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

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Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Policy
The Annie E. Casey Foundation
POLICY OPPORTUNITIES
FOR MEETING THE COMPLEX NEEDS OF YOUTH EXITING FOSTER CARE

NCSL — Youth Homelessness and Child Welfare Fellows
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)
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

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

UNITED STATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AGE 21 IN 2015</th>
<th>AGE 21 IN 2018</th>
<th>AGE 21 IN 2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health Insurance</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma/GED+</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable Housing</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarceration</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Parents</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment (Part-time and full-time)</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary Enrollment</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

SOURCE: Adapted from Journey to Success Campaign: Continuing Legacy of Youth-driven Advocacy
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.

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>18th Birthday</th>
<th>19th Birthday</th>
<th>Percent Still in Foster Care on 19th Birthday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>24,303</td>
<td>6,080</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>21,150</td>
<td>5,159</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UNITED STATES

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.

**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).**

**SOURCE:** Child Trends’ analysis of AFCARS and NYTD data for Fostering Youth Transitions 2023, The Annie E. Casey Foundation.
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
Fewer services are being provided.

Fostering Youth Transitions 2023

Sample State Profile
Developing solutions to build a brighter future for children, families and communities

www.aecf.org
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.
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.

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**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