

Policy Opportunities and Challenges to Address Vulnerable Populations

2023 NCSL Youth Homelessness Fellows

June 26, 2023, 3:15 p.m. — 5:00 p.m.

Today's Speakers



Anne Farrell

Director of Research,
Chapin Hall



Sarah Berger-Gonzalez

Senior Policy Analyst,
Chapin Hall



Judge Shelia Calloway

Juvenile Court,
Metropolitan
Nashville & Davidson
County



Heather Wilson

Senior Policy
Specialist, NCSL



Child Welfare & Homelessness among Transition-Age Youth

Anne Farrell and Sarah Berger Gonzalez
Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago

National Conference of State Legislatures
Youth Homelessness Fellows
Nashville, TN

June 2023

Pathways from child welfare to homelessness

- Transition-age youth (TAY): developmental period; statutes/programs define TAY as 16-24
- Growing recognition of challenges and disparate outcomes experienced by youth and young adults (YYAs) who spent time in foster care.
- [Federal authority](#) for child welfare sits in HHS -> ACF -> Children's Bureau.
- Federal and state legislation and regulatory shifts have enabled greater flexibility and more support to youth who spent time in foster care.
- Extended foster care: 33 states enable youth to remain in or re-enter foster care at or after 18th birthday.

Background

There is growing recognition of challenges and disparate outcomes experienced by youth and young adults (YYAs) who spent time in foster care.

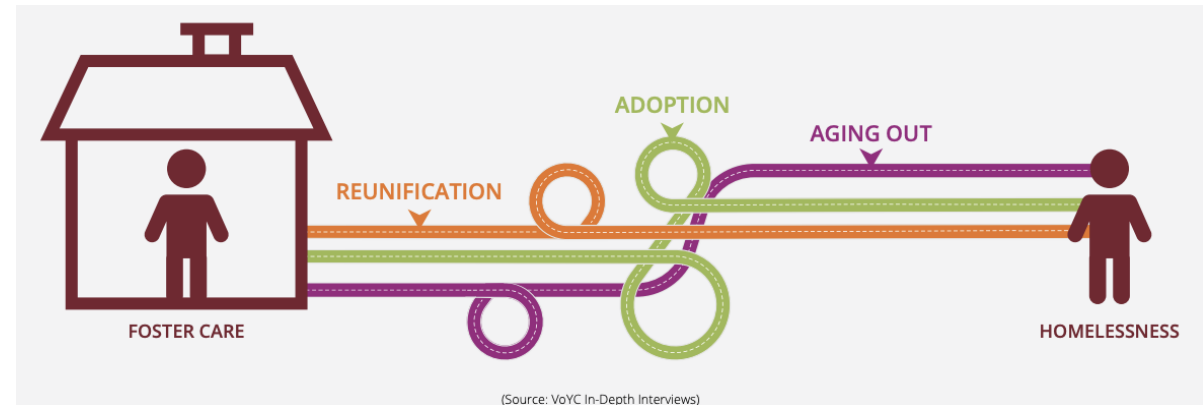
- Each year, over 20,000 US children emancipate from/age out of foster care.
- They lag behind peers in high school graduation, GED attainment, college entry.
- Less than 5% of former foster youth finish college.
- Legislative/Policy Landmarks
 - [*The Foster Care Independence Act \(1999\)*](#): amended Title IV-E of the Social Security Act: John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood.
 - Education and training vouchers; pandemic era support increases (extensions possible)
 - [*Fostering Connections Act \(2008\)*](#): Title IV-E eligibility from 18-21 for foster youth.
 - [*The Families First Prevention Services Act \(2018\)*](#): Incentives for alternatives to foster care.
 - [*Family Unification Program*](#) housing vouchers: PHAs and CW systems collaborate; 36-month vouchers.
 - [*Foster Youth to Independence*](#) vouchers: 18-25, leaving foster care in 90 days
 - Direct Cash Transfers: (1) Federal aid to states (2) numerous demonstrations.
- State programs include higher ed tuition and fee waivers, dorm/housing regulations, and more.

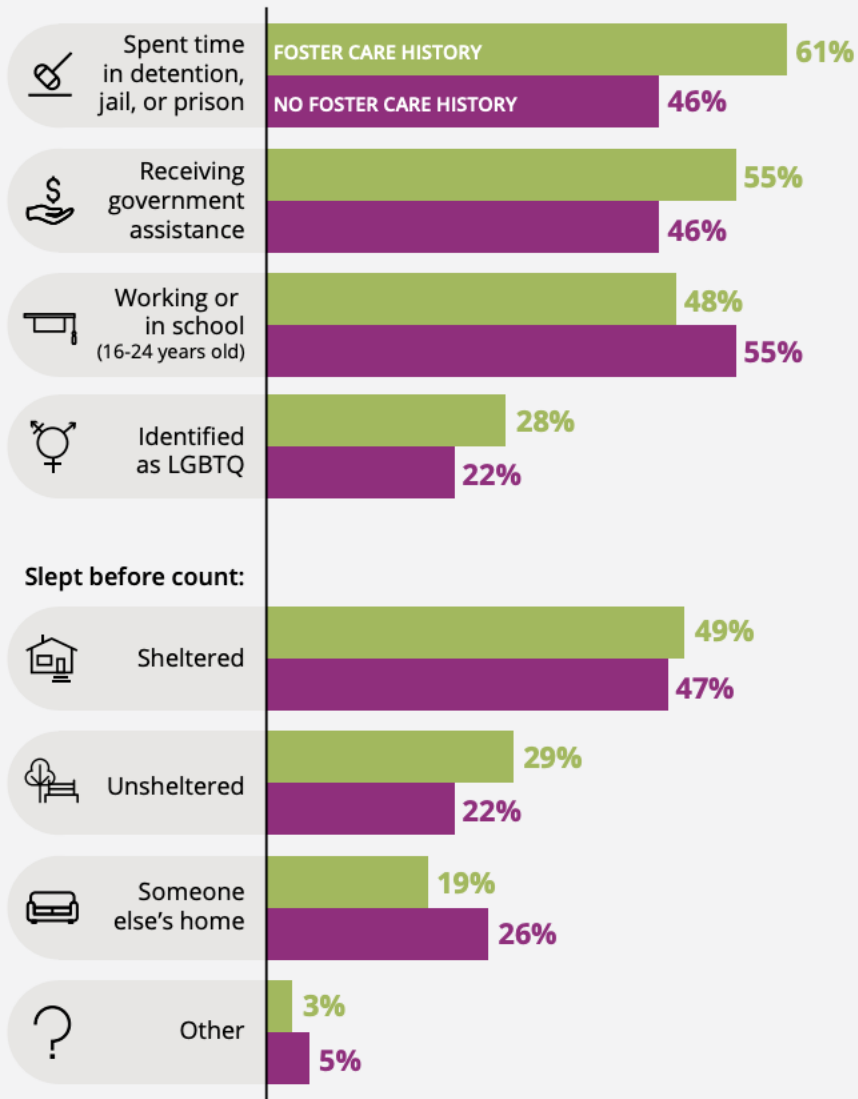
What do we know?

- Young people with experiences in foster care are more likely to experience homelessness into their mid-20s.
- Increased risk among young people who:
 - Identifying as LGBTQ+
 - Have low household income;
 - Lack a sense of connectedness and social/family support;
- Highest likelihood:
 - Ran away from foster care
 - Group/congregate care placement
 - Unstable placement(s)
 - Physical abuse

Pathways from child welfare to homelessness

- 29% of young people we interviewed had been in foster care
- Young people see entry into foster care as the start of their homelessness experience.
- Foster care placement was part of a larger pattern of instability including family homelessness.
- Some young people had positive “permanency outcomes” from a child welfare systems perspective (adopted, reunited) and still experienced instability.
- Young people experiencing homelessness who spent time in foster care differ from their counterparts who did not.





(Source: VoYC Brief Youth Surveys)

- Among youth experiencing homelessness, young people who experienced foster care were:
 - More likely to receive public assistance, identify as LGBTQ+
 - Less likely to be working or in school
- Pathways were varied.
- We don't know how effective our current solutions are in supporting well-being (except extended foster care).

Extended Foster Care

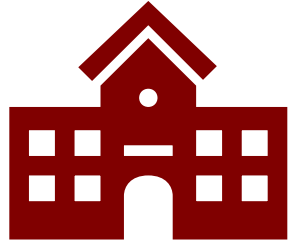
Supports vary state to state and include:

- Higher education: applying for college, obtaining financial aid, textbook allowances, educational tests and support services.
- Employment: finding jobs, writing resumes, submitting applications and understanding employee benefits.
- Health care: Medicaid and selecting a health-care power-of-attorney.
- Home management: meal planning, housekeeping, and maintenance.
- Financial counseling: budgeting, credit
- Life skills, including driver's license.
- Community services and support.
- Social relationships and networks.

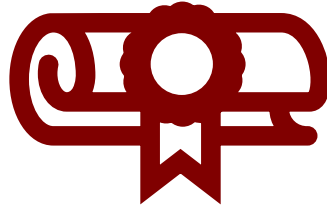
aging out
OF FOSTER CARE?
Now What



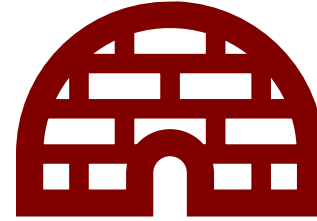
Benefits of Extended Foster Care (EFC)



Young people who stay in foster care are 3 times more likely to be enrolled in school;
1.4 times more likely to be receiving educational aid; and
3 times less likely to be disconnected from school and work.



For each year in EFC, a young adult's likelihood of earning a high school credential grows by 8% and likelihood of enrolling in college jumps by 5-12%.



21-year-olds in EFC are 2.7 times less likely to have experienced homelessness when compared to their earlier-exiting peers.



Every year in EFC increased the chances that youth felt they had people to turn to for advice or emotional and tangible support and reduced the likelihood of arrest by about 28%.



- Prevent placement
- Support families reunifying/adopting
- Extend foster care
- Evidence-based intervention: [LifeSet](#)
- Authentic, respectful relationships with young people
- Engage young people in transition planning – early
- Embed lived experts in program design, implementation, evaluation
- Coordinate across systems
- Ensure a housing plan for every young person

What can we do?

Some resources

[Midwest Study](#) (Courtney & Dworsky, 2010s)

- Risk factors before age 19: ran away from foster care; group placement; physical abuse; delinquent behaviors; lack of closeness to family/parents
- A third to half of participants experienced homelessness by age 26

[Social Network Analysis](#) (Yoshioka-Maxwell & Rice)

- Young people with family ties less likely to experience homelessness: Connectedness matters.

[Voices of Youth Count](#)

- Incidence and prevalence; pathways

[CalYouth](#) (Courtney et al.)

- At age 23, most look favorably upon their experiences in care, yet:
- Faring poorly compared to age peers in well-being (education, employment, income, physical and mental health, criminal justice contacts). Gender, race, and ethnicity condition their experiences.

[TAY-Hub](#) (Courtney et al.)

- Extended foster care associated with fewer incidents of delinquency
- Much info and research available on website.

[ACF Overview of Extended Foster Care](#) and [State Child Welfare Statutes Search](#)

The Intersection Between Youth Homelessness & Juvenile Justice



Sheila D. J. Calloway, Judge
Nashville Davidson County Juvenile Court

Case Study: Poor Practices Lead to Poor Outcomes

Case #1

- ▶ → Youth kicked out of home

Case #2

- ▶ → Youth living in a car with parent looking for relief

Risk Factors for Youth Homelessness

- ▶ **Child Welfare Involvement**
- ▶ **Lack of Parental Support**
- ▶ **LGBTQ+**
- ▶ **Limited School Involvement**



Status Offenses

Examples:

- ▶ **Running Away**
- ▶ **Curfew Violations**
- ▶ **Truancy**
- ▶ **Incorrigibility**
- ▶ **Possession of Tobacco (in applicable states)**

PLEASE NOTE: Possession and/or consumption of alcohol is not a status offense in many states and territories. This is because the legal age is often 21 (not 18). Therefore, if an adult caught with alcohol can be cited for being under the legal age, so can a minor. This same rule can apply in states where possession and/or consumption of marijuana is legal for adults over 21.

Who Are They Really?

We have these youth before us... what do we do with:

- ▶ **The angry parent who keeps calling the police?**
- ▶ **The child who keeps running away?**
- ▶ **The teen who won't go to school?**
- ▶ **The youth alcoholic?**
- ▶ **The rule-breaker?**

The Truth About ACEs

The three types of ACEs include

ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

NEGLECT



Physical



Emotional

HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION



Mental Illness



Mother treated violently



Divorce



Incarcerated Relative



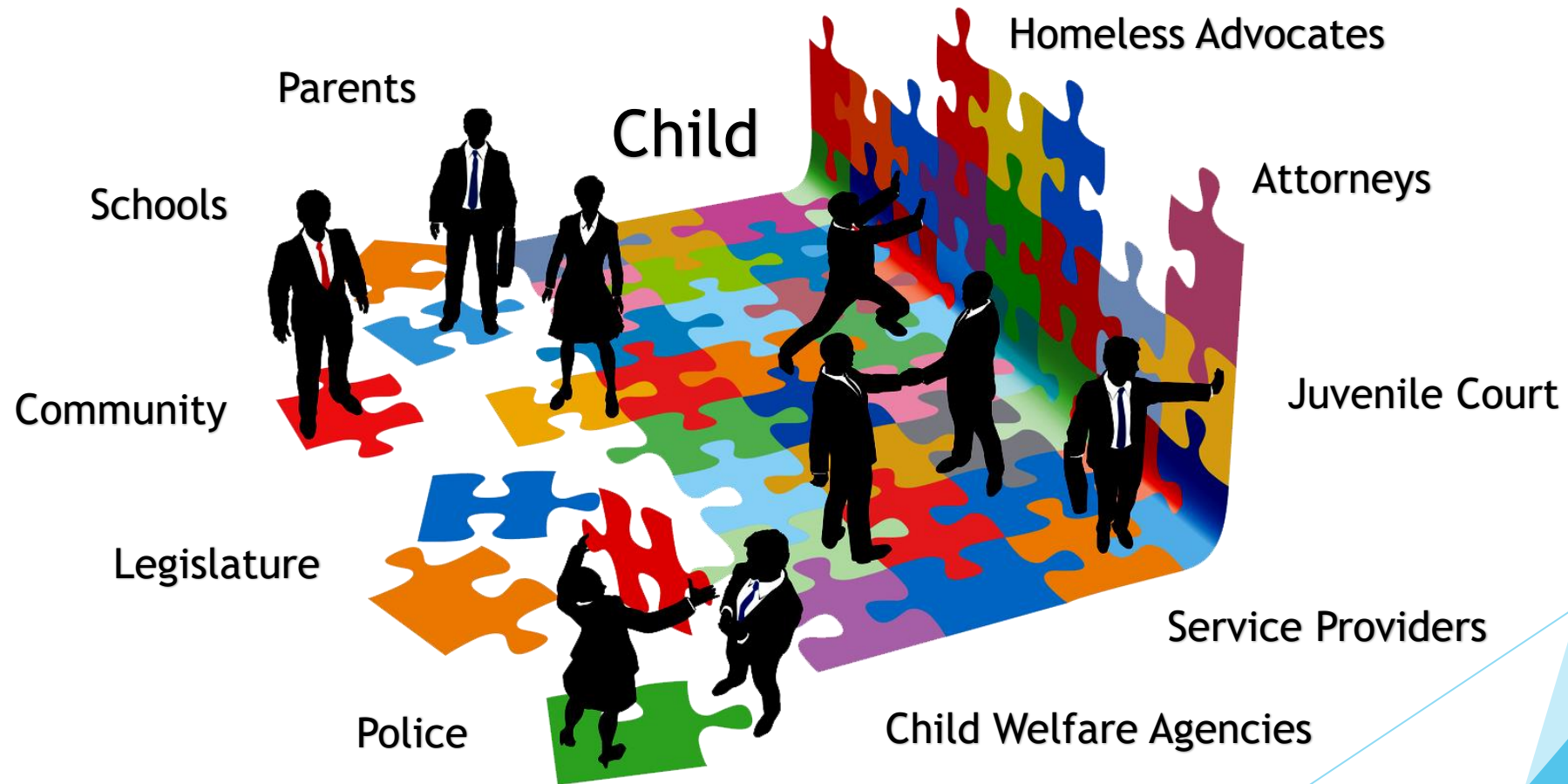
Substance Abuse

Long-Term Effects of Justice Involvement

- ▶ Education Outcomes
- ▶ Employment Issues
- ▶ Health Issues
- ▶ Criminal Justice Involvement



It Takes A Village & WE are the Village



Human Trafficking: Intersections with Youth and Young Adult Homelessness

Heather Wilson, MSW

Senior Policy Specialist, NCSL

What is Human Trafficking

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 and its subsequent reauthorizations recognize and define two primary forms of human trafficking.

Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age.

(22 U.S.C. § 7102(11)(A)).

Labor Trafficking

Forced labor is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for labor or services--through force, fraud or coercion--for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery.

(22 U.S.C. § 7102(11)(B))





Examples of Force, Fraud and Coercion

NONE of these elements need be present if a commercial sex act involves a minor.

Force

- Physical abuse or assault
- Sexual abuse or assault
- Confinement or incapacitation
- Deprivation or withholding

OR

Fraud

- False promises of work/living conditions
- Withholding promised wages
- Contract fraud

OR

Coercion

- Threats of harm to self or others
- Debt bondage
- Psychological manipulation
- Document confiscation.



State Human Trafficking Policy Areas

States have enacted varying laws regarding human trafficking.

Prevent Trafficking

State actions to raise public awareness of trafficking, and mitigate its influence on commerce, include:

- disseminating information on trafficking crimes
- services and prevention efforts
- setting standards in certain industries for licensing, advertising, training and disclosure

Support Victims

Some states require an agency or commission to develop a plan for providing services to trafficking survivors.

Others include programs to provide services to survivors, child welfare population specific statutes, or other, more specific services such as immigration.

Prosecute Traffickers

The majority state of laws include the elements force, fraud and coercion, but their definition can vary greatly from state to state.

State trafficking laws address many factors and circumstances that can enhance the criminal penalties for trafficking crimes, including additional penalties for trafficking a vulnerable population or the consideration of aggravated circumstances.





Examples of Trafficking Pathways

Family, Friends, Acquaintances

- Traffickers may exploit victims for income, as a part of a continuing cycle of violence (particularly interpersonal family violence, including abuse and neglect).

Intimate Partners

- Power and control can be used over victims to ensure their cooperation. Intimacy can be used as a tool to maintain that power and control.

Employers

- The unequal power dynamics may lead to trafficking through withholding wages, isolating workers or providing poor working conditions.

Organized Crime

- To maintain control over a victim, traffickers may force the victim into participating in legal activities.

Gangs

- Many gangs recruit using force, fraud or coercion. Minors who seek social and emotional acceptance are more vulnerable to this type of trafficking situation.

Landlords

- The unequal power dynamics in this relationship may lead to trafficking through threat of eviction, increase in rent or other.



Risk Factors for Trafficking

Primary Risk Factors

- Running away or experiencing youth homelessness
- Child welfare involvement
- Child sexual abuse

Other Risk Factors

- Emotional or physical abuse
- Parental substance use
- Difficulties at school
- Exposure to domestic violence
- History of exploitation in the family or community
- Neglect (lack of supervision, care, and basic necessities).

[How can the child welfare system protect young people from commercial sexual exploitation?](#)
(2022), Casey Family Programs



Trafficking Intersects with Youth Homelessness

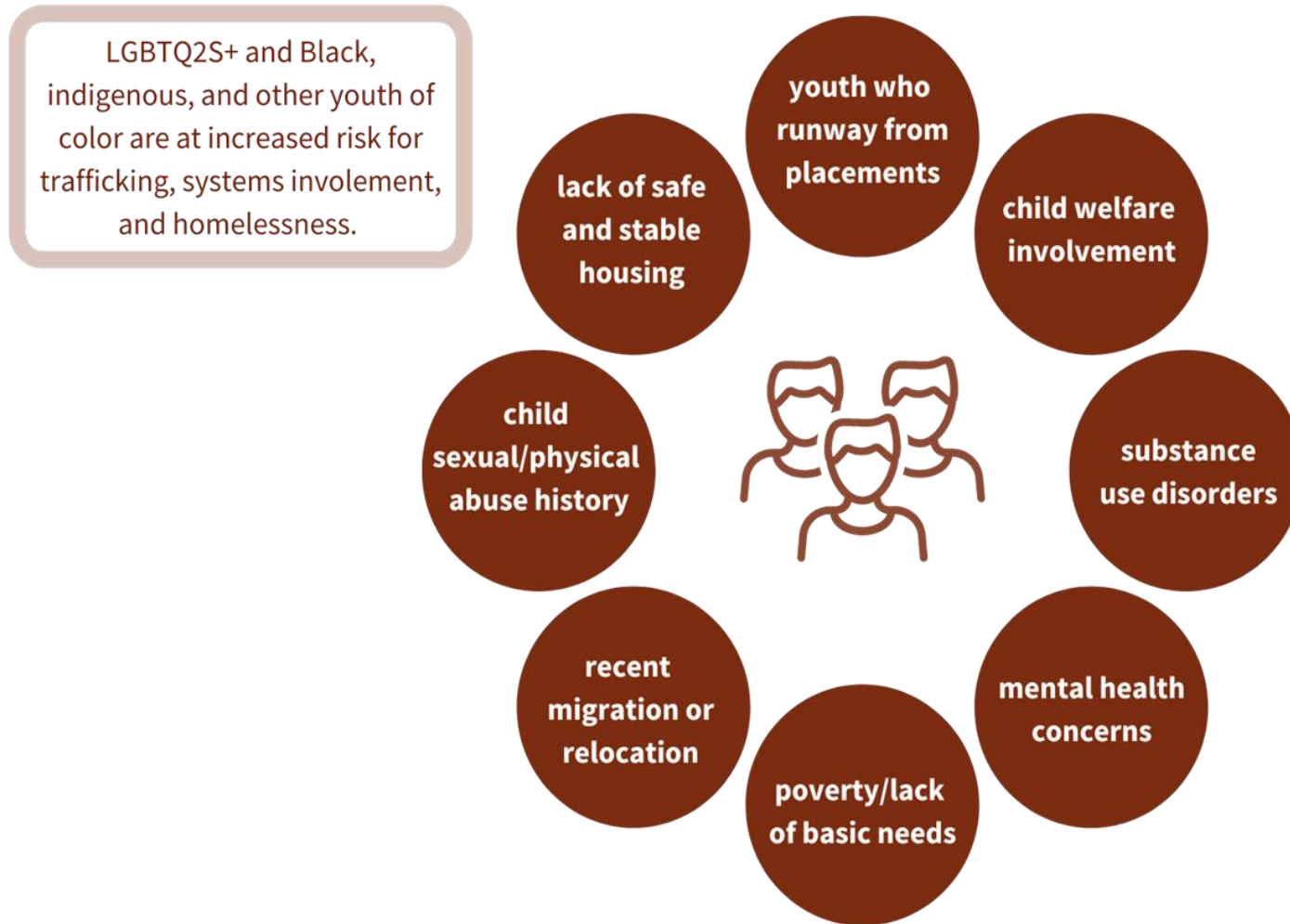
- An **estimated 1 in 5** youth experiencing homelessness have also been trafficked (the actual number is believed to be higher)
- Research indicates that **between 20% and 40%** of youth experiencing homelessness have also been trafficked.

SOURCES: Loyola University New Orleans's Modern Slavery Research Project/Covenant House International, Labor and Sex Trafficking Among Homeless Youth: A Ten-City Study (2016).; Middleton, J. S., Ghent, R., Gattis, M., Roe-Sepowitz, D., Goggin, R., & Frey, L. M. (2016). Youth Experiences Survey (YES): Exploring the scope and complexity of sex trafficking in a sample of youth experiencing homelessness in Kentuckiana. Report submitted by the Human Trafficking Research Initiative, University of Louisville, KY.

Prevalence of Trafficking Among Youth Experiencing Homelessness



Shared Risk Factors for Trafficking & Homelessness



Adapted from National Network for Youth:, 2022 Presentation to NCSL Youth Homelessness Fellows



Shared Protective Factors for Trafficking & Homelessness

Increasing youths' protective factors decreases their risk for homelessness + human trafficking + many other negative outcomes



Adapted from National Network for Youth, 2022 Presentation to NCSL Youth Homelessness Fellows



Shared Policy Levers for Prevention and Reduction of Human Trafficking and Youth Homelessness



Many states already have these policies, but they often aren't discussed or implemented as strategies to prevent human trafficking and Youth Homelessness



Emotional Support and Access to Mental Health Services

Economic Stability

Housing Supports

Education and Job Training

Social Connections





Introduced Federal Legislation

- **The Homeless Children and Youth Act (Introduced in the Senate 2021)**
 - Would modify definitions relating to homeless individuals and homeless children or youth as used by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to verify eligibility for HUD homeless assistance programs, including the Continuum of Care program. Would align terms with the definitions of homeless used to verify eligibility for other federal assistance programs. Would increase access to federal homeless programs by homeless children, youth and families.
- **The Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act (Introduced 2022)**
 - Would modify programs covered by The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act to more comprehensively address the needs of homeless youth, including providing resources and services to youth victims of human trafficking and youth at risk of being trafficked.





State Policy Examples

- Increasing Access to Vital Identification
 - **Texas's HB 123** (2019) waives fees to access birth certificates (for those born in Texas), IDs and driver's licenses for youth in care and youth experiencing homelessness. To prove a youth is experiencing homelessness, schools, shelter staff, drop-in centers, etc. can verify with a letter/form.
 - **New York** allows for a “statement of identity” for “disenfranchised, homeless youth,” which is certified by a state employee, to prove identity if they cannot meet other identification requirements. This law is considered a success for proving identity for individuals represented/served by a government or government approved facility, although it does not remove barriers for those not represented by a facility/system. Applicants still must provide an original birth certificate to obtain an ID.
- Supportive Housing
 - **Nine states** allocate funding or authorize local governments to expend funds for youth-specific housing and service options.
- Record expungement
 - **44 states** offer some form of criminal record relief specific for survivors of trafficking.



Resources from the Field



- [Domestic Human Trafficking and the Child Welfare Population](#) (2016 – 2022), Administration for Children and Families Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) and RTI International are partnering with the Children’s Bureau
- [Best Practices and Recommendations for States](#) (2020), National Advisory Committee on the Sex Trafficking of Children and Youth in the United States
- [Preliminary State Self-Assessment Survey Overview](#) (2022), National Advisory Committee on the Sex Trafficking of Children and Youth in the United States
- [Trauma Type: Sex Trafficking](#), National Child Traumatic Stress Network
- [State Statute Search](#), Child Welfare Information Gateway, a service of the Children’s Bureau
- [Responding to Youth Homelessness: A Key Strategy for Preventing Human Trafficking](#), National Network for Youth
- [Human Trafficking](#) (Issue Area), Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center



- Select a policy topic roundtable (child welfare, juvenile justice or human trafficking) for discussion with experts and colleagues.
- Join the discussion for approx. 30 minutes.
- Rotate to a new table or continue the conversation for another ~30 minutes.



Policy Roundtables

