



## What is Connected by 25?

Connected by 25 of Hillsborough County is a new \$1.3 million program designed to help young people who “age out” of foster care at age 18 make successful transitions to adulthood. Funded by local and national foundations, the program tries to connect these vulnerable young people to education, employment, housing, banks and support systems by age 25. Connected by 25 focuses on economic success because the ability to support oneself and accumulate assets often predicts future success in life. Connected by 25 uses five major strategies to help youth achieve economic success:

- Advocate and support academic achievement
- Facilitate and create access to workforce development opportunities
- Provide financial literacy programs
- Encourage savings and asset-building through the Opportunity Passport™ program, consisting of a personal debit account so young people can pay for short-term expenses and a matched savings account, known as an Individual Development Account (IDA), so young people can pay for assets, such as tuition and housing deposits
- Create entrepreneurship opportunities

## Door Openers are the key to making all of these strategies a reality

Connected by 25 of Hillsborough County also features a telephone and e-mail hotline manned by former foster youth who field questions from children still in foster care. The hotline helps the younger foster youth, ages 13 to 17, navigate the child-welfare system and provides an empathetic ear to youth struggling in the system. The local program also features an educational advocate who tracks foster youth as they move from high school to high school so they don't fall through the cracks. In addition, a University of Tampa professor is teaching the youth about entrepreneurship, such as how to operate a business, leadership skills, and raising capital.

Cby25 is located at 401 East Palm Ave., Tampa.  
The phone number is 813-314-2070

## What is a Door Opener?

Each of us had someone – a relative, teacher, coach, neighbor or boss – who gave us a chance and opened a door for us. Connected by 25 wants employers, educators, policymakers, philanthropists, public and private agencies, and the community to open doors for foster youth. Community members can call 813-314-2070 or visit [www.cby25.org](http://www.cby25.org) to be involved. A Door Opener could:

- Provide internships, job training, and employment
- Match youths' savings in a special account
- Donate to the Cby25 Scholarship program to pay for tuition, health insurance, transportation, basic necessities and enrichment activities such as sports, clubs, and arts programs
- Volunteer time and talents as a mentor

## Why is this program needed?

When teenagers age out of foster care, they are handed their belongings and told to fend for themselves. Many are still in high school. Yet the unrealistic expectation is that they will be able to find and maintain housing and employment and continue their educations without support. A recent University of Chicago study found that these young people face formidable challenges and often struggle to stay in school, find stable housing, support themselves financially, and secure medical services. Federal and state policies regulate the age at which youth must leave the child welfare system; states vary widely in the services they offer to youth older than 18. The University of Chicago study found that youth who leave the child-welfare system at age 18 were nearly three times more likely than their peers not to be working or in school. They also were twice as likely as their peers to be unable to pay their rent or mortgage and utility bills. They were four times as likely to be evicted. Only 46 percent of the young adults in the study had a bank account, compared to 82 percent of their peers nationally.

## How many young people age out?

Nationally, about 20,000 young people age out of foster care annually. In Florida, 800 youth age out every year. In Hillsborough County, 402 youth between 13 and 17 years old are in the foster care system; an additional 116 youth between the ages of 18 and 23 are being served.

## Who are the partners in Connected by 25?

The Eckerd Family Foundation is the lead funder and has partnered with Hillsborough Kids, Inc., to provide these services locally. [www.eckerdfamilyfoundation.org](http://www.eckerdfamilyfoundation.org)

Connected by 25 of Hillsborough County, one of three national pilot projects, also has become a Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative site. The Initiative, a national foundation based in St. Louis focused on helping young people who age out of foster care, is providing tools, evaluation and technical assistance. The Opportunity Passport program™ is an Initiative tool.

[www.jimcaseyyouth.org](http://www.jimcaseyyouth.org)

The Lumina Foundation for Education in Indianapolis contributed \$289,000 for an educational advocate focused on foster youth in the Hillsborough County high schools and the peer hotline for younger teens still in foster care. [www.luminafoundation.org](http://www.luminafoundation.org)

The Annie E. Casey Foundation, a national foundation working to build better futures for disadvantaged children and their families, is contributing technical assistance and evaluation resources. [www.acef.org](http://www.acef.org)

Casey Family Programs, a Seattle-based national operating foundation that has served children, youth, and families in the child-welfare system, is providing scholarship and evaluation dollars to the program. [www.casey.org](http://www.casey.org)

**Eckerd Family Foundation**



The Annie E. Casey Foundation

