westview Press, 2004). Book tours will occur in some cities in which stations and their community partners are conducting campaigns.

National Strategic Partners

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative and The Annie E. Casey Foundation function as strategic partners/advisors as well as funders for the outreach campaign.

Evaluation / Outcomes

A comprehensive evaluation will be provided at the conclusion of the project.

Outreach Extensions

Judy Ravitz, President

Ken Ravitz, Vice President and Chief Financial Officer

7039 Dume Drive, Malibu, CA, 90265

Telephone: 310.589.5180; Fax: 310.589.5280; E-mail: outext@aol.com