

Presenters: Female Narrator; Tom Oates, Child Welfare Information Gateway; Sixto Cancel, Think Of Us; Sarah Sullivan, Think Of Us

[00:00:00]: [Music Introduction]

FEMALE NARRATOR [00:00:02]: This is the Child Welfare Information Gateway Podcast, a place for those who care about strengthening families and protecting children. You'll hear about the innovations, emerging trends and success stories across child welfare direct from those striving to make a difference. This is your place for new ideas and information to support your work to improve the lives of children, youth, and families.

TOM OATES [00:00:32]: Welcome into the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast everyone, Tom Oates here. And we're continuing the conversation about aging out of foster care. Specifically, recommendations on improving the process and shifting our focus. Yes, employment, housing, and education are priorities in transition planning and transition success. But there are other factors that should be looked at and focused on. The reason - well, homelessness, incarceration, unemployment, lack of access to health care plague many former foster youth and at a disproportionately higher rate among black, native and brown foster youth along with queer and trans youth. So, this is part two of the conversation with Sixto Cancel and Sarah Sullivan from Think of Us. Think of Us developed the Aging Out report in conjunction with Bloom works that shares insights gleaned from research from on-site visits with five different locations, engaging more than 200 foster youth, former foster youth, child welfare staff, foster parents, and supportive adults. Now, if you head on over to childwelfare.gov and just visit podcasts on this episode's webpage we'll have a link to Think of Us and the Aged Out report.

[00:01:47]: Now, back in Part 1, we discussed the three themes the report identifies as areas where the child welfare system is failing foster youth and should be given greater focus - and that's healing and dealing with trauma, centering youth in their preparedness, and helping youth build a supportive network. I encourage you to go and listen to that episode. Now in this episode here, the conversation shifts to recommendations to both address and shift focus on those themes. We're really happy to have sat down with Sixto and Sarah and just a bit of a flashback - Sixto Cancel was the very first guest on the first episode of the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast back in the summer of 2016. Hi, diving back into our conversation on aging out, focusing on recommendations with Sixto Cancel and Sarah Sullivan from Think of us here on the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast.

[00:02:47]: Sarah, we talk about creating a culture of, of healing. So, let's bring this down to the individual caseworker level, you know, somebody who's listening here, and what can they do in their day-to-day interactions with foster youth to kind of help maybe create that, like, what we talked about, culture of healing?

SARAH SULLIVAN [00:03:03]: Yeah, I think the first thing to do is really in every interaction for all frontline staff who work with young people, to have as the first question be, how are you doing? Just a simple check in on how are you doing? This came up actually in some research we've done subsequently that we heard over and over and over again, young people said every interaction with every staff should be, how are you doing? And give me a moment, actually just share how I'm doing. So, that's a first simple thing. The second one is to reach out to young people to check on in them, even when you don't need something. Between the report cycles, between the court cycles, you know, check in on them periodically to see how they're doing. That's something that not only is obviously nice to do, but really builds trust and can be really affirming for young people who feel like okay, you really do care about me

more than just what you need to submit your report. And we all know that staff are very, very overworked and so it's not, it's not at all because, you know, people don't care like we get that people are, are, you know, have high caseloads and all of this - but we prioritize other things above the healing from trauma, those other things can come first. So, this is what really centering the healing from trauma could look like. It's looking like saying, hey, as my first question, I'm going to ask how you're doing, hey, in-between court report cycles and case cycles, I'm going to ask you how you're doing. That's really what centering it can look like even in a day-to-day basis.

[00:04:31]: And then while this next one will take structural changes - I think the case manager can be an important, and the front-line staff can be an important distributor of this is - it's really our vision right now, our working vision at Think of Us that young people could be presented periodically during the time and care with the lot, a long list of modalities they could potentially choose from to heal from trauma. Obviously, right now, we kind of bubble trauma up into mental health and foster care and pretty much just pursue psychiatric diagnoses with treatment, which are either through psychotropic medication or through talk therapy. Both, which emerging research is showing, are not always the best modalities for healing trauma. And we also talked to a lot of young people who don't love those modalities. So, you know, could we expand what the options are - because we know there are so many different pathways to healing trauma - and could we present those to young people and let them know what options might look like? Let foster youth engage with what's interesting to them and help, let caseworkers help shepherd them into those things which can be anywhere from pursuing a favorite, like exercise or sport, if that's one. Spending more time with siblings, if that's one, spending time in nature. All these things we heard from foster youth that they developed their own healing mechanisms and coping mechanisms outside of what the system offered - which was anything to one person really liked to take hot showers, others joined an anime community online. Another person found sleep to be like, really focusing on sleep to be very therapeutic. So, foster youth do find their own avenues to healing, but how could caseworkers actually support that by encouraging young people in those pathways that they're most interested in?

TOM OATES [00:06:14]: Demonstrating that it's a priority is kind of opening up the door that we, we understand healing, we accept healing, we promote healing - I think that can just go a long way. So, that's kind of at that caseworker level, but an agency itself, and Sixto, go, go ahead, ff we don't want to miss the point on that, that one-to-one interaction is important. Go ahead.

SIXTO CANCEL [00:06:38]: One thing I also just would love to mention is that, you know, unlike other forms of trauma, like if I was in a car accident, you know, every time I get near, what we see for some folks is that when you get near a big bang, it's startling and it's triggering, right. And so, the traumas related to these incidents, right, a smell, a big noise, a familiar environment. The trauma around being in foster care is relational. It is the experience of, like, being detached from your, your origin, right? Whether that was your biological mother and father, sometimes it's grandma - but it's that family detachment. And so, it's actually intimacy in the relationship that can be triggering. And then on top of that experience, the way that we inherited the system, which is if this placement doesn't work for you, if you don't fit in, if you misbehave too much, you're going to find yourself in a new placement after you just heard someone say three weeks ago, I love you, you're part of our family, you know, we're so happy to have you here. But then obviously that love wasn't strong enough, or what happened, is what goes through our brain when you find yourself in a new position.

[00:07:54]: So, every interaction then with the, with the frontline staff for me, is an opportunity to have one step closer towards healing because something has to offset the system induced trauma that will

occur and it will occur and it will be induced by the system because of the very nature of how the system is structured. So, if you have a frontline person who can understand you might be having a reaction - the appropriate reaction in many cases - to the traumatic experiences that you're having, you know what, you no longer hear their tone as an attitude towards you. You no longer decide that I don't know if they're worthy, or ready for that trip that we need, are taking the other young people on or that extra gift card that happens during Christmas, right? Like these are the things that are even more sometimes hurtful that young people will notice in the behavior of a frontline staff person. And actually some of the things that, you know, we have sometimes go through. It's easy to say they're bad people in this world and that's why they treat me this way. It becomes hard to accept. Why am I not good enough? And this person is not allowing blank to happen between us.

SARAH SULLIVAN [00:09:09]: And, Sixto, I think that's such a great point and I think that makes me think that really one of the primary, primary ways that frontline staff can be most useful here is really helping to decode the behavior with a trauma informed lens. To exactly your point, what we do a lot of times is that young people, so all foster youth have experienced trauma. Most experienced trauma before care. All experienced the trauma of removal of some kind. And then many foster youth obviously experience additional traumas once they're in foster care. So, all have experienced trauma and that will have to express itself in some symptomatic way, whether it's through behavior, or through a health issue or through relational issue, or through a social issue - it will manifest in some way. But what we tend to do, to Sixto's point, rather than healing the root cause of the trauma, we try to address those symptoms. And a lot of times we punish young people for displaying the very symptoms of trauma that to your point, Sixto, are actually normal responses. We should be concerned if they didn't express those responses to trauma.

[00:10:16]: And I'll give one very good example of how a caseworker could help is with running away. And now I think there's a lot to know and understand about why foster youth run away sometimes, but one very simple explanation is that the stress response is fight, flight, or freeze. You know, fleeing is one of the known stress responses. And I think having that in mind or at least top of mind when caseworkers are deciding how they're going to adjudicate - because a lot of times we'll, something like that will be met with a punishment when really, maybe that's exactly the time we should have an empathetic lens to saying, you know, what's really going on here, was a trigger just, was the young person just triggered in some way and actually this is an expression of the trauma. So, just building on what frontline staff can do, I think really having that, that empathetic lens and to really being well educated personally on how trauma shows up from young people will really help the young people they work with, I think.

TOM OATES [00:11:14]: So, with the caseworker level - and there's a lot and just, there's that mind shift and how a case worker can approach. What can an agency do, maybe to incorporate healing within its system or to foster that within those caseworkers, knowing that there's also a lot of turnover with caseworkers, as well? So, I'm curious to think, where can you start to create that culture of healing, you know, maybe within an agency versus within the individual relationship?

SIXTO CANCEL [00:11:41]: When I think about at the agency level, I think that's where you need leadership to say this is how we're viewing it, right? And so, to not reinforce the systematic kind of responses that say, you had this type of behavior or you reacted in this way, so the policy is going to equal that you can't do this, right? And so, we've seen that type of structure inside of an agency. The other thing I would say is that above the agency though, which is I think in order to really get at this problem, is that we actually had to fundamentally change what's feeding the agency. Which is, for many times we look at funding and like how to get services to young people, you need a diagnosis. You need

to be able to say this is what this is so then that way Medicaid can reimburse for this service and then you have now the service available. So, if, to expect agencies and staff to kind of have this dramatic shift, it almost feels unfair to me because what actually the biggest monster here is that the way that I can get any type of - let me rephrase by saying, what seems like the biggest type of monster here is that the way that a lot of things are funded in terms of intervention for young people is that you have to be able to, be able to charge it to Medicaid. To charge it to Medicaid, you need a diagnosis. So, now we're pathologizing trauma. We are creating this, these diagnoses to be able to get people help. And that becomes, I believe some of the intergenerational cycles of saying, oh, you had a problem. And this is how we've now treated you and this is how we have now limited, limited you or have dealt with you, right as a system. And then that starts to trickle down from one generation to the next.

TOM OATES [00:13:30]: You start to take a look at, you know, where the system becomes a system, right, and it stops becoming relationships. And that's where, this is where unfortunately with something so large, checking the box becomes a requirement. And you guys talked about this when we very first started this conversation of kind of hacking bureaucracy, right? And so, there's, there's a good example right there. Along with this kind of, this, this, this, you know, I guess a triangle of relationships that can be in a youth's life are those supportive adults, right, those foster parents. And this goes back to an early part in the conversation of, hey, when I'm sad, just let me be sad. Right? So, the guidance that you would then give for those who are in a young person's life, be it foster parents, be supportive adults, be it somebody who's just, who's just there, right, who's present. How, how can these folks maybe help in terms of healing?

SARAH SULLIVAN [00:14:27]: Yeah, I think it's such a great question. And to Sixto's point earlier about how, for foster youth much of the core trauma, not all of it, but for much of the core trauma is around relationship. That literally being in a committed relationship to young people will help heal the trauma. So young, so supportive adults who stick around and show up when they say they're going to show up and do what they say they're gonna do - that is a way to help heal the trauma of relationships. So, that's just one. And you hear it from foster youth all the time, like they - and from staff - foster youth just want people who are going to stick around. And I think in some ways that's, that's why foster youth, I think - and I'm sure, I'm sure many other people - but foster youth, I think sometimes test relationships because they want to know, are you going to be there or not, you know? And so, having those strong relationships is critical. So, that's one.

[00:15:21]: But then I think beyond that, you know, ways to help are really exposing the foster youth in your life to other potential modalities and encouraging the things in them that they're interested in. And I think, you know, that can look like a whole bunch of things. It can look like a sport that they're really interested in, or a hobby that they're really interested in and that can help, you know, build the capacity and the community that ultimately can help heal from the trauma. And then, I think, you know, strong adults who can open up and share about how they're, you know, doing self-care, how they have overcome the struggles in their life and share those things and be really, you know, be really strong adults for these young people and show what it looks like to overcome hardship. I think that those are great models and great ways that foster parents and supportive people can show up for young people.

TOM OATES [00:16:11]: There's a lot of ways and if healing starts, you know, I guess from the core, it's the first of the kind of three pillars that you guys addressed within Aging Out - it almost all starts with, with trauma and recognizing and healing. And there are those relationships and there's communication involved with it and that sort of moves to the recommendations for, for the, the idea of a youth centered or a youth driven plan. So, for those caseworkers where when they start thinking about

preparedness, maybe what are some of the easy ways - and we talked about, you know, putting youth at the center - what are some of those easy ways to put youth in positions to kind of shape and drive and, you know, maybe chart their own path for preparation.

SIXTO CANCEL [00:16:51]: I think some of the things that come to me first is to have true authentic experiences, you need exposure. And so, I think we try to think about what are the easy ways. And I'm like, it's actually just hard work, right? Like and it's work that we by default have to make sure we're not being manipulative in it. Because the way that the system is set up is that if I wanted housing as the 19-year-old me, then I had to go to college. There wasn't an opportunity not to go to college because then there wasn't funding for me to do something else. So, and when I was going to college, what I was petrified by was the fact that I had went to a failing school. So, my writing abilities were very poor. And the chances of me actually failing out of college were very high because I was coming in with such a deficiency. And so, I was, you know, lucky enough to have that awareness and to work with people to say, let me go ahead and pick a college based on my writing abilities where they will actually work with me all the way through. You know, have the same teacher for a whole year and a half in English so that I can build that skill set up. But the reality is, is that that it's already a pre-destined track, right? And I'm all for young people going to college, but I think it's so important that when we talk about preparedness, we actually expose young people to a variety of different experiences that then they can actually have some real voice and choice around what is it that they want to do and they see fit for themselves to be able to do that.

SARAH SULLIVAN [00:18:24]: Yeah, and just to build on that, I'll also share that, you know, this is a capacity that we need to start building from essentially the time young people enter care. So, what happens too often is that we have a system where social workers and case managers do things for you. And then the moment you turn 18, you're supposed to know how to do them yourself. And a better way would be, could we, could we be building that capacity over time? And part of that capacity looks like helping you understand what you actually want and helping to advocate for what you want and to see that through. And so, easy ways that are also very affirming that we could be incorporating that all throughout the time and care is that Think of Us advocates for basically as soon as possible, the system asks the young person where do you want to be living and that at all times from first placement to placement changes, we always ask the question, where do you want to be living? And then we do everything in our power as a system to try to make that placement possible. And so, that's a simple way - I mean, it's a, it's a radical way - but a simple way that, that could start building the skills for preparedness. Because now you have a young person thinking like, oh, I could have wants, oh, I have agency. And now when we're getting 18, 21, it's not so crazy to think where do I want to be living now? Like, we've actually had the chance to think about it throughout.

[00:19:52]: And then, you know, obviously when it comes to the goals, we really need to provide open-ended ways for people to share their goals. Now, that all sounds good and great, but the trouble is the system doesn't always like what some of youth's goals are. And that's a real thing that we've got to sort out. And one good example of this is, as we know from the Midwest study and other studies like, a place where a large percentage of people go after they age out of care is back to the bio family. And we all like to think that that doesn't happen. But the research shows that we know it happens a good amount of time and foster youth aren't going to reveal - and let's say it's not even moving back, but let's just say they personally have the goal of having a stronger relationship or any relationship with family once they age out - they're not gonna reveal that goal if they don't think that goal is going to be respected and well met. And so, we're going to have to do some adjustment on our side to, if we really want to help achieve youth's goals that they're going to do when they turn 18 or 21 anyway, so we might as well help them

be prepared for them, we're going to have to do some adjustment on our side to figure out how we're going to handle goals that young people, that the system will say that it doesn't like. And obviously this, you see a lot with other relationships where we see for youth and extended foster care, you know, the state get, will get to decide, get to approve the placement, where they live in order to get the EFC check for housing. But young people will live with boyfriends and girlfriends, significant others, and they can sometimes be denied their payment because of that setting. So, we're going to have to - if we really want to know how to help young people achieve their goals - we're going to have to be prepared to do some adjusting on, in some ways that we haven't budgeted before.

TOM OATES [00:21:45]: There's a big control aspect that falls under that and who's got the decision-making power? And, and you, you talked by giving a young person agency as maybe, as they're, maybe a little younger but giving them, kind of that, that understand, kinda flexing that muscle right, of using their agency and, and planning and looking forward. Yet at the same time, if you want somebody to flex that muscle, you have to give them the freedom to move, right? And so, there's a, that's a big control aspect and I'm not sure we'd get an answer for that yet, do we?

SIXTO CANCEL [00:22:18]: No, I don't think we have, I think we have the beginnings of something, right? So, when I think of this as like we now know that the climate says young people need agencies to have healthy development, to have healthy development. And when I think about the system, the system does have this power dynamic that came from, you know, just is rooted in a lot of colonialism, racism around there is a person who knows, who can fix your life, they can save you, right? The power dynamic that we've inherited causes this sense of control. What's reinforcing that sense of control, in my opinion, is the actual liability that's attached. So, the fact is is that what states have gotten sued over have been things like the over prescription of medication, too much movement. When there was someone who ran away and x happens, right? So, like what we've done is that we've, the way that systems are being held accountable is in lawsuits that then are attached to, okay, how much risk can we mitigate now? And so, if we saw more lawsuits, let's say around, we had poor outcomes for young people, period, right? Like, it's just unacceptable that we're aging out young people to homelessness. Then all of a sudden, I believe we'll start to see a shift in the system to go ahead and act differently. But I believe that's actually the wrong pathway when we're basing our system decision based on what is the liability that you can sue for because that's not incentivizing what's actually, what we know to be in the best interests of young people.

[00:23:56]: And so how do we actually move away from a system that is compliance driven? That is, that will shift when it is the power of the courts intervening in that way. How do we actually see system transformation when we actually are saying, okay, there's new science, new understanding around healing, new understanding around trauma. And let's go ahead and try to shift to these types of models.

TOM OATES [00:24:16]: That's a shift that's clearly going to take a lot of effort, a lot of energy, you know, a lot of time, and then rinse, wash, repeat, have those same conversations and, you know, start to point to the evidence of what works. Guys, I want to shift to that third pillar and think about moving recommendations, moving forward to when we talked about identifying supportive networks and helping engage youth to identify and maybe leverage some of those. You had mentioned a little bit in terms of the questions to be asked or how to help a young person identify what is a, who is a supportive adult in their life. So, what are some of those other techniques or questions that case workers may be able to, to use easily when they're thinking about mapping out somebody's supportive network?

SIXTO CANCEL [00:25:02]: The first thing that comes to mind for me is it is your relationship with that young person. If the young person cannot trust you, there's no way in hell they're about to trust you with what might be causing them anxiety around their connection to someone, right? And so, that's the first thing I would say. The second is going to be the relationship and the experience that the young person's having with the system. We heard from so many young people that they literally just don't trust the system to be interacting with the adults in their life. What are you going to say about me? What's going to happen to them? Are they going to get an investigation now? What bad things might they, what bad things happen to them too. And so, I think, when I think about a worker who's asking themselves, how do I reveal, you know, get this young person to reveal, I think the first thing is like, what is your relationship? How do you show up in the world for them? And then for what purpose are you going to try to engage their supportive adults? Because if it's just for the purpose of placement, we know that that may not be the best. But are you going to do everything in your power just to make sure that there's connection, that there is opportunity for engagement that doesn't have that alternative motive. Because one thing that people who are in that flight, freeze, or fight mode can sense is when there's like an alternative motive, we're always looking for it.

SARAH SULLIVAN [00:26:27]: Yeah, I think those are great points and, you know, one quote that really just is kind of seared into my memory and I think for many of my teammates, too is someone who told us you know, foster youth will exit care with fewer relationships than they came in with. And you just think, man, if this whole thing started because of a breakdown in relationships - that's how, that's ultimately why we got into foster care, there was a breakdown in relationships - how could it be that at the end of it, you could have fewer relationships coming out than coming in. And so, that guides some of our thinking around it. And what can someone do, what can a case manager do, what can the system do? The first thing is to - from as soon as the young person enters care, the moment they enter care - we should be engaging with the supportive people in their lives. It can't be a downstream, oh, when you're turning 18, it has to be as soon as you turn, as you enter the system a goal of the system needs to be, how can we help maintain and strengthen your supportive relationships for the duration of time that you're in it.

[00:27:26]: So, it's having a conversation with young people, who do you want to make sure we're prioritizing having a relationship with? And yes, that has to do with what you, here, the amount of truths you get will have to do with the nature of the relationship, but start with what you get and then work with helping to strengthen and maintain those relationships over time and have periodic check-ins about how those relationships are going. Then we got some really good tips from one of our sites around how you actually contact - let's say you're a social worker contacting one of those supportive people - what we heard is a huge takeaway is you don't want to scare them away because a call saying hi, I'm from CPS and this person just get came into care and they say that they know you is a good way to get hung up on is what we've been told. So, what you want to do is not start with and not assume that all supportive people have to be a placement option, to Sixto's point, but start by saying, hey, do you know extended family members in this young person's life? Hey, do you have, we were told to ask for things like a photo album or photos. Sometimes young people don't have mementos and things like that from, once they get into foster care.

[00:28:31]: And so, having the supportive people to help with things like that can be really useful. Start with those smaller questions. Because, because the system is so interested in permanency - for good reasons we understand - they will often only engage with these kinds of people if they think it can be a placement. So, don't only be interested in supportive people if they can be a placement, supportive people can play a very important role in young people's lives, even beyond placement. And - not that

this should be the intention - sometimes supporting those relationships over time can help that develop into a placement. So, it could actually also be the long-term placement goal sometimes. And then I would just say again, periodically throughout the time and care, revisiting that because if the young person is in care for a long time, they will also be developing new relationships with a teacher, with a coach. And so, how can we be nurturing and supporting those relationships even as they meet new people during, during their time in care?

TOM OATES [00:29:27]: Guys, I appreciate you guys diving deeper into kind of these tangible recommendations really because we'd been, and the great thing about them is we're talking about actions or behaviors, right? Things you can change your behavior tomorrow. You can ask those questions tomorrow and it doesn't cost anything and normally it doesn't take up any more time than, than somebody's already applying. But we, we do have I'm sorry, Sarah?

SARAH SULLIVAN [00:29:52]: Well, I just, as you were speaking, I just thought of one other idea that might be useful too, which is, I think, you know, when we talk about it this way, it can sound like, oh, for a social worker, this is just one more burden, this is like I'm already overworked, I have so much to do like, now I've gotta maintain all of their supportive relationships, too, like that's a lot. But one way to think about it is that actually we could bring in these supportive people to pick up some of the slack and actually help with some of the needs of young people. So, in that way the social worker maybe doesn't have to be the one to write the resume with the young person. The social worker maybe doesn't have to be the one to go to the DMV and get the license. But, if we can engage a supportive person - a coach, an aunt or uncle, you know, a best friend's mom - if we can engage people like this and they could help with the resume, they could help with the license, that actually could relieve pressure and burden off of social workers and then have the long-term benefit of once you meet that 18, 21 milestone and the social worker goes away, I've actually had a chance to develop the relationship with the supportive person in a way that maybe I can lean on them after 18 or 21. So, I just wanted to share that as another perspective.

TOM OATES [00:31:04]: Yeah, it's not always saying that every supportive person has to be a placement option. But everybody can play a small role in somebody's team, right? And, you know, everybody's got, picking up, not necessarily picked up the slack, but just being there at a certain moment, right? And then that starts to create a, create this thing of, hey, we're all in this together and hopefully that can build some trust over time that, hey, just want you to, you know, be able to be there for one moment here, one moment there, but then, then we're all in this together with a much more of a, it's less adversarial, obviously.

[00:31:39]: So, where I was, where I was going with, with the idea of, of really behaviors or actions - yet, we are at a point as we're recording this, in the spring of 2021, there are some short-term available Chaffey funds. And so, I'd offer for you guys to think of any other recommendations about those funds or maybe other available funds that maybe jurisdictions can leverage to maybe develop some better outcomes for youth aging out. Is there anything that pops into your head about taking advantage of some funds available and how you'd best apply them?

SIXTO CANCEL [00:32:15]: Some of the things that come up to me is when I think about Chaffey funds, I think of two buckets. There is the bucket of Chaffey funds that traditionally have been allocated to the states and there's the bucket of Chaffey funds that the Congress just approved. And the intent of this second wave of money was to be direct cash payments, for the most part and some supports, send some support to young people. And the reason I mention that is because I think it's important to note

that some relief money is needed to help young people literally solve their situation. But for more of the long-term goal of what Chaffey was created for, I think that I literally go, like literally I think of how is it that Chaffey dollars can be used to really fuel those developmental experiences?

[00:33:40] When I was 18, I had by the age of 18, I was a senior in high school and I had spent literally all four years of high school in the asset development program, learning how to buy a car, learning how to rent an apartment, doing all the PowerPoints with the pizza every single month. We are here, here we're doing it. And then I saved money all through high school and it was time to buy a car. And then it was the funniest thing ever. My worker was like, oh no, I don't think you should get a car. And I was just like wait, no, I know unprepared because you've spent four years teaching me month after month, pizza after pizza that I, like how to get a car. And so, I was like, I'm going to go get a car and I did it. I went and got myself a car, I went got the insurance, I pulled all the strings I needed to pull to just do it myself because the system had trained me. And so, when I think of the importance of these dollars, I think that those developmental experiences are critical because what I needed as the 18-year-old high school senior to have a car is exactly the right amount of responsibility at that time for me to be able to be ready to then the next year, live in my own apartment.

[00:34:18]: And so taking care of that car, realizing how things got broken and things came up and making the choice around it and how I almost screwed up, right, like and bought the wrong car - was the foundation for me to be able to go ahead and be living on my own and have that incremental stepping stone to more responsibility.

TOM OATES [00:34:39]: Sixto Cancel, Sarah Sullivan. I, I cannot thank you guys enough. One, for spending the time with us here. But for what you've done to dive into, I guess what, what originally started as an app to navigate the system and now turns into a map to hopefully reform the system. I thank you guys so much. Want to remind everybody, if you head to this episode's page and you can check out the Aged Out report and look at the work that Think of Us is doing. Sarah and Sixto, thanks again and we appreciate your time. Thanks for your energy, your passion, and your expertise and sharing it with us here on the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast.

SARAH SULLIVAN [00:35:20]: Thanks so much for having us.

SIXTO CANCEL [00:35:22]: Truly an honor.

TOM OATES [00:35:24]: So, if you haven't, I encourage you to check out part one of this conversation where the insights regarding healing and dealing with trauma, centering youth in their preparedness, and helping youth build a supportive network are discussed. Now again, this is not to say employment, education, and housing aren't important, but the relationships and the emotions should be focused on, as well, to help support a more successful transition. We'll have links to the Aged Out report along with other resources supporting youth in transition on this episode's webpage, just head on over to childwelfare.gov, search podcasts, and you'll see this episode's page along with webpages for all the episodes of the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast. Hey, a reminder to just visit childwelfare.gov when you're looking to find information, best-practices, reports, contact information, resources for yourself, for your peers or the families that you work with. Now, these are vetted and relevant resources free of charge and approved by the Children's Bureau, all designed to help those within or connected to the child welfare field. Thanks again to Sixto Cancel and Sarah Sullivan with Think of Us. And of course, thanks to you for joining us here on the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast. I'm Tom Oates. Have a great day.

FEMALE NARRATOR [00:36:46]: Thanks for joining us for this edition of the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast. Child Welfare Information Gateway is available at childwelfare.gov and is a service of the Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families. The views and opinions expressed on this podcast do not necessarily reflect on those of Information Gateway, or the Children's Bureau.