

# Recommendations to Reform California's Independent Living Program

January 5, 2024

Danielle Wondra, Children Now  
Senior Policy and Outreach Associate, Child Welfare

Children Now

[dwondra@childrennow.org](mailto:dwondra@childrennow.org)



# Policy Brief on Independent Living Program

## Supporting Successful Transitions into Adulthood for Youth in Foster Care:

Reforming California's Independent Living Program

March 2023



Download at:

<https://www.childrennow.org/portfolio-posts/supporting-successful-transitions-into-adulthood-for-youth-in-foster-care-reforming-californias-independent-living-program/>



## Background on the Independent Living Program (ILP)

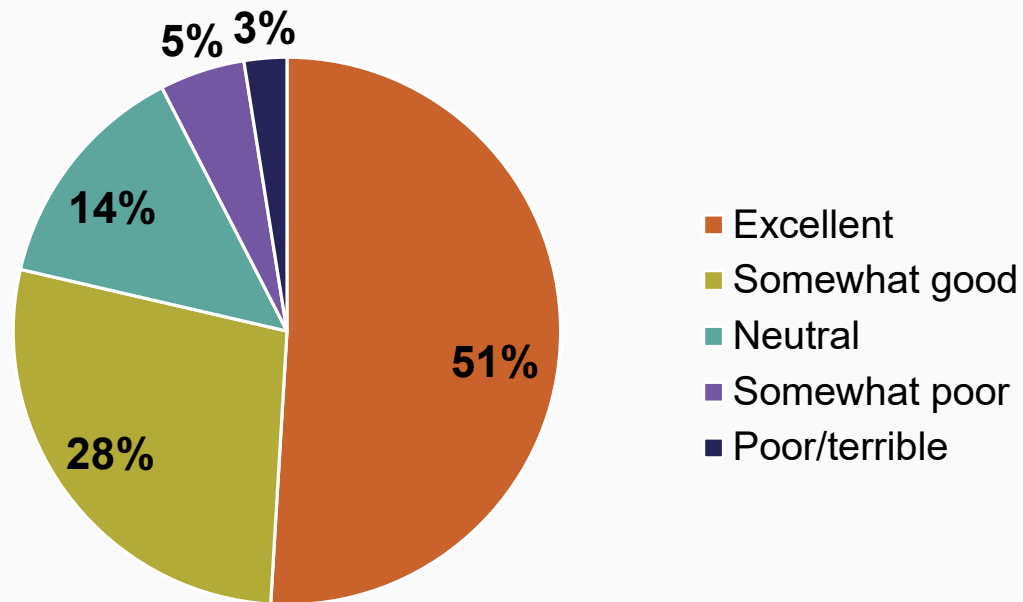
- Helps transition age youth with foster care experience transition to adulthood.
- Serves eligible youth ages 16 up to 21 years old.
- Provides services and supports in the areas of education, employment, financial and independent living skills, and housing assistance.
- Funded by the federal John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood and local funding.
- Chafee ILP grant estimated to be \$16.8 million in FY 2023-24.
- Administered by counties, and the State provides limited guidance around the services and supports that can be offered.
- Youth participation is voluntary.

## Youth's Perspectives on ILP

- We gathered input from about 175 transition age youth through focus groups and a youth survey that was distributed across the state.
- Includes 159 completed surveys from youth ages 16-24 who were currently or formerly in foster care and had participated in ILP in California.

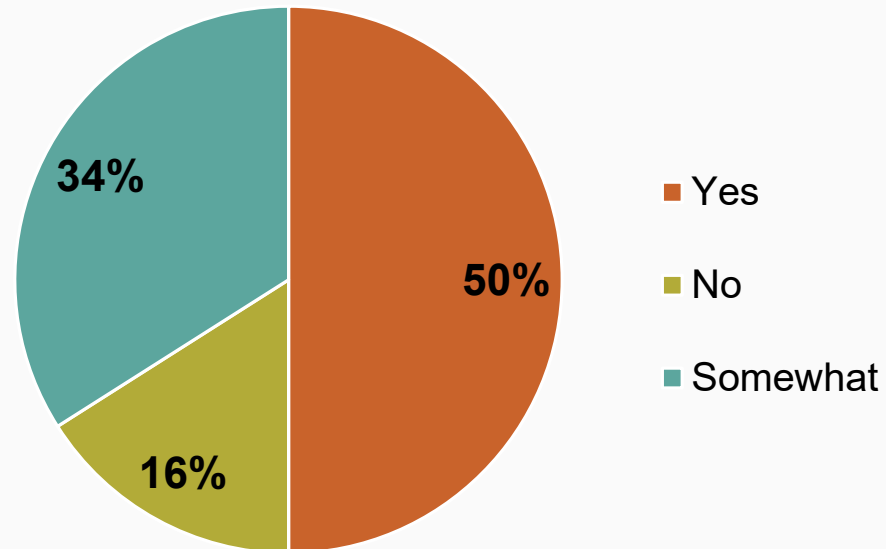
## Youth's Perspectives on ILP

Figure 1. Overall, how would you rate your experience with ILP?



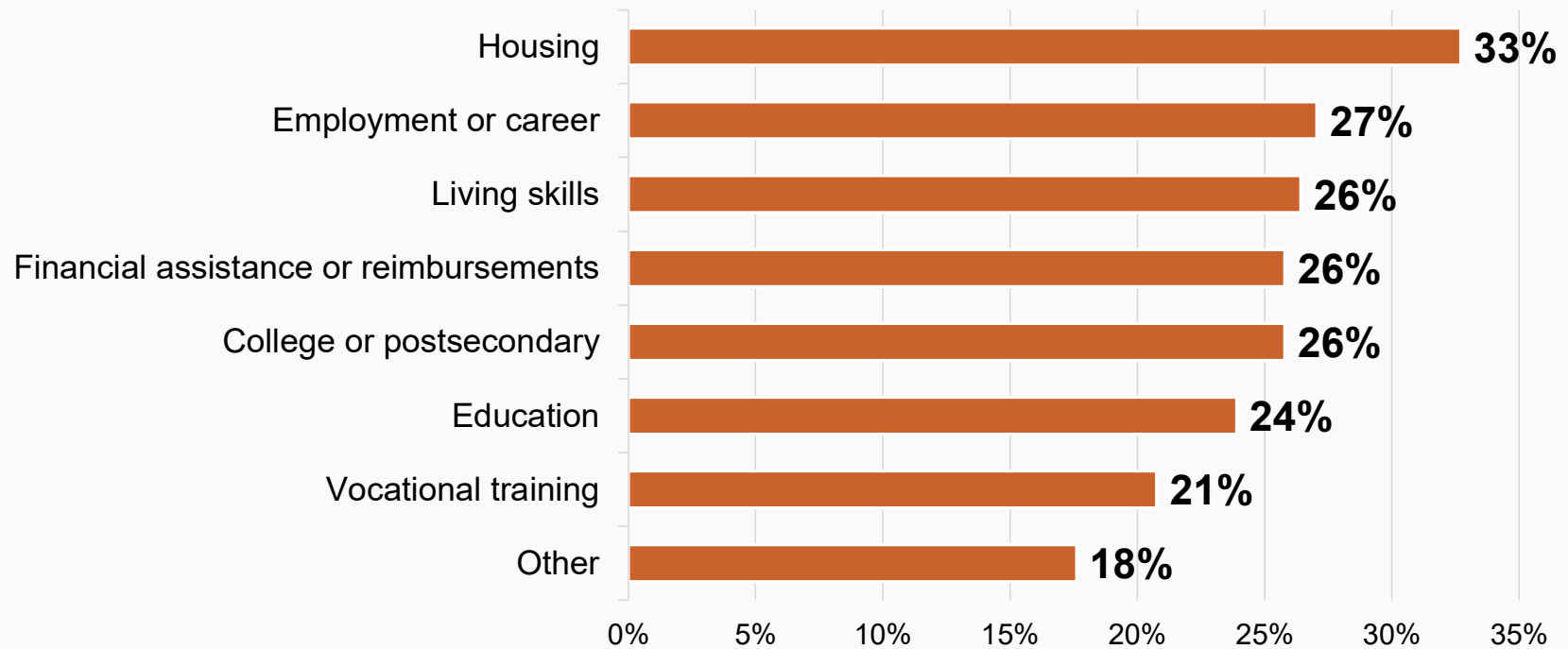
## Youth's Perspectives on ILP

Figure 2. Did ILP prepare you for adulthood?



## Youth's Perspectives on ILP

**Figure 3. What do you wish you had gotten from ILP that you didn't get or that you wanted more of?**



# Recommendations to Expand and Improve ILP

## *Policy Recommendations*

1. Expand the age eligibility for ILP.
2. Modernize and standardize the services and supports offered by ILP.
3. Increase ILP funding overall.



## Recommendations to Expand and Improve ILP

### *Program Recommendations*

4. Consider and address the barriers to transition age youth engaging in ILP.
5. Focus on the importance of interdependence.
6. Prioritize building collaborations and relationships within communities.
7. Incorporate youth voice and choice into all ILPs.
8. Hire staff with lived experience in the child welfare system.

# Thank you!

Danielle Wondra, Children Now  
Senior Policy and Outreach Associate, Child Welfare  
Children Now

[dwondra@childrennow.org](mailto:dwondra@childrennow.org)

