

A Decade of Opportunity: Meeting the Complex Needs of Youth Exiting Foster Care

NCSL Child Welfare and Youth Homelessness Fellows Programs

August 24, 2023

Webinar Overview



Presentation



Legislative Case Study

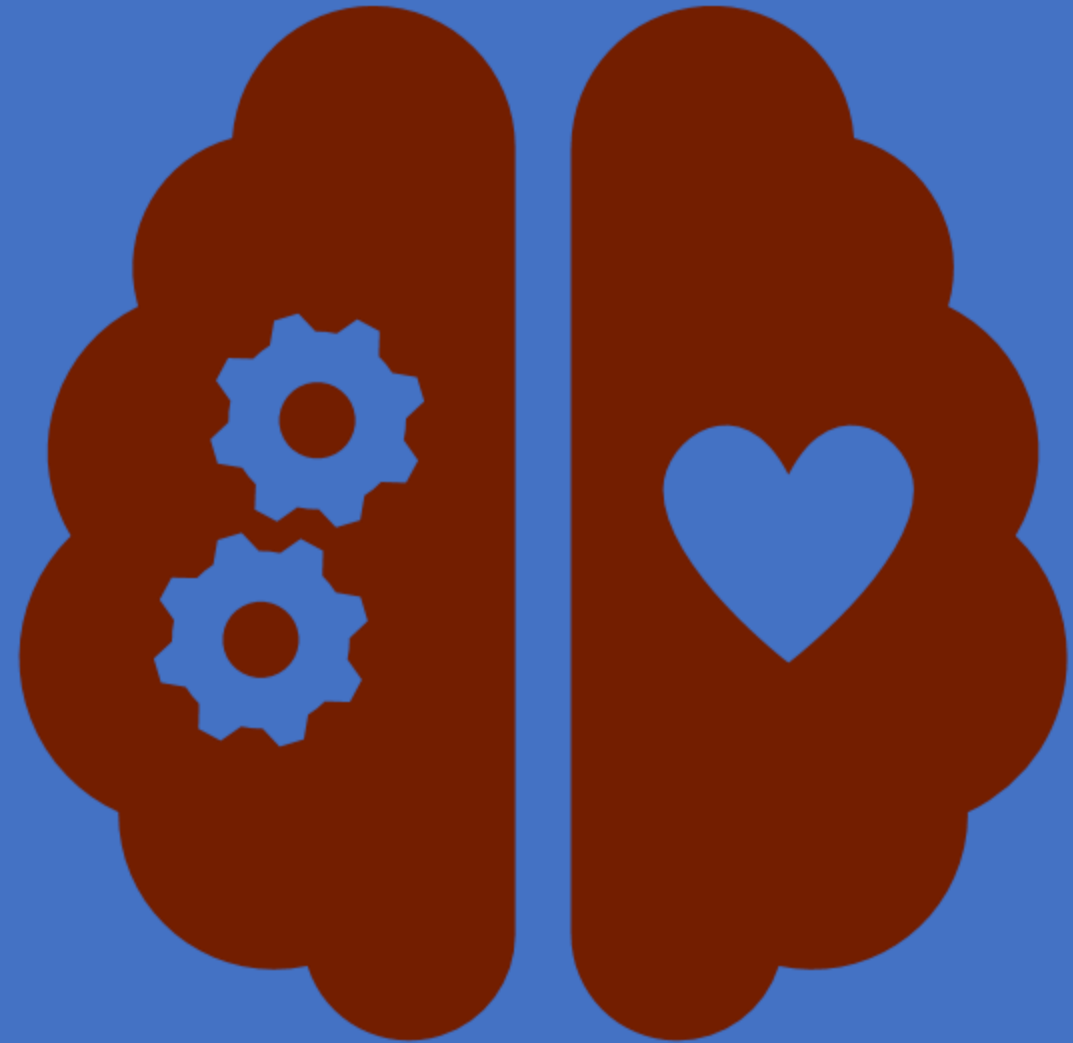


Cohort Discussions

Adolescent Brain Development

The Basics

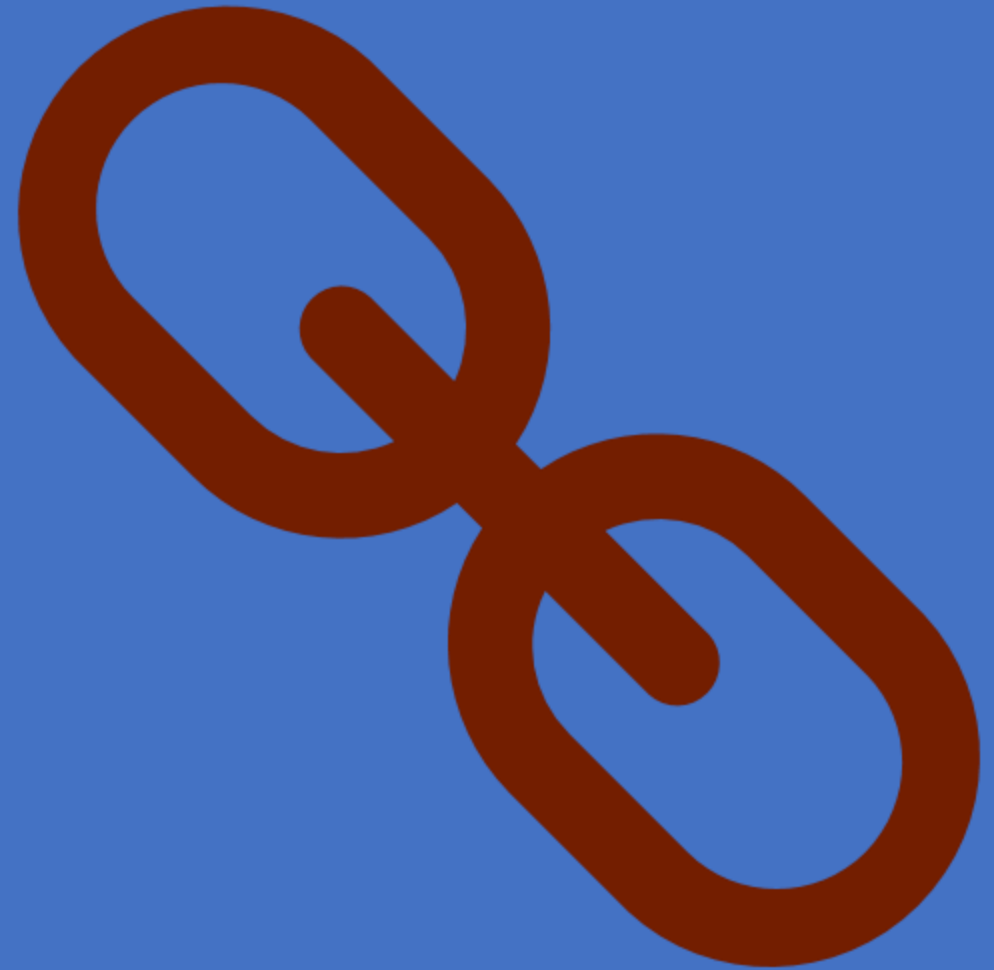
- Adolescent brain development is partially dependent on earlier life experiences.
- Between the ages of 10 and 25, the brain rapidly grows and develops.
 - Planning and decision-making
 - Connectivity between different parts of the brain
- Adolescents need supportive and safe environments and relationships – a toxic environment creates challenges for healthy brain development.



The Link Between Foster Care and Youth Homelessness

The Basics

- Factors of children and youth in foster care that increase the risk for youth homelessness:
 - Age and time in care
 - Number of placements
 - Type/setting of placement
 - Running away from placement



Today's Presenter



Todd Lloyd, MSW

Senior Policy Associate, External Affairs
Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Policy
The Annie E. Casey Foundation



POLICY OPPORTUNITIES

FOR MEETING THE COMPLEX NEEDS OF YOUTH EXITING FOSTER CARE

Agenda

- Snapshot of young people in foster care and their needs
- Three key data points to guide state policymakers
- State-level data and other resources

*“The state is not a mother,
the state is not your father,
the state cannot hug you.
The state is not your family.”*

Jasmine, Youth Advocate and Policy Advisor (Hawaii)

Foster care population, 2021

There are fewer teenagers and young adults in foster care.



147,143 or 24%

of the United States' foster care population was ages 14-21 in 2021

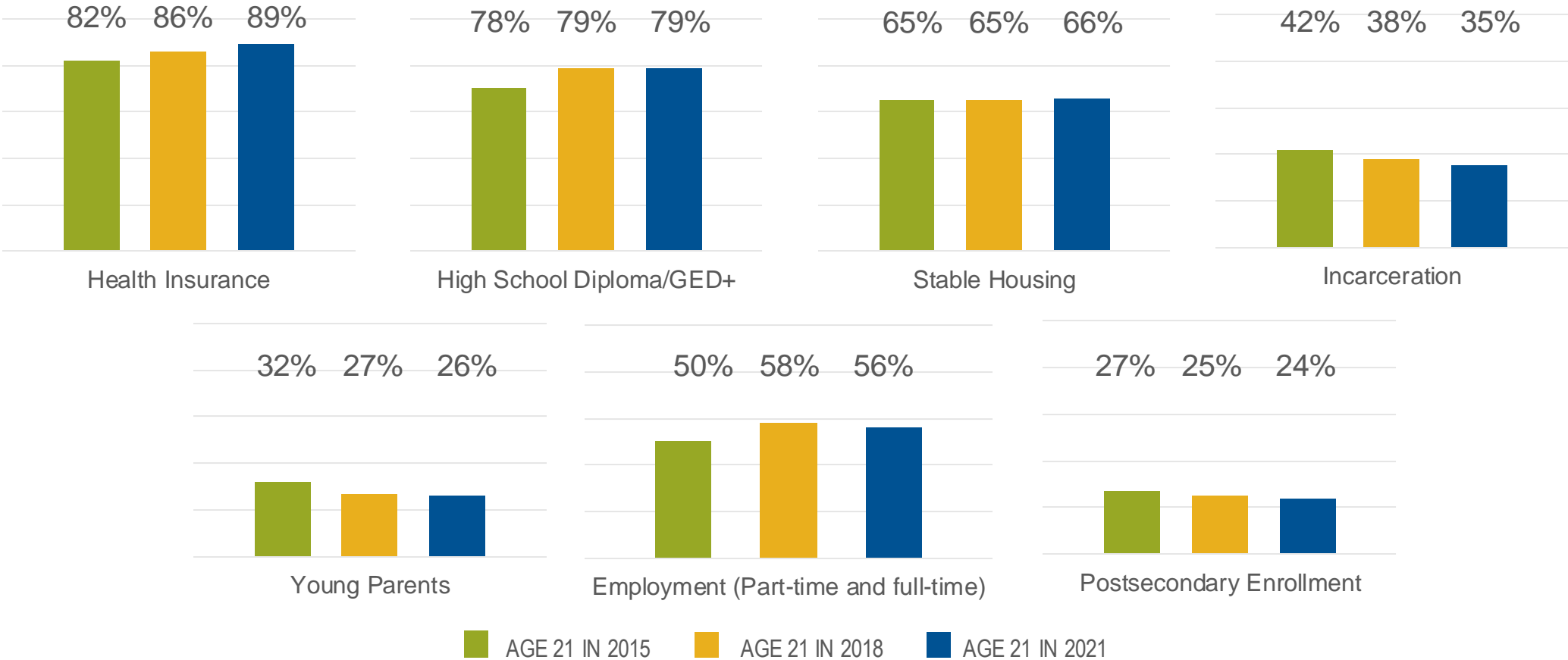
Down from **34%** in 2006

SOURCE: Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), 2021

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD), 2021

Cohorts 1, 2 and 3

UNITED STATES



SOURCE: NYTD outcomes data are from surveys of three groups of young people who experienced foster care. The groups reached age 21 in 2015, 2018 and 2021

Federal policies to support youth in foster care

1985: Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985

- Authorizes new entitlement funds to help young people transition from foster care

1999: Foster Care Independence Act

- Creates the Chafee Program as we know it today

2008: Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act

- Extends Title IV-E foster care eligibility to age 21

2010: Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

- Extends Medicaid coverage to age 26 for youth formerly in foster care

2014: Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act

- Updates Chafee; empowers youth decision making; promotes normalcy

2018: Family First Prevention Services Act

- Extends reach of program to youth up to 23; ETV up to 26

2020: Supports during the COVID pandemic

- Consolidated Appropriations Act, Division X, 2021 - additional \$400 million to Chafee for COVID relief
- Consolidated Appropriations Act, Division Q, 2021 - Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Act supports housing assistance through FUP and FSS for all youth leaving care



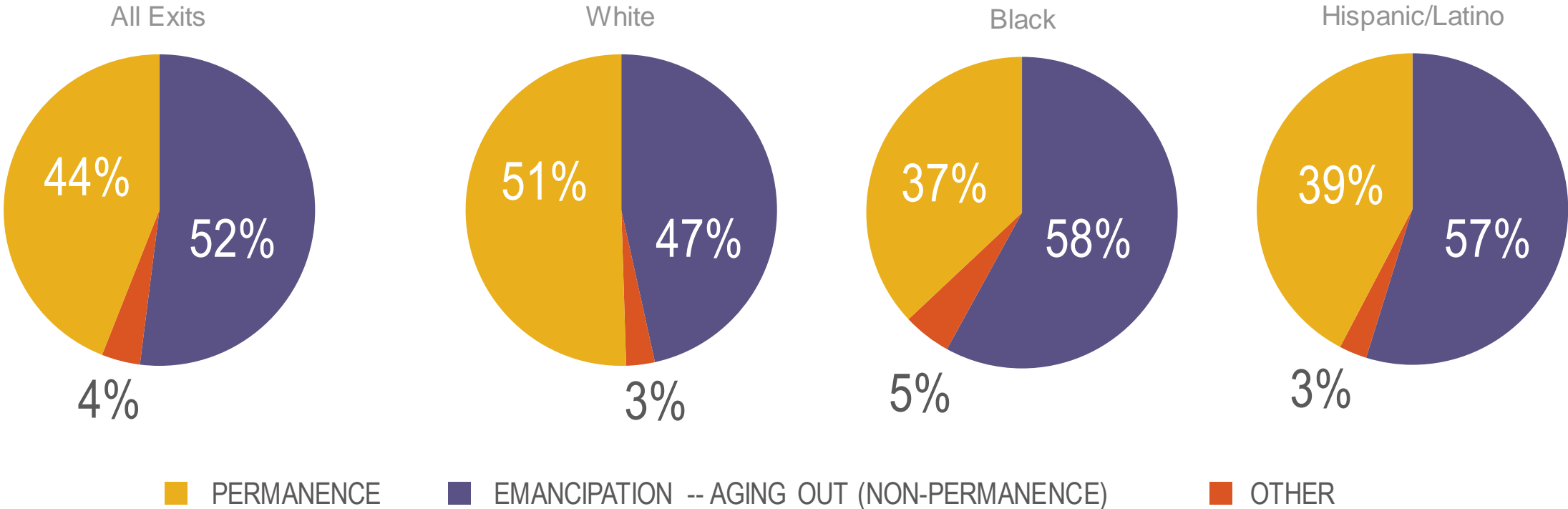
Data Point 1

Child welfare systems are unable to find permanent families for many youth in care.

Exit reasons by race/ethnicity, 2021 (ages 16+)

Systems are finding permanent families for fewer young people.

UNITED STATES



SOURCE: Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), 2021

Policy opportunities for increasing permanency

- Invest in agencies locating kinship caregivers for youth in foster care.
- Provide robust services for kinship caregivers, so they are able to support youth in their care.
- Connect families to the resources they need to prevent entry into care and to provide swift reunification when removal is needed.

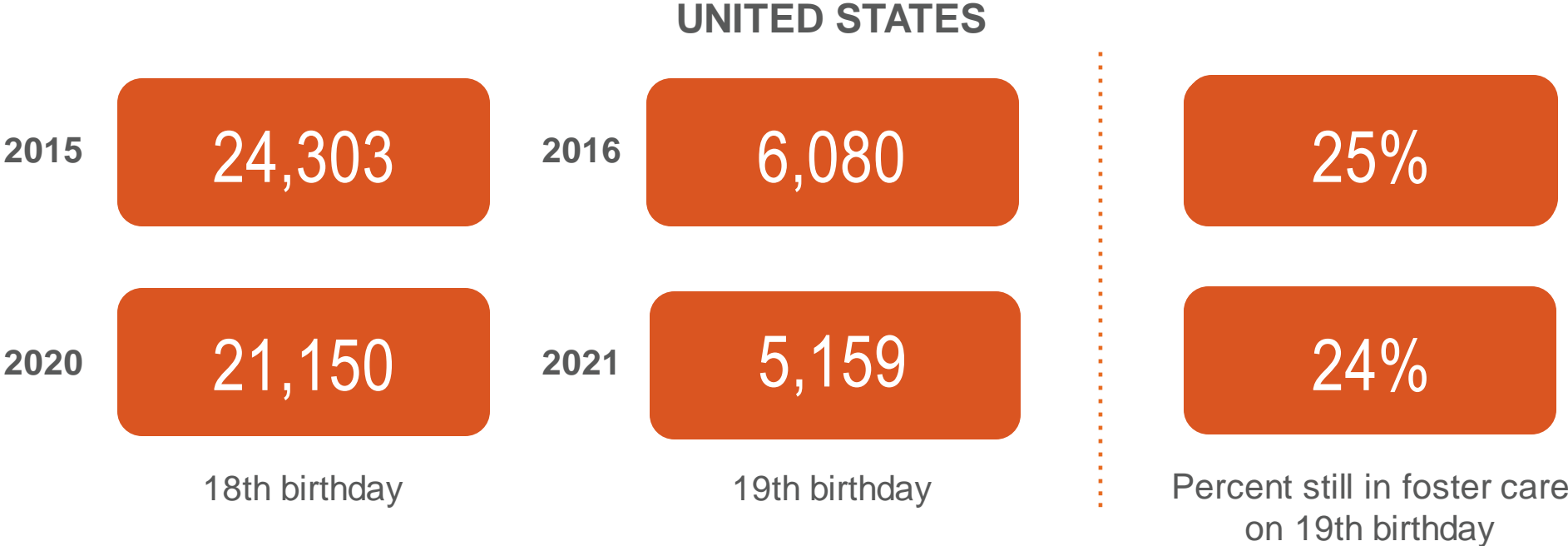


Data Point 2

Although extended foster care improves youth outcomes, participation is low.

Young people in foster care on their 18th and 19th birthdays

Extended foster care options have increased, but participation is low.



NOTE: The table above represents the number of young people in foster care on their 18th birthday and the number and percent still in foster care on their 19th birthday.

SOURCE: Child Trends' analysis of AFCARS Data for Fostering Youth Transitions 2023, The Annie E. Casey Foundation

Policy opportunities for promoting extended care

- Take time to talk to young people in your state to learn what barriers exist in accessing extended foster care.
- Extend foster care beyond age 18 in your state, leveraging federal support if possible.
- Expand eligibility criteria so more young people can participate in extended foster care.



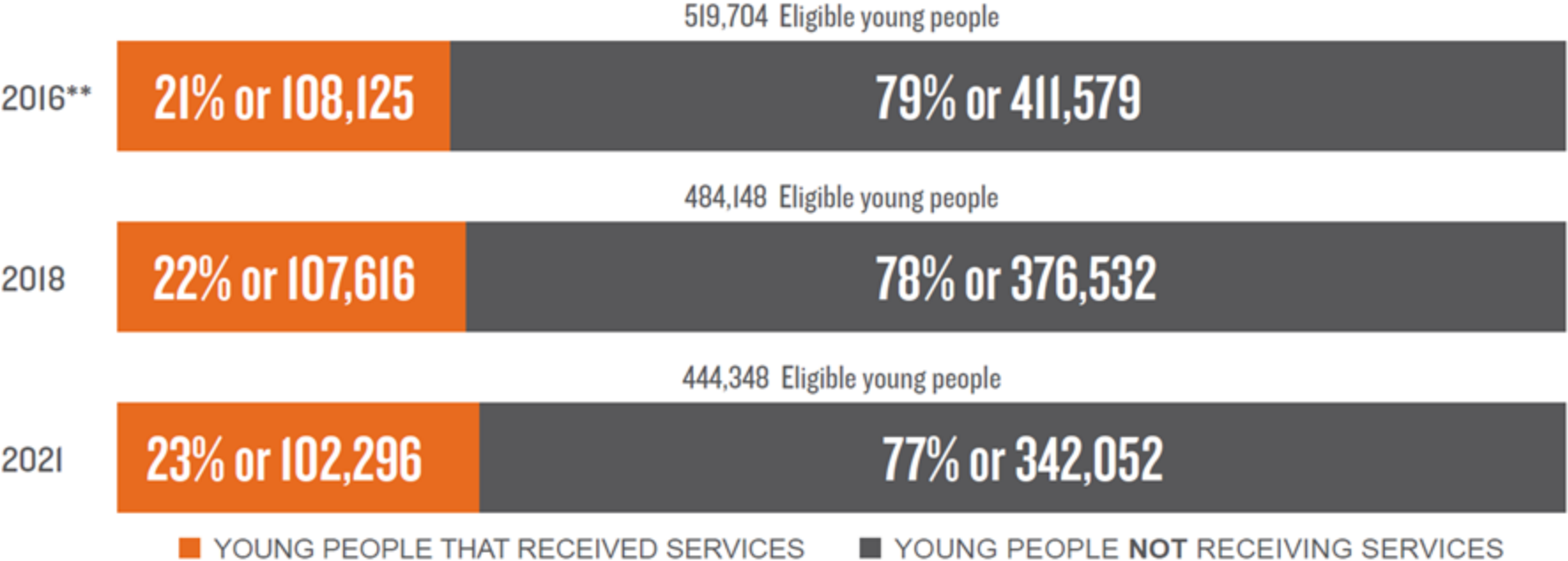
Data Point 3

Transition services are not delivered to many eligible young people.

Chafee transition services and eligibility

Services to help youth transition from foster care are not being delivered.

TRANSITION SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN FOSTER CARE



**The chart shows the percentage of young people who were eligible, those who received a service (orange), and those who were eligible and did not receive a service (gray).

Chafee transition services received



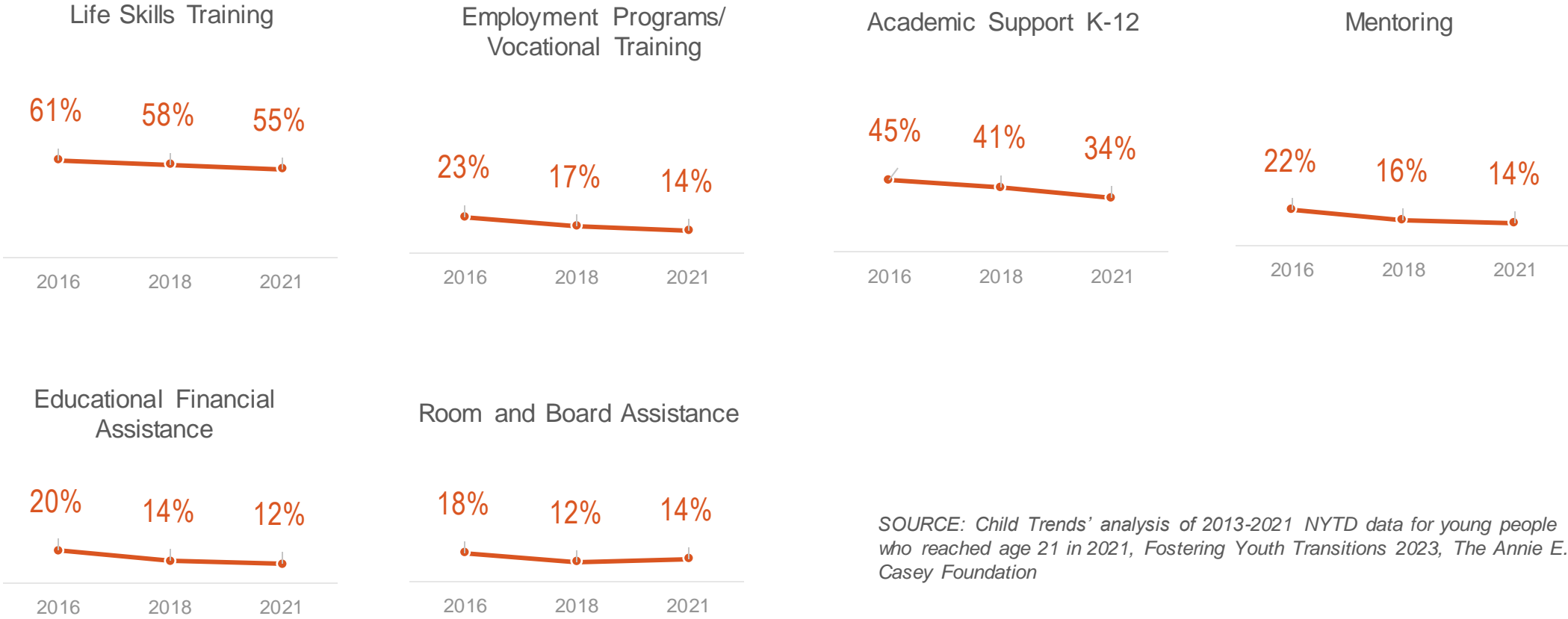
210,539 young people or 47% of the United States' foster care population received Chafee transition services at any time between the ages of 14 and 21 while in foster care 2013 to 2021.

NOTE: The number above represents those young people who received a service at any time between the ages of 14-21, or when they were eligible to receive independent living services.

SOURCE: Child Trends' analysis of AFCARS and NYTD data for Fostering Youth Transitions, 2023, The Annie E. Casey Foundation

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD), Services File

Fewer services are being provided.



SOURCE: Child Trends' analysis of 2013-2021 NYTD data for young people who reached age 21 in 2021, *Fostering Youth Transitions 2023*, The Annie E. Casey Foundation

Fostering Youth Transitions 2023

Sample State Profile

State profiles

2023 PENNSYLVANIA PROFILE TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a pivotal developmental stage as young people learn the skills needed to be healthy and productive adults. This process can be complicated for youth with foster care experience. Here's what we know about the experiences of these youth in Pennsylvania.

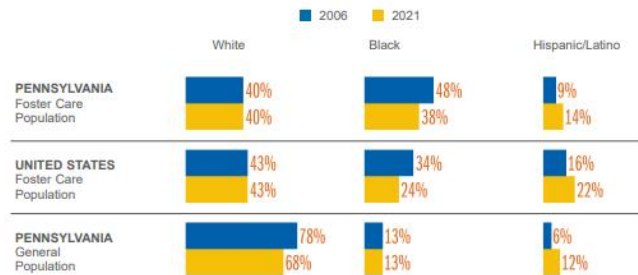


147,143 or 24%
of United States' foster care population was ages 14+ in 2021
Down from **34%** in 2006



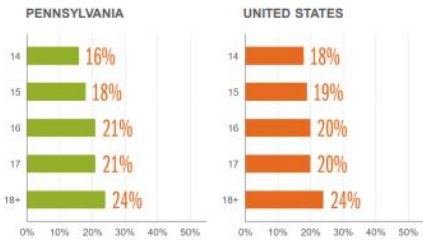
6,043 or 28%
of Pennsylvania's foster care population was ages 14+ in 2021
Down from **46%** in 2006

Youth in Foster Care by Race/Ethnicity

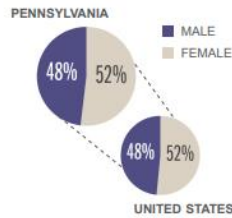


Above charts are based on the three largest racial and ethnic groups in this state in foster care. For additional data, please visit the KIDS COUNT Data Center, <https://datacenter.kidscount.org>. Additional detail on all data in the state profiles can be found in *Fostering Youth Transitions: Source Notes*.

Youth in Foster Care by Age, 2021



Youth in Foster Care by Sex*

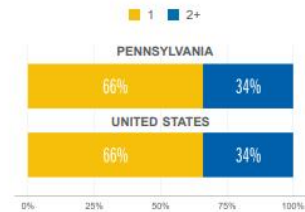


*Sex is based on gender at birth.

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Removing a child from home to a foster care placement is reported as an episode. Multiple episodes — and placement changes during an episode — can lead to poor outcomes for youth.

Number of Episodes in Foster Care, 2021



Number of Placements During Most Recent Foster Care Episode, 2021



PENNSYLVANIA 2+ Foster Care Episodes



PENNSYLVANIA 4+ Foster Care Placements



UNITED STATES 2+ Foster Care Episodes



UNITED STATES 4+ Foster Care Placements



Percentage of young people in each racial/ethnic group who have experienced multiple foster care episodes and placements.

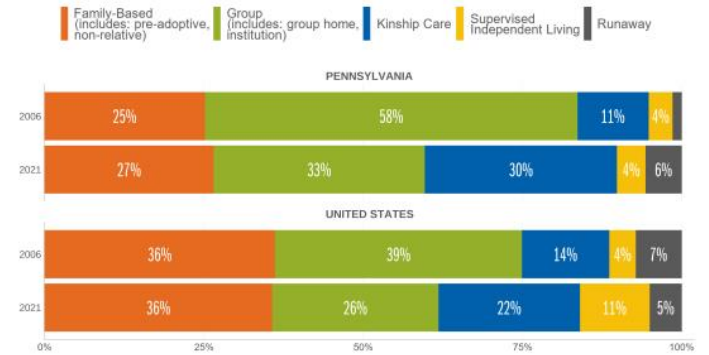
Entry Reasons*



*A young person may have more than one entry reason. The entry reason "Abuse" combines data on physical and sexual abuse.

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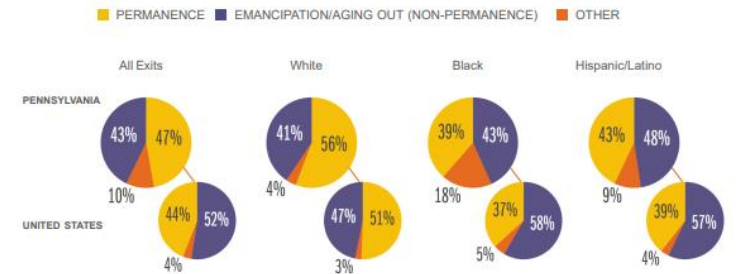
Placement Type



Due to spacing, labels are not shown for data smaller than 3%. Please refer to *Fostering Youth Transitions: Data Tables* for detail.

Exit Reasons

Many young people who leave foster care without permanent, legal connections to family or caregivers are exposed to risks including homelessness and economic instability.



The above charts represent young people ages 16+ who exited foster care in 2021. Due to rounding, some charts may not equal 100 percent. Permanence includes adoption, reunification with birth families, living with a relative and guardianship. When fewer than 10 young people are reported in data, this brief uses N.A. Please see *Source Notes* for additional detail.

State profiles

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Extended Foster Care

Nearly all states allow young people to stay in foster care between the ages of 18 and 21. Young people who spend time in extended foster care experience better outcomes than those who age out and live on their own. The benefits of extended foster care can include stability for young people while they finish school or find employment.

Young People in Foster Care on Their 18th and 19th Birthdays



This table represents the number of young people in foster care on their 18th birthday and the number and percent still in foster care on their 19th birthday. When fewer than 10 young people are reported in data, this brief uses N.A. When no young people are reported in the data, this brief uses zero.

Young People in Foster Care on Their 19th Birthday, by Race



When fewer than 10 young people are reported in data, this brief uses N.A. Please see Source Notes for additional detail.

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Transition Services

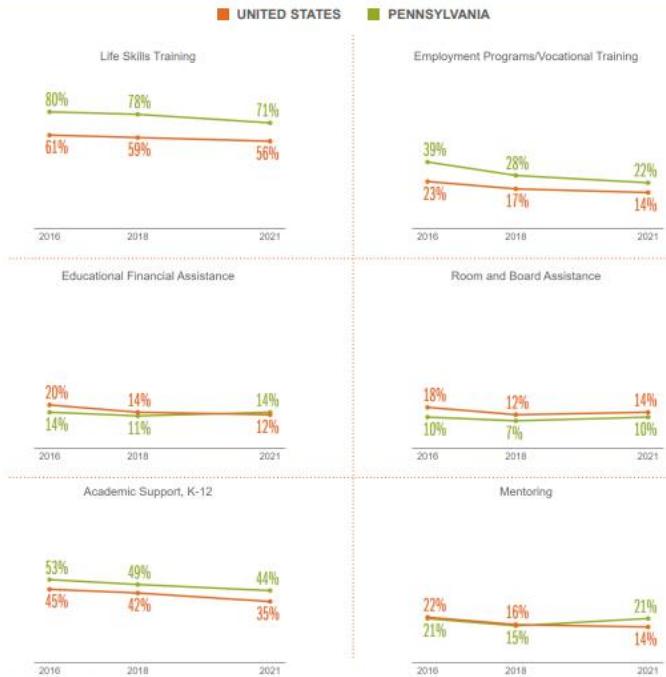
Transition services, such as vocational training and housing assistance, are designed to help young people with foster care experience transition to adulthood. Participation in federally funded transition services provides a window into how well young people are being equipped for employment, education and housing.



210,539 or 47%
of the United States' foster care population received a service at any point between ages 14-21*



10,442 or 51%
of Pennsylvania's foster care population received a service at any point between ages 14-21*



*This is calculated using data from FY 2013-2021.

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Young Adult Outcomes by Age 21*

Research shows that young people who have experienced foster care have worse outcomes than their peers in the general population across a variety of service categories — from education and employment to housing and early parenthood. Examining data on these outcomes in Pennsylvania is important in efforts to improve the practices, programs and policies that help ensure these young people have the relationships, resources and opportunities they need for well-being and success.



*Outcomes data are from surveys of three groups of young people who experienced foster care. The groups reached age 21 in 2015, 2018 and 2021. When fewer than 10 youth are reported in a category, N.A. is used. See Fostering Youth Transitions: Source Notes for additional detail. Fostering Youth Transitions data analysis was provided by Child Trends.

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for children, families and communities*

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Legislative Case Study: Arkansas [HB 1462](#) (2023)



Representative Scott,
Child Welfare Fellow, Youth
Homelessness Fellow Alum



Representative Vaught,
Youth Homelessness Fellow
Alum



Locating and Supporting Kinship Care

[IA H 2507](#) (2022): Requires courts to secure the least restrictive care for a child with a preference for placement with the child's family or a fictive kin.

[FL S 7034](#) (2022): Revises payment rates for relative and nonrelative caregivers under the Relative Caregiver Program.

[VA S 1720](#) (2019): Requires notice to relatives regarding their kinship foster parent eligibility.



Legislative Examples: Permanency

Resources for Prevention and Reunification

[WA S 5256](#) (2023): Expands the child welfare housing assistance program and makes it permanent.

[MT S 163](#) (2023): Requires the Department of Public Health and Human Services to establish a registration portal for volunteers interested in supporting child abuse and neglect prevention, family support and reunification.



Legislative Examples: Permanency

Addressing Eligibility and Barriers

[NH H 550](#) (2019): Directs the Department of Health and Human Services to extend eligibility for Chafee funds from age 21 to the age of 23.

[TX H 700](#) (2021): Requires the department to address barriers to participation in the Preparation for Adult Living Program for disabled youth.



Legislative Examples:
Promoting Extended Foster Care

Legislative Examples: 2022-2023

Additional Supports for Transition Age Youth

Education and Life Skills

[FL H 1577](#) (2022): Requires the state's university and college systems and the Department of Education to create a support structure for former foster youth.

[AZ S 1728](#) (2023): Requires the state's Extended Foster Care Comprehensive Service Model to include life skills training.

Housing and Financial Supports

[CO S 82](#) (2023): Creates Colorado's Fostering Success Voucher Program to assist foster youth ages 18-26.

[TX S 1379](#) (2023): Requires the department to enter into an agreement with financial institutions to establish savings and checking accounts for foster youth aged 14-21.

Relational Supports

[IL S 3130](#) (2022): Requires the department to describe its search and reunion services and explain how to access the services to every youth in care within 30 days after a youth's 18th birthday or closure of the case.

NCSL Resources

[Policy Levers for Preventing Child Maltreatment](#)

[Child Welfare Database](#)

[Housing and Homelessness Database](#)

[Youth and Young Adult Homelessness: Options to Improve Access to Services](#)

[Youth Homelessness Overview](#)

[Economic Mobility Database](#)

[Economic Security and Mobility: Reviving the American Dream](#)



Additional Resources

Annie E Casey Foundation

- [Fostering Youth Transitions 2023](#)
 - [State Data Profiles](#)
- [Preventing and Ending Youth Homelessness in America](#)
- [Journey to Success](#)
 - Also supported by Raikes Foundation, Conrad N Hilton Foundation and Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

Databases

- [National Youth in Transition Database](#)
- [Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System](#)
- [National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System](#)



NCSL Base Camp 2023



Nov. 8-9, 2023