

## **Independent Living Skills for the Foster Teenager**

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Phase II Final Report  
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## **A. General Scientific and Technological Aims**

The goal of the project in Phase II was to develop, produce, and evaluate a video-based curriculum for foster teenagers that would be the most comprehensive and integrated set of materials available on independent living. The curriculum is designed for use by independent living skills instructors to teach practical skills and information for a set of core topic areas. Instruction integrates the use of video, hands-on materials, role-play, and discussion. Activities and materials are intended to appeal directly to the foster teenager.

### Phase II Objectives

1. Produce a 20-minute dramatized video story for each of six additional instruction units to be used in conjunction with the one produced in Phase I. Each unit will cover one of the following core topic areas: money management; job skills and career planning; educational planning; legal skills; food, nutrition, and health; and transportation. For each topic area, the stories will realistically depict a group of teenagers who encounter problems and discover solutions. The stories and characters will help to introduce topics and major concepts within each topic, and to provide a context for instructional activities.
2. Produce hands-on instructional materials for each topic area that will give foster teenagers practical experiences with documents, forms, and applications.
3. Design role-play activities that will give foster teenagers opportunities to develop and practice effective communication skills with significant people in each area of endeavor. These may include employers, teachers, lawyers, doctors, foster parents, etc.
4. Integrate the above features into a unit of instruction for each topic area. Units will consist of two 90-minute meetings. Instruction will be implemented by an independent living skills instructor with small groups of foster teenagers. In addition to the core topic areas, the following special topics will be interwoven throughout the curriculum: interpersonal skills, conflict resolution, decision-making skills, consumerism, working with mentors, discrimination, and housekeeping skills.
5. Develop and pilot test a set of assessment instruments for each topic area.
6. Write a curriculum guide that provides independent living instructors with conceptual background and a complete description of instructional activities.
7. Conduct a longitudinal field test of the completed curriculum with foster teenagers in two major independent living skills programs. The evaluation will assess the impact of the program on foster teenagers' knowledge of independent living skills, their confidence in using those skills, and their comfort with communicating to their foster parents and counselors.

## **B. Phase II Research Activities**

### Upgrade and Extension of Materials and Curriculum

Phase I support was sufficient to develop and test the first in a proposed series of instructional units on independent living skills. The topic for the first unit was housing. A model of instruction was developed that integrated the use of video, hands-on materials, role-play, and discussion. Project efforts focused on making the instruction practical and effective for teenagers, and on incorporating issues specific to being a foster teenager. The goal of the instruction was to increase foster teenagers' knowledge of apartment hunting skills, confidence in using those skills, and comfort with talking to their foster parents and counselors about finding a place to live.

In Phase II, a complete and marketable curricular package was produced and evaluated. The instructional model developed in Phase I was applied to six additional units of instruction. The list of six units originally proposed was slightly modified after initial consultations. The unit on food, nutrition, and health was seen as too broad a topic for one unit, so it was divided into two units, with food and nutrition as one unit and health as a separate unit. The unit on transportation was integrated into other units. Thus, although the topics were prioritized differently, the overall number of units was conserved. Each unit covers one core topic area on independent living. The following is a summary list of the features of the complete curriculum. (The entire seven-unit curriculum is included in this report as Appendix A.)

- The six additional core topic areas on independent living developed in Phase II include:
  - 1) Money Management
  - 2) Job Skills / Career Planning
  - 3) Educational Planning
  - 4) Legal Skills
  - 5) Food and Nutrition
  - 6) Health
- A set of special topics was interwoven throughout the core topic areas:
  - Interpersonal Skills
  - Conflict Resolution
  - Decision-Making Skills
  - Consumerism
  - Working with Mentors
  - Discrimination
  - Housekeeping Skills
- The instruction in Phase II closely follows the model developed in Phase I. Most of the core topic areas are covered in two 90-minute sessions; one unit (money management) takes three 90-minute sessions, and one (job skills) takes four 90-minute sessions. Instruction for all units is conducted in a small group format. Materials for each unit include a 30-minute video story and a set of hands-on materials. Activities for each unit include role-play and discussion. The series of video stories throughout the curriculum is loosely interconnected in terms of story

situations and characters. However, each story and the accompanying curricular activities for that unit of instruction can be used independently. This gives the curriculum considerable flexibility when marketed. Independent living programs may choose to order one or more of the units, or may customize the sequence of delivery of instructional units. The format of the instruction in Phase II emphasizes foster teenage peer groups, rather than mixed groups of foster teenagers and their foster parents as in Phase I.

- Video materials in Phase II continue to reflect human diversity. Story characters represent different cultural groups and individuals with differing physical disabilities. Story actions convey how different individuals may understand and respond to situations. Discrimination based on race or ability is an explicit topic in the curriculum. Also, the materials continue to blend foster and non-foster teenagers. Educational specialists and teens participated in product development to ensure accuracy and sensitivity regarding these issues.
- The completed curricular package for each unit includes a curriculum guide for independent living instructors that describes the use of video and materials in the instruction activities.

#### Preliminary Focus Groups

Three focus groups were used to gather specific information about the needs and attitudes of foster teenagers. One group included foster parents, independent living coordinators and instructors, child psychologists, and program administrators. Two other groups included foster teenagers who were either about to be emancipated or had been recently emancipated. Each group consisted of 10 individuals—males and females from different ethnic groups (Black, Hispanic, Asian/Native American, and White). Focus group sessions lasted 1½ - 2 hours. Foster teenagers were recruited through the Oregon Services for Children and Families (SCF) and were paid \$25 for their participation. Professionals were recruited from the Oregon SCF and the Eugene professional community, and were paid \$50 for their participation.

One foster teen focus group meeting was held at Brownsville Elementary School in Brownsville, Oregon. The other teen focus group and the specialist/parent focus group meetings were held at Northwest Media, Inc. in Eugene. In the focus groups, an experienced facilitator presented the proposed video scripts, instructional materials, and plan of instruction. Focus group members were asked to evaluate each on the basis of its psychological relevance and instructional value. The groups also discussed issues that relate to cultural diversity and physical disability. Discussions covered the value of the curriculum content, typical pitfalls the instructional groups might encounter, the value of the instructional process, and the effective use of teaching aids. Information from the focus groups was reviewed to help determine the final content of the materials. Among the ideas emphasized by the groups and incorporated into the videos, for example, was the importance of the entire setting of the videos (music, clothing, hair styles, and language) being “modern,” so that teens would relate to the material presented.

## Subjects

Recruiting subjects for the evaluation study turned out to be an enormous challenge, which accounts for the lengthy delay in completing the study and submitting the final report. Unfortunately, the research site proposed in the application for the Phase II grant, i.e., independent living skills programs in Riverside and Los Angeles County in California, did not work out. Although one program in Riverside did provide a small number of subjects for the pilot testing of the study's assessment measures, it was unable to provide the much larger number of subjects (180) over the necessary time period for the proposed evaluation study of all seven instructional units. When we finally realized this, we made contact and worked with several other potential research sites in California. When none of these other California sites worked out either, we decided to look for sites closer to home. Over the next 2 years, we contacted and worked with a number of independent living programs around Oregon, as well as with the Northwest Youth Corps in Eugene, Oregon. Together, these Oregon sites eventually provided the 54 teen subjects in the evaluation study's final sample. (Sample demographics are reported in Table 1, Appendix C.)

Given the difficulty that we encountered in recruiting subjects, when we shifted the study to Oregon we decided to modify the study design regarding treatment and control groups. Instead of having two separate groups for the treatment and control conditions, we added a second pretest to the design. That is, the questionnaires were administered to all subjects twice prior to the intervention, so that subjects became, in effect, their own controls.

## Procedure

The complete curriculum covers seven units of instruction—six new units and the unit on housing developed in Phase I. As noted above, five units consist of two 90-minute meetings; one (money management) consists of three 90-minute meetings; and one (job skills) consists of four 90-minute meetings. The plan was for foster teenagers to receive the entire seven-unit curriculum over 17 consecutive weeks—one meeting per week—in instruction groups consisting of 8-12 foster teenagers and an independent living instructor. This did not turn out to be a realistic plan with the targeted independent living programs. Teens did not stay in the programs long enough, or attend classes regularly enough, to complete the entire curriculum, and the programs had difficulty working the entire curriculum into their crowded schedules. Therefore, we decided after moving the study to Oregon that we would focus the evaluation on just three of the seven units: Health Matters, Legal Jams, and Money Talks. (These were the units that IL program personnel involved in the study expressed the most interest in and actually used first with their classes, providing a small but adequate number of subjects for the evaluation study.)

Instead of forming a separate control group that received a comparison curriculum, as had been proposed in the grant application, we adopted a two-group Intervention versus No-Treatment design, comparing the results of instruction with no instruction. Intervention group results were measured by comparing subjects' scores on the second pretest with their scores on the posttest; between those two measurement points, subjects were given IL instruction using one of the units from the curriculum. Control group results were measured by comparing subjects' scores on the first pretest with their scores on the second pretest; between those two measurement points, subjects

received no instruction.

An Intervention vs. No-Treatment design made sense for evaluation of the multimedia curriculum developed under this grant for two major reasons. First, we believe there are no competing materials designed for the same purpose and thus, no substitute curriculum to test against. Second, we believe that media enhancements are necessary components of effective training programs. Since the multimedia materials developed in Phase II are an integral part of the curriculum, it is not feasible or necessary to test the curriculum against a partial version of itself. The Intervention vs. No-Treatment design is appropriate for the task of evaluating the curriculum's effectiveness.

All instruction groups were led by an independent living instructor. Curricular materials and a written guide to study procedures were sent to instructors well before their classes began. Also, instructors either met or consulted by phone with the principal investigator to help them become familiar with the materials, instructional strategies, and research procedures before beginning their classes.

#### Model of Instruction for the Curriculum

The model of instruction developed in Phase I was applied to the additional units of instruction developed in Phase II. Each unit covers one core topic area and a set of relevant special topic areas. The major components of the model include the following:

*Video:* A 30-minute video dramatization was produced for each core topic. (Production of 20-minute videos had been proposed, but we found we needed 30 minutes to adequately cover all the desired material.) The video stories are used to introduce the topic and major concepts, and to develop the context for instruction and activities in each meeting. Stories are divided into the right number of parts to correspond with the number of meetings within each unit of instruction.

In each story, situations arise in which the characters provide typical and yet unique responses. In tone, the stories are characterized by conflict and humor; in style by informal narrative, street argot, hand-held camera, naturalistic lighting, a contemporary but eclectic musical score, and an improvisational acting manner. The intention is to provide a comfortable and entertaining depiction of specific experiences teenagers will face in this area.

The videos, although individually unique, share the following characteristics:

1. The scripting of the tapes is based on a specific set of teaching objectives developed in the curriculum.
2. The tapes are of sufficient length to tell a story, develop characters, and depict the essential situations in the topic area. The tapes run approximately 30 minutes in length.

3. An ensemble cast of actors, which includes those in *The Apartment Hunt*, was created. This allows the introduction of new characters and the further development of familiar characters. The use of an ensemble created opportunities in plotting and provided cohesiveness to the entire series.
4. The tapes have a characteristically teen point-of-view. As was the case with *The Apartment Hunt*, tapes were shot film-style, on location, using original music and employing an off-beat narrative style.
5. The story characters include a blend of foster and non-foster teenagers. This is intended to ensure that the treatment of foster teenager issues is presented in a realistic and balanced manner that does not single out or alienate foster teenage viewers.
6. The scripts were developed with attention to both accuracy and authenticity. To ensure accuracy, script research drew on the knowledge and experience of professionals in the field. For example, in *The Apartment Hunt*, background research involved consultation with landlords and property management personnel. In the newer (Phase II) series, the tape on legal rights and situations, e.g., relied on similar research with policemen, prosecuting and defense attorneys, judges, and other professionals. To ensure authenticity in tone and language, Mr. Marquez wrote the scripts by working closely with the actors, reviewing all the situations, and rehearsing every line.
7. Another important aspect of creating educational media with appeal to youth is the use of music. Music holds special meaning for youth and presents opportunities and challenges to the educational media producer. While employing a musical score of demonstrable quality and personality is difficult for productions with modest budgets, we deemed it essential in this case and therefore planned for judicious use of original music throughout the series.

*Discover Wants and Needs:* The concept is to present foster teenagers with a checklist of factors intended to help them organize a major activity, such as finding a place to live, a job, or a school. Teenagers can learn what factors are important to consider, and how they individualize their task to suit their lifestyles and goals.

*Learn and Rehearse Skills:* Teenagers need to identify and practice the skills they will need to be successful in achieving their goals. A fundamental skill that cuts across all areas is communication. In the curriculum teenagers are given the opportunity to role-play realistic encounters with others. Typically, the interactions are with unfamiliar people who have authority, such as landlords, employers, and lawyers. In many cases, the responses they get are based on how they handle themselves during these interactions. The curriculum provides teenagers with enough structure through scripted information to simulate and stimulate effective interactions. In addition, where it is appropriate, teenagers have the opportunity to practice other specific skills, such as reading a classified advertising section and using the yellow pages.

*Documents and Applications:* Every major life activity is accompanied by important written materials and required forms. They can seem threatening and actually turn off individuals from their pursuits. In the curriculum, teenagers are given hands-on experience with essential documents and applications, such as job applications, contracts, maps, and school transcripts.

*Peer Group Discussion:* Foster teenagers typically have a less developed sense of peer group affiliation than other teenagers. Opportunities for discussion in the curriculum are intended to give

foster teenagers the chance to share individual attitudes, experiences, and information.

### Instructional Units of the Curriculum

The completed curriculum consists of seven units of instruction—the one on housing developed in Phase I and the six new units produced in Phase II. Each unit devotes its instructional meetings to a core topic and relevant special topics. The topics for the six units produced in Phase II are listed below, with accompanying information about the content within each unit. The treatment of each topic emphasizes building practical skills and solving problems.

- 1) *Money Management*
  - budgeting
  - record keeping
  - consumerism
  - paying bills
- 2) *Job Skills / Career Planning*
  - career planning
  - job-seeking
  - job maintenance
  - interpersonal skills
  - conflict resolution
  - discrimination
- 3) *Educational Planning*
  - learning styles
  - linking career goals and education needs
  - high school
  - continuing education
  - paying for education
  - working with mentors
- 4) *Legal Skills*
  - dealing with conflict and confrontation
  - knowing your rights if arrested
  - lawyers
  - marriage, child support
  - legal responsibilities
  - moral versus legal rights
  - voting
- 5) *Food and Nutrition*
  - kitchen tools, organization, issues, and safety
  - food management

- nutrition

#### 6) *Health*

- habits
- the human body
- maintaining physical, social, and emotional health
- medical care
- promoting health
- health issues related to teen pregnancy

### Data Collection

Data were collected from foster teenagers in the sample twice before any instruction was given for a particular unit. Students completed the first pre-treatment assessments approximately one week before instruction in the unit began. Students completed the second pre-treatment assessments at the start of the first class of each unit, before the instruction began. Post-treatment assessments were administered immediately following the final class of each instruction unit. The independent living instructor for each instruction group conducted the assessments. (We had planned to administer a follow-up assessment four months after completion of instruction. Unfortunately, given the difficulty we encountered in recruiting subjects, along with the difficulty the programs had in retaining foster teens, it proved impossible to carry out the follow-up assessment.)

### Variables

An experimental design was employed for research and development of the instructional units. Essentially, a treatment group and a no-treatment control group were compared to evaluate program effects. The independent variable of the study was group membership (treatment vs. no-treatment). Analyses for each instructional unit focused on three primary dependent variables:

1. knowledge about independent living skills;
2. confidence in using independent living skills; and
3. comfort in communicating with foster parents, mentors, and counselors.

Each of these dependent variables was measured three times:

- a. pre-treatment #1 (a week prior to beginning of instruction);
- b. pre-treatment #2 (immediately prior to beginning of instruction); and
- c. post-treatment (immediately after completion of instruction).

### Measures

As specified above, knowledge, confidence, and comfort are the dependent variables for the research and development of instructional units. Measurement of these variables was aligned with each of the instructional units. Instruments for the six new units were developed in Phase II. (The battery of instruments for the three curriculum units evaluated is included in this report as Appendix B.)

All measures were pilot tested. A test of face validity of each measure was conducted with a small group of teenagers and one or two independent living instructors. Participants were asked to give feedback regarding the appropriateness and clarity of language used in the test items. Overall, the groups thought the instructions, questions, and responses were clear. They also said the questions made sense, were straightforward, and good. At the suggestion of one group, an additional item, asking teens how likely they would be to talk to “other relatives” about a particular core topic, was added to the comfort questionnaire for each unit.

The knowledge questionnaires were also analyzed for both internal reliability and test-retest reliability. A group of about 35 foster teenagers completed each unit’s questionnaires for this purpose. Based on preliminary analysis of the results, some of the questionnaires were revised and then tested again. (Table 2 in Appendix C reports the pilot test reliability statistics on the knowledge scales for the three units included in the evaluation study, i.e., the health, legal skills, and money management units. Table 3 in Appendix C reports the evaluation study sample reliability statistics for the same three knowledge scales.)

Below are descriptions of the study’s measures. A questionnaire of each type – knowledge, confidence, and comfort – was adapted for use within each of the core topic areas of instruction.

- 1) *Knowledge of Independent Living Skills.* These questionnaires measure foster teenagers’ knowledge of independent skills in the seven specific topic areas. The knowledge questionnaire for each unit includes 20 multiple-choice questions that cover content relevant to that particular instructional unit. Three underlying constructs guided the development of questions: acquaintance with key terminology, understanding individual responsibilities, and interpersonal skills. Scores are the total number of correct answers to the 20 questions.
- 2) *Confidence in Using Independent Living Skills.* These questionnaires consist of 10 items in which foster teenagers rate their level of confidence in using skills that are relevant to a particular instructional unit. Item ratings range from 1 to 10, “completely disagree” to “completely agree.” Scores on each confidence scale are the mean rating for the 10 scale items. Lower scores on the scale reflect lower levels of confidence in using the particular IL skills, while higher scores represent higher levels of confidence in using those skills.
- 3) *Comfort with Foster Parents, Mentors, and Counselors.* These questionnaires consist of 8 or 9 items in which foster teenagers rate their level of comfort in talking to their parents, various mentors, and independent living counselors about issues or problems in a particular area of independent living. Items ask how comfortable teenagers feel about seeking social and emotional support in each of the topic areas. Item ratings range from 1 to 10, “completely disagree” to “completely agree,” respectively. Scores on each comfort scale are the mean rating for the 8 or 9 scale items. Lower scores on the scale reflect lower levels of comfort, while higher scores reflect higher levels of comfort.

*Background Information Questionnaire.* This questionnaire, based on the version used in Phase I, asked foster teens some basic demographic questions, along with a few additional questions related to their experience with employment and the criminal justice system, as well as any previous

independent living skills training.

*Student /Teacher Feedback Questionnaires.* After completion of the instruction in each unit, students and instructors were asked to rate key aspects of the unit's curriculum and materials. On a scale of 1 to 4 ("not at all" to "very much," respectively), they were asked to evaluate the overall unit, the related video, and classroom activities. On a scale of 1 to 10 ("worst" to "best," respectively), they were asked their opinion of the unit's overall quality. Finally, they were given an opportunity to write any open-ended comments and suggestions they wanted to about the unit.

### Hypotheses

The research hypotheses concern whether foster teenagers learned key aspects of independent living (knowledge, confidence, and comfort) from the curriculum. As indicated above, knowledge of topic areas was measured by a series of *Knowledge of Independent Living Skills* questionnaires. These questionnaires yielded three scores, i.e., one for each of the units evaluated. (We had proposed computing a global score for all units combined, but no subjects completed all three units of instruction. Only a handful completed even two units.)

Foster teenagers' confidence in topic areas was measured by a series of *Confidence in Using Independent Living Skills* rating scales. As with the knowledge scales, the confidence scales yield three scores (one for each of the three units evaluated). Again, it was not possible to compute a global score, since none of the teens completed all three units.

Foster teenagers' comfort in discussing the various topic areas with parents, mentors, and counselors was measured by a series of *Comfort with Foster Parents, Mentors, and Counselors* rating scales. Like the knowledge and confidence scales, these scales yield three scores, one for each of the three evaluated units.

The questions focus on whether or not being exposed to the curriculum causes foster teenagers to change in terms of the variables. After using the curriculum, do students show greater knowledge of key terminology, individual responsibilities, and interpersonal skills? This and other empirical questions form the hypothetical core of the project.

### Data Analysis

Analyses were conducted to determine whether the curriculum demonstrated improvements in (a) knowledge of each curriculum topic, (b) confidence in completing tasks related to the topic, and (c) comfort associated with discussing the topic. Based on the Intervention vs. No-Treatment design described above, the control group consisted of scores from the two-fold administration of the measures prior to the intervention, with the treatment group defined by the second pretest scores and the posttest scores.

First, parametric *t* tests were completed, comparing pretest measures between the defined control and intervention group scores. Second, means and standard deviations were determined for the pretest and posttest on each measure. Third, a two-way repeated measures analysis of variance

(ANOVA) was used for each measure, with one factor being group and the second factor being the pre and post assessment. Finally, student satisfaction and teacher satisfaction surveys were completed following the implementation of each curriculum.

## Results

Using parametric *t*-test procedures of pretest scores, no statistically significant difference was demonstrated between the intervention and treatment groups for any of the three measures (knowledge, confidence, or comfort) on any of the three targeted curricula. Means and standard deviations between control and intervention groups are presented in Table 4 (Appendix C) for each of the three measures within each curriculum unit.

### Money Talks Curriculum

*Money Talks Knowledge Assessment.* A 2 (Pre and Post assessment) x 2 (Group) repeated measures ANOVA was used to test differences in scores for the knowledge measure for the *Money Talks* curriculum. There was a statistically significant main effect for group  $F(1, 49) = 3.49, p = .068$ ; and pre-to-post assessment  $F(1, 49) = 17.76, p = .000$ . A statistically significant interaction effect demonstrated that improvement in the sample's knowledge was a function of group  $F(1, 49) = 4.05, p = .05$ .

*Money Talks Confidence.* A 2 (Pre and Post assessment) x 2 (Group) repeated measures ANOVA was used to test differences in scores for the confidence measure for the *Money Talks* curriculum. There was a statistically significant main effect for group  $F(1, 49) = 9.70, p = .003$ ; and pre-to-post assessment  $F(1, 49) = 15.98, p = .000$ . A statistically significant interaction effect demonstrated that improvement in the sample's confidence was a function of group  $F(1, 49) = 5.76, p = .02$ .

*Money Talks Comfort.* A 2 (Pre and Post assessment) x 2 (Group) repeated measures ANOVA was used to test differences in scores for the comfort measure for the *Money Talks* curriculum. No statistically significant main effect was demonstrated for group  $F(1, 49) = .202, p = .655$ ; and pre-to-post assessment  $F(1, 49) = .002, p = .963$ . No statistically significant interaction effect was demonstrated in the sample's comfort as a function of group  $F(1, 49) = .020, p = .889$ .

*Money Talks Student and Teacher Satisfaction.* Students were requested to self assess their gains from the instructional intervention. Over 96% of the students stated that this curriculum unit helped them better understand (a little, mostly, or very much) how to keep track of their money. Almost 89% of all students stated that their understanding of how to budget and manage their money had improved. Additionally, almost 78% of the students rated the video as an effective tool within the curriculum. Over half of all participants defined each of the separate classroom activities within the unit as useful. Overall, more than three-quarters (76.8%) of the students rated the quality of the unit as 5 or above on a 10-point scale, with 10 being the highest rating. Table 5 in Appendix C presents the means and standard deviations for items in this survey, except for those relating to the usefulness of the individual classroom activities.

Teachers were also asked to assess the *Money Talks* unit after completing it. On most of the 4-point scale items, which were slightly reworded to make them appropriate for teachers rather than students, the two instructors who taught the unit gave it somewhat higher ratings than did the students. On two additional items which asked how well organized and how easy to implement the Leader's Guide was, both teachers gave it the highest rating (4 on a 4-point scale). The teachers' mean rating for the overall quality of the *Money Talks* unit was 7.50 on the 10-point scale, compared to the students' mean of 5.65. In the open-ended section of the questionnaire, one of the teachers wrote: "Overall, a very good unit, very organized, good activities to reinforce concepts."

### Health Matters Curriculum

*Health Matters Knowledge Assessment.* A 2 (Pre and Post assessment) x 2 (Group) repeated measures ANOVA was used to test differences in scores for the knowledge measure for the *Health Matters* curriculum. There was no statistically significant main effect for group  $F(1, 25) = .348, p = .561$ ; and pre-to-post assessment  $F(1, 25) = .348, p = .561$ . No statistically significant interaction effect was demonstrated in the sample's knowledge as a function of group  $F(1, 25) = .086, p = .772$ .

*Health Matters Confidence.* A 2 (Pre and Post assessment) x 2 (Group) repeated measures ANOVA was used to test differences in scores for the confidence measure for the *Health Matters* curriculum. There was a statistically significant main effect for group  $F(1, 25) = 7.28, p = .012$ ; and pre-to-post assessment  $F(1, 25) = 2.94, p = .10$ . No statistically significant interaction effect was demonstrated in the sample's confidence as a function of group  $F(1, 25) = .000, p = .992$ .

*Health Matters Comfort.* A 2 (Pre and Post assessment) x 2 (Group) repeated measures ANOVA was used to test differences in scores for the comfort measure for the *Health Matters* curriculum. There was no statistically significant main effect for group  $F(1, 25) = .367, p = .550$ ; and pre-to-post assessment  $F(1, 25) = .079, p = .781$ . No statistically significant interaction effect was demonstrated in the sample's comfort as a function of group  $F(1, 25) = .118, p = .734$ .

*Health Matters Student and Teacher Satisfaction.* Upon completion of the intervention, the students self assessed their increased understanding of health matters. Almost 93% of students stated both that their understanding of personal health matters was enhanced through the completion of this unit and that they would recommend the unit to other teens. Almost 70% of students rated the video as an effective tool within the curriculum. *The Teenage Human Body Operator's Manual*, the book developed as part of the project, was rated as the most useful classroom activity in this unit, with more than 92% of students rating it as useful (a little, mostly, or very much). Seventy-five percent of students rated the overall quality of this unit as 5 or above on a 10-point scale, with 10 being the highest rating. Table 5 (Appendix C) presents the means and standard deviations for items in this survey.

Only one teacher participated in evaluation of the *Health Matters* unit. With the exception of just one item, this teacher consistently rated the unit somewhat higher than did the students. Like the students, the teacher rated *The Teenage Human Body Operator's Manual*, along with a companion activity based on the book, as the unit's most useful classroom activity. In the open-ended section

of the questionnaire, the teacher described this book as “Very Cool!” The teacher rated the Leader’s Guide organization and ease of use as a 3 on a 4-point scale, where 4 is the highest rating. The teacher’s rating of the overall quality of the *Health Matters* unit was 8 on a 10-point scale, where 10 is the highest rating, compared to the students’ mean rating of 5.75.

### Legal Jams Curriculum

*Legal Jams Knowledge Assessment.* A 2 (Pre and Post assessment ) x 2 (Group) repeated measures ANOVA was used to test differences in scores for the knowledge measure for the *Legal Jams* curriculum. There was no statistically significant main effect for group  $F(1, 38) = .637, p = .430$ .; but one for pre-to-post assessment  $F(1, 38) = 6.092, p = .018$ . No statistically significant interaction effect was demonstrated in the sample’s knowledge as a function of group  $F(1, 38) = .897, p = .350$ .

*Legal Jams Confidence.* A 2 (Pre and Post assessment ) x 2 (Group) repeated measures ANOVA was used to test differences in scores for the confidence measure for the *Legal Jams* curriculum. There was no statistically significant main effect for group  $F(1, 38) = .028, p = .869$ .; and pre-to-post assessment  $F(1, 38) = 2.10, p = .155$ . No statistically significant interaction effect was demonstrated in the sample’s confidence as a function of group  $F(1, 38) = .977, p = .329$ .

*Legal Jams Comfort.* A 2 (Pre and Post assessment ) x 2 (Group) repeated measures ANOVA was used to test differences in scores for the comfort measure for the *Legal Jams* curriculum. There was no statistically significant main effect for group  $F(1, 38) = 1.57, p = .218$ ; and pre-to-post assessment  $F(1, 38) = 2.44, p = .126$ . No statistically significant interaction effect was demonstrated in the sample’s comfort as a function of group  $F(1, 38) = .141, p = .710$ .

*Legal Jams Student and Teacher Satisfaction.* In the students’ self assessment of their gains from the curricular unit, over 85% stated that it improved their understanding of dealing with conflict and would help them avoid “legal jams.” Almost 81% ranked the video as effective. More than 75% of the students rated *all* of the classroom activities as useful (a little, mostly, or very much), and 50% of the students rated the overall quality of this unit as a 5 or above on a 10-point scale, with 10 being the highest rating. Table 5 (Appendix C) presents the means and standard deviations for items in this survey.

Five teachers evaluated the *Legal Jams* unit. In general, they gave it a somewhat higher rating than did the students. Their mean rating for the Leader’s Guide (organization and ease of use) was 3.6 on a 4-point scale, where 4 is the highest rating. The teachers’ mean rating of the overall quality of the *Legal Jams* unit was 7.40 on the 10-point scale, compared to the students’ mean rating of 5.23. Commenting on the Leader’s Guide, one teacher said, “Nice & simple, easy to use & reproduce—good.” Another felt the unit as a whole was interesting, but “a bit ‘young’ for my group.”

### Discussion

In Phase II, we developed and produced a video-based curriculum for foster teens, which we believe is the most comprehensive and integrated set of materials available on independent living.

Although other companies have produced materials on individual independent living topics, few have produced materials on the whole range of topics covered by our seven-unit curriculum, and no one else has produced a video-based curriculum as comprehensive. Our entire IL library has been experiencing brisk sales, which tells us it is providing what agencies and their IL instructors want and need to help them teach their foster teens these critical skills.

The formal evaluation of the curriculum was much more limited than originally planned because of the enormous difficulty encountered in recruiting and retaining foster youth for the study. This forced us to reduce the size of the sample, to evaluate three instead of all seven curriculum units, and to forego the proposed four-month follow-up assessment.

Findings based on pre-post analyses, although mixed, were encouraging. The unit on managing money produced the best results. Teens showed significant gains in knowledge and in their sense of confidence in managing money. There was also a small trend toward increased comfort in talking with supportive adults about managing money. For the unit on health, teens showed improvements only in their sense of confidence, while the unit on legal issues produced no apparent improvements.

These disappointing results were somewhat counterbalanced by strong endorsements of satisfaction among students and teachers. Students and teachers rated all three curriculum units as beneficial. Given teens' propensity to be critical of instructional materials in general, we were pleased that they rated our curriculum as highly as they did – and pleased, though not surprised, that teachers gave it even higher marks. Overall, this engendered a sense of value and accomplishment for the curriculum.

Our current work in this area focuses on delivering life skills to at-risk youth over the Web. We are conducting the Phase I study at a Job Corps Center with over 200 trainees. Having the exquisite cooperation of the Center, along with the highly structured nature of activities at the Job Corps, provides a captive audience for the evaluation study. This strategy should resolve the extensive problems we encountered with subject recruitment and retention for the video-based life skills curriculum. Much of the content for the one unit developed for the Web-based curriculum was adapted from the equivalent unit of the video-based curriculum, which provides another opportunity – albeit indirect – to evaluate the effectiveness of the video-based material.

## APPENDIX A

### SEVEN-UNIT CURRICULUM

Apartment Hunt  
Food Rules  
Health Matters  
Job World  
Learning Changes  
Legal Jams  
Money Talks

APPENDIX B

BATTERY OF INSTRUMENTS FOR THE THREE UNITS EVALUATED

Health Matters  
Legal Jams  
Money Talks

## APPENDIX C

### TABLES

Table 1  
*Sample Demographics*

| Variable   | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|--|----------|-----------|----------|----------------|
| Age  | 16.61    | .94       | 54       |                |
| Grade (current or last completed)                    | 10.98    | 1.06      | 52       |                |
| Gender   |          |           |          |                |
| Female   |          |           | 19       | 35             |
| Male   |          |           | 35       | 65             |
| High school diploma or equivalent?                   |          |           |          |                |
| Yes  |          |           | 6        | 11             |
| No   |          |           | 48       | 89             |
| Ethnic background                                    |          |           |          |                |
| White  |          |           | 35       | 69             |
| Black  |          |           | 1        | 2              |
| Latino/Hispanic                                      |          |           | 6        | 12             |
| Asian  |          |           | 0        | 0              |
| American Indian/Native Alaskan                       |          |           | 4        | 8              |
| Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander               |          |           | 0        | 0              |
| Mixed  |          |           | 5        | 10             |
| Ever paid as an employee?                            |          |           |          |                |
| Yes  |          |           | 46       | 85             |
| No   |          |           | 8        | 15             |
| Ever adjudicated or convicted of a crime?            |          |           |          |                |
| Yes  |          |           | 30       | 57             |
| No   |          |           | 23       | 43             |
| Other IL training through this program in past year? |          |           |          |                |
| Yes  |          |           | 24       | 45             |
| No   |          |           | 29       | 55             |

Table 2  
*Pilot Test Reliability Statistics for the Three Knowledge Scales*

| Curriculum Unit                             | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>N of Cases</i> | <i>N of Vars</i> | <i>Cronbach's Alpha</i> | <i>Correlation Coefficient</i> | <i>N of Cases</i> | <i>p</i> |
|---|----------|-----------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|----------|
| <b>Money Talks</b>                          |          |           |                   |                  |                         |                                |                   |          |
| Time 1 scale                                | 6.44     | 2.78      | 34                | 20               |                         | .47                            |                   |          |
| Time 2 scale                                | 5.50     | 2.77      | 34                | 20               | .48                     |                                |                   |          |
| Relationship between Time 1 & Time 2 scales |          |           |                   |                  |                         | .63                            | 34                | .000     |
| <b>Health Matters</b>                       |          |           |                   |                  |                         |                                |                   |          |
| Time 1 scale                                | 7.15     | 3.79      | 34                | 20               | .78                     |                                |                   |          |
| Time 2 scale                                | 7.50     | 3.41      | 34                | 20               | .66                     |                                |                   |          |
| Relationship between Time 1 & Time 2 scales |          |           |                   |                  |                         | .63                            | 34                | .000     |
| <b>Legal Jams</b>                           |          |           |                   |                  |                         |                                |                   |          |
| Time 1 scale                                | 6.66     | 2.39      | 35                | 20               | .34                     |                                |                   |          |
| Time 2 scale                                | 6.69     | 2.48      | 35                | 20               | .36                     |                                |                   |          |
| Relationship between Time 1 & Time 2 scales |          |           |                   |                  |                         | .41                            | 35                | .015     |

Table 3  
*Reliability Statistics for the Three Knowledge Scales, Evaluation Study Sample*

| Curriculum Unit                                   | M     | N of SDCases | N of Vars | Cronbach's Alpha | Correlation Coefficient | N of Cases | p    |
|---|-------|--------------|-----------|------------------|-------------------------|------------|------|
| <b>Money Talks</b>                                |       |              |           |                  |                         |            |      |
| Pretest 1 scale                                   | 10.56 | 3.26         | 27        | 20               | .65 (n=19)              |            |      |
| Pretest 2 scale                                   | 11.42 | 4.01         | 24        | 20               | .78 (n=20)              |            |      |
| Posttest scale                                    | 14.04 | 3.02         | 27        | 20               | .71 (n=19)              |            |      |
| Relationship between Pretest1 & Pretest 2 scales  |       |              |           |                  | .65                     | 24         | .001 |
| Relationship between Pretest 2 & Posttest scales  |       |              |           |                  | .68                     | 24         | .000 |
| Relationship between Pretest 1 & Posttest scales  |       |              |           |                  | .57                     | 27         | .002 |
| <b>Health Matters</b>                             |       |              |           |                  |                         |            |      |
| Pretest 1 scale                                   | 11.93 | 3.69         | 14        | 20               | .78 (n=11)              |            |      |
| Pretest 2 scale                                   | 12.15 | 3.87         | 13        | 20               | .76 (n=12)              |            |      |
| Posttest scale                                    | 12.36 | 4.45         | 14        | 20               | .84 (n=13)              |            |      |
| Relationship between Pretest 1 & Pretest 2 scales |       |              |           |                  | .92                     | 13         | .000 |
| Relationship between Pretest 2 & Posttest scales  |       |              |           |                  | .84                     | 13         | .000 |
| Relationship between Pretest 1 & Posttest scales  |       |              |           |                  | .82                     | 14         | .000 |
| <b>Legal Jams</b>                                 |       |              |           |                  |                         |            |      |
| Pretest 1 scale                                   | 9.96  | 2.97         | 22        | 20               | .54 (n=17)              |            |      |
| Pretest 2 scale                                   | 11.17 | 3.02         | 18        | 20               | .62 (n=16)              |            |      |
| Posttest scale                                    | 11.73 | 3.72         | 22        | 20               | .59 (n=19)              |            |      |
| Relationship between Pretest 1 & Pretest 2 scales |       |              |           |                  | .61                     | 18         | .007 |
| Relationship between Pretest 2 & Posttest scales  |       |              |           |                  | .75                     | 18         | .000 |
| Relationship between Pretest 1 & Posttest scales  |       |              |           |                  | .47                     | 22         | .028 |

Table 4  
 Scale Scores Pre/Post by Group: Treatment and Control

|                              | Pretest Score |           |          | Posttest Score |           |          |
|------------------------------|---------------|-----------|----------|----------------|-----------|----------|
|                              | <i>M</i>      | <i>SD</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i>       | <i>SD</i> | <i>n</i> |
| <b>MONEY TALKS SCALES</b>    |               |           |          |                |           |          |
| <u>Knowledge</u>             |               |           |          |                |           |          |
| Treatment                    | 11.44         | 3.80      | 27       | 14.04          | 3.02      | 27       |
| Control                      | 10.42         | 3.41      | 24       | 11.44          | 3.80      | 24       |
| <u>Confidence</u>            |               |           |          |                |           |          |
| Treatment                    | 7.08          | 1.94      | 27       | 8.84           | 1.58      | 27       |
| Control                      | 6.78          | 1.74      | 24       | 7.08           | 1.94      | 24       |
| <u>Comfort</u>               |               |           |          |                |           |          |
| Treatment                    | 6.53          | 2.54      | 27       | 6.64           | 2.51      | 27       |
| Control                      | 6.53          | 2.64      | 24       | 6.53           | 2.54      | 24       |
| <b>HEALTH MATTERS SCALES</b> |               |           |          |                |           |          |
| <u>Knowledge</u>             |               |           |          |                |           |          |
| Treatment                    | 12.36         | 3.79      | 14       | 12.36          | 4.45      | 14       |
| Control                      | 11.69         | 3.73      | 13       | 12.36          | 3.79      | 13       |
| <u>Confidence</u>            |               |           |          |                |           |          |
| Treatment                    | 7.36          | 1.93      | 14       | 8.08           | 1.44      | 14       |
| Control                      | 7.79          | 1.37      | 13       | 7.36           | 1.93      | 13       |
| <u>Comfort</u>               |               |           |          |                |           |          |
| Treatment                    | 4.89          | 1.69      | 14       | 4.63           | 1.47      | 14       |
| Control                      | 4.90          | 1.66      | 13       | 4.89           | 1.69      | 13       |
| <b>LEGAL JAMS SCALES</b>     |               |           |          |                |           |          |
| <u>Knowledge</u>             |               |           |          |                |           |          |
| Treatment                    | 11.05         | 3.08      | 22       | 11.72          | 3.72      | 22       |
| Control                      | 9.83          | 2.87      | 18       | 11.05          | 3.08      | 18       |
| <u>Confidence</u>            |               |           |          |                |           |          |
| Treatment                    | 8.51          | 1.36      | 22       | 8.84           | 1.06      | 22       |
| Control                      | 8.06          | 2.16      | 18       | 8.51           | 1.36      | 18       |
| <u>Comfort</u>               |               |           |          |                |           |          |
| Treatment                    | 5.84          | 2.21      | 22       | 5.74           | 2.43      | 22       |
| Control                      | 6.48          | 1.96      | 18       | 5.84           | 2.21      | 18       |

Table 5  
*Student Satisfaction with the Three Curriculum Units*

| Questionnaire Item   | Scores on a 4-point scale* |           |          |
|--|----------------------------|-----------|----------|
|  | <i>M</i>                   | <i>SD</i> | <i>N</i> |
| <b>MONEY TALKS</b>   |                            |           |          |
| Did the <i>Money Talks</i> unit help you better understand how to keep track of your money?          | 2.78                       | 0.89      | 27       |
| Did this unit help you better understand how to budget and manage your money?                        | 2.85                       | 1.03      | 27       |
| Would you recommend this unit to other teens?  | 2.56                       | 1.12      | 27       |
| Would you want to take units similar to this on other life skills topics?                            | 2.33                       | 1.07      | 27       |
| Did the <i>Money Talks</i> video make the instruction more effective?                                | 2.56                       | 1.05      | 27       |
| Were the situations [in the video] realistic?  | 2.33                       | 1.07      | 27       |
| Was the video relevant for teens?  | 2.19                       | 1.15      | 27       |
| <b>HEALTH MATTERS</b>  |                            |           |          |
| Did the <i>Health Matters</i> unit help you understand your health issues?                           | 2.64                       | 0.84      | 14       |
| Did this unit help you understand how to make a positive change in your health?                      | 2.50                       | 1.02      | 14       |
| Would you recommend this unit to other teens?  | 2.64                       | 0.93      | 14       |
| Would you want to take units similar to this on other life skills topics?                            | 2.07                       | 0.92      | 14       |
| Did the <i>Health Matters</i> video make the instruction more effective?                             | 2.39                       | 1.19      | 13       |
| Were the situations [in the video] realistic?  | 2.00                       | 0.58      | 13       |
| Was the video relevant for teens?  | 2.23                       | 1.09      | 13       |
| <b>LEGAL JAMS</b>  |                            |           |          |
| Did the <i>Legal Jams</i> unit help you understand how to deal with conflict in a more positive way? | 2.62                       | 0.97      | 21       |
| Did this unit help you understand how to avoid getting into legal jams?                              | 2.76                       | 1.04      | 21       |
| Would you recommend this unit to other teens?  | 2.48                       | 1.12      | 21       |
| Would you want to take units similar to this on other life skills topics?                            | 2.43                       | 1.17      | 21       |
| Did the <i>Legal Jams</i> video make the instruction more effective?                                 | 2.52                       | 1.08      | 21       |
| Were the situations realistic?   | 2.43                       | 1.03      | 21       |
| Was the video relevant for teens?  | 2.57                       | 1.03      | 21       |

\*The 4-point scale was as follows: 1="not at all," 2="a little," 3="mostly," and 4="very much."

| On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is the worst and 10 is the best:           | Scores on a 10-point scale |           |          |
|---|----------------------------|-----------|----------|
|   | <i>M</i>                   | <i>SD</i> | <i>N</i> |
| How would you rate the overall quality of the <i>Money Talks</i> unit?    | 5.65                       | 2.55      | 26       |
| How would you rate the overall quality of the <i>Health Matters</i> unit? | 5.75                       | 2.09      | 12       |
| How would you rate the overall quality of the <i>Legal Jams</i> unit?     | 5.23                       | 2.71      | 22       |