

New Plan To Help College-Aged Foster Kids Succeed



[Len Ramirez](#) , Reporting

(CBS 5) SAN JOSE Robert Belfield has lived in foster care since he was 3 years old. But at 19, he's now too old to be in the system. "When I came out of the foster home, you know, I really didn't do too good," Belfield said. "I was basically a failure." Unfortunately, many people who age-out or emancipate from foster care don't go very far.

"Many of them find themselves with no where to go and with very limited resources," Liza Giron-Espinoza of Santa Clara County Social Services said. "They leave the system just to come back later on as part of the welfare system, or the jail system."

But Robert says things will be different now, thanks to a new initiative that puts him on two college campuses every day. He attends classes at Mission Community College in Santa Clara and goes home to the dorms at San Jose State. Robert is one of 21 former foster kids who are getting to taste the college life 24/7.

"It's college life, getting used to it, getting adjusted," Belfield said. "That's where I want to be after I get what I can out of this JC. I want to go to a state university. To me it's like pre-living there on the campus you could say."

The program is called California Connect by 25. It exposes young people to positive experiences and support systems that will help them succeed.

With housing a major problem for youth coming out of the system, San Jose State offered rooms that were made available when these new high-rise dorms opened last year.

"Collaboration can have a great positive impact," said John Anyosa of Work 2 Future. "It can actually impact the life of someone and make their college education a reality."

Robert says just being around college all day and night, seeing fellow students strive and study, has helped him focus on his future. He wants to transfer full time to State and work on a degree in social work.

"I want to be able to reach that kid before he gets into a gang, sells drugs or goes to jail," Belfield said. "I want to be able to talk some sense into him."