



FROM FOSTER CARE TO INDEPENDENCE

An Assessment of Best Practices to Support Youth Who Age Out of Foster Care

INTRODUCTION

United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS) has tracked poverty data since the 1980's. Since 2000, Johnson County has seen a rise in the poverty rate for residents of all ages. This trend led UCS to launch the Poverty Initiative in 2015, which aims to reduce poverty and create opportunity using targeted strategies and key partnerships.

Nearly 15,000 of the county's 37,000 poor are "unrelated individuals," individuals living alone or with nonfamily members. 30 percent – roughly 4,500 – of those unrelated individuals are age 15 -24. This age group is often referred to as transitional-age youth.¹

Transitional age youth are in a critical developmental stage of life. It is often the time when young people prepare to launch into independence, higher education, or full-time employment, setting the foundation for their future. Those who enter this stage without the support of a financial safety net or family connections are more likely to fall behind and experience poverty as adults. The risks are especially high for youth who age out of the foster care system without a permanent home.

Foster youth who transition out of care at age 18 without reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship face a myriad of challenges and risks for poor outcomes. Most young people are not expected to have all the necessary tools for adulthood when they reach their 18th birthday, but the Kansas foster care system (like many throughout the country) creates high expectations of independence for youth in care. These youth still need support and resources to be successful, even more so than their peers who are not in foster care.

Supporting transitional-age foster youth will require a thoughtful and thorough assessment of the system that serves them, followed by strategic actions to ensure that they have the best possible start to life as adults in our community.

United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS), a nonprofit agency founded in 1967, provides data analysis, leads collaborative planning and mobilizes resources to enhance the availability and delivery of health and human services. UCS has a long history of monitoring trends, and examining the state policies and practices that influence the well-being of our community's most vulnerable residents. For example, when the former Social and Rehabilitation Services privatized child welfare in the 1990's, UCS convened a task force to examine how it was working and make recommendations for statewide improvements. Following federal welfare reform in 1996, UCS partnered with the United Way of Kansas to monitor the impact on families.

UCS believes investment in the human-service safety net benefits everyone, including businesses and residents of communities, and is critical to the success of our state and its counties. Maintaining an essential safety net is a shared responsibility of the state and federal governments in order to protect the state's most vulnerable residents - the poor, the disabled, the very young and very old - and to support those who need help to achieve self-sufficiency.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UCS undertook this project to assess opportunities for system improvements that better support foster youth who age out of care in Johnson County. UCS examined national and local outcomes for transitional-age foster youth, and assessed the current system's capacity, strengths, and weaknesses to adequately support young people as they move towards independent living. The report contains promising and emerging policies, programs, and practices that can successfully support youth who are transitioning out of the foster care system.

The system assessment contains stakeholder perspectives of six key domains of the foster care system which are most likely to impact youth. They include case management, transition planning, transitional living supports, staffing and funding, foster parent support, and privatization.

The assessment suggests priority strategies for the transitional-age foster youth population that lives in the Johnson County community. The priority strategies are **Transition Planning, Safe and Stable Housing, Innovation and Investment**, and **Relationships with Supportive Adults**. For each priority strategy, there is a body of research to support its role in helping youth transition out of custody successfully. The report points to promising models for implementation and recommends best practices for each strategy.

Finally, UCS recommends next steps for stakeholders who want to use the findings of this report to collaboratively implement system improvements and expand opportunities for the successful transition of youth out of foster care.

This report is not meant to be an exhaustive look at the entire foster care system. There are certainly many entities, both organizations and individuals, who might be able to impact the life of a transitional-age foster youth. Therefore, recommendations are targeted at the system as a whole, rather than a specific entity. Additionally, there are a number of other considerations related to state budget, public policy, and system design that are not included in this report due to the limited scope, but are nonetheless critical to a sustainable support system for transitional-age foster youth.

It should be noted that although the focus of the report is on the youth in Johnson County, those youth are part of regional, statewide, and national systems and therefore broader influence is implied by the system assessment, priority strategies, and recommendations in this report.

Finally, the recommendations are intended to achieve the best possible outcomes for youth.

OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH WHO AGE OUT OF FOSTER CARE

When a youth is in foster care, they have housing, financial assistance, and a range of services available to support their development. When foster care ends, those supports are abruptly disrupted, often before a youth is prepared to assume the roles and responsibilities associated with independent living. This leaves former foster youth more likely than their counterparts to experience homelessness, unemployment, unplanned pregnancy, legal system involvement, substance abuse, and a lack of basic health care services.ⁱⁱ

National data on youth who age out of foster care reveals the challenges that they face. States are required to report on certain outcomes to the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD), administered by the Children's Bureau in the federal Department of Health and Human Services.ⁱⁱⁱ For the first round of data collection, the survey was administered to a cohort of youth three times: at age 17 in 2011 to establish a baseline, at age 19 in 2013, and at age 21 in 2015. It captures data on six outcomes: Financial Self Sufficiency, Educational Attainment, Connections with Adults, Experiences with Homelessness, High-Risk Outcomes, and Access to Health Insurance. The most recent Kansas outcomes data is current as of December 2015.^{iv} Kansas data indicates that:

- Fewer than 20% of survey participants were employed during the baseline survey, but more than half had found either full-time or part-time employment by the time they reached age 21.
- 38% of youth surveyed received some form of public assistance at age 21, an increase from 29% two years earlier.
- By age 21, 67% of participants attained their high school diploma or GED, and 26% were currently attending school.
- At age 17, 40% of youth reported referral for substance abuse treatment at some point in their lifetime. Referrals decreased significantly over the next several years, reaching 9% at age 21.
- Between age 19 and age 21, the rate of youth participants who had children more than doubled from 15% to 39%.
- 17% of 19-year old youths reported an incident of homelessness in the past two years; that rate had doubled by the time the cohort reached age 21.
- Approximately 95% of youth maintained relationship connections to at least one adult throughout the survey period.
- An average of 71% of youth who were eligible to take the NYTD survey actually participated; the primary reason for non-participation was that surveyors were unable to locate the youth.

Based on available data, Kansas youth fare better than the national average for certain outcomes. By age 19, Kansas youth have higher rates of high school graduation and connection to adults compared to all youth nationally; fewer Kansas youth receive public assistance than the national

average. However, in some areas, our youth are falling behind compared to national outcomes; by age 19, fewer Kansas youth are attending school or receiving health care coverage, while a greater number of youth are incarcerated, have given birth, or have fathered a child compared to the national average.^v

UCS requested Johnson County-level NYTD outcomes data from The Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) and the Children's Bureau. It was not made available at the time of publication of this report.

THE KANSAS FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

The Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) is the state agency responsible for management and oversight of the child welfare system. Kansas was the first state to privatize foster care in 1997, a response to concerns about children “languishing in foster care for extended periods, being shuffled from one home to another, not getting the services they needed, and continuing to be abused or neglected.”^{vi} While several other states have privatized foster care on a smaller scale (for example, privatizing case management for high-needs children, or privatizing child placement services), Kansas and Florida remain the only states that have privatized the entire foster care system.

DCF contracts with private agencies that are responsible for providing foster care services including case planning, child placement, life skills, adoption, foster parent recruitment and training, and transition planning. KVC Behavioral Health Care Inc. is the private contractor providing services in the Kansas City region which includes Johnson, Wyandotte, Douglas, Leavenworth, and Atchison counties.

Every year, on average, 36 Johnson County youth age out of the Kansas foster care system, representing 54% of the 67 youth on average who age out of foster care in the Kansas City region annually.^{vii} See the Appendix for data on youth who age out of care in our community.

SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

From January through May of 2016, UCS interviewed more than 30 stakeholders, field professionals, foster parents, youth in transition, and youth mentors with knowledge of the Kansas foster care system. The following assessment is based primarily on those interviews. Perceptions vary widely depending on the knowledge and experience of individual stakeholders. This assessment is a summary of those varying opinions. To protect the privacy of individuals and organizations, opinions and quotes are not directly attributed.

Case management: Stakeholders expressed that the Kansas foster care system has capacity for effective case management while a youth is in custody. This is partially attributed to the fact that a single agency, KVC Behavioral Health Care, provides case management along the continuum of child welfare – from removal to placement to adoption. Other agencies supplement KVC’s services; for example; there are several child placement agencies, and agencies that focus specifically on youth with severe mental illness. The system as a whole is seen as best practices-centered and trauma-focused. However, several community-based agencies expressed frustration with the way “tough” cases are managed, including cases with older youth and youth with severe mental health or behavioral issues. One community-based case worker suggested distributing those cases across agencies with extra capacity and resources to manage them properly. A major complication in case management happens when the youth leaves custody: their case file, full of critical information, is not passed on to any other agency. The youth receive those files, which are often incomplete or lost before they can be shared with other agencies.

“KVC does a great job managing 90% of the foster population, but other agencies can and should take some of the tougher cases. No case manager should have more than 2 or 3 tough cases on their plate at a time.” –Community-based case worker

Transition Planning: In Kansas, youth officially age out of foster care at the age of 18, but the transition process often begins when a youth approaches age 16. According to the policy and procedure of DCF, the transition process works as follows: youth who have a case plan goal of Other Planned Permanency Living Arrangement (OPPLA), or independent living, must develop a transition plan. DCF created a transition plan template to assist case managers, foster parents, and other relatives in helping youth connect to resources for housing, employment, transportation, finances, and school (see Appendix 1). As youth work towards certain independent living objectives, such as updating medical records or attaining a driver’s license, the district court presiding over the case assesses whether reasonable efforts are being made to reach independent living goals. A youth’s transition plan can be revised as needed to ensure that the plan is realistic and achievable. An exit interview with the court judge is followed by a court hearing, where the youth is released from state custody. DCF, in compliance with federal law, requires that all youth have a transition plan in place by 90 days prior to the 18th birthday.^{viii} The overall assessment of transition planning within the Kansas foster care systems is that there are strong policies and procedures in place. Often, however, the policies and procedures do not consistently translate into strong practice. This can be attributed to heavy caseloads and high staff turnover, as well the challenges of adolescent participation in and commitment to the

process. The adults involved in the transition planning include the KVC case worker, an independent living case manager, court liaisons, and occasionally foster parents. Many stakeholders agreed that this combination of adults who represent “the system” can keep youth from deeply engaging in transition planning,

“The transition plans require careful follow up and support beyond just the youth and their case workers; foster parents and other stakeholders must step in to ensure the success of a transition.”
– District court judge

and that more autonomy or the addition to the team of a close adult might improve the success of transition planning. Stakeholders and youth also stated that the transition process starts too late and feels rushed.

Transitional Living Supports: A wide range of transitional living supports are offered through DCF and federal funding sources, complemented by direct services from community-based agencies. Services include a living subsidy for youth who are working or in school, emergency funds, vehicle repair funds, “startup” living funds, and the education and training voucher which can be applied to any post-secondary education program. Additional services include Medicaid enrollment through age 26, and a tuition waiver. All independent living services have program requirements, including the requirement that the youth maintains residence in Kansas. In Johnson County, one of the greatest system weaknesses is the lack of transitional housing for youth who leave foster care without being adopted. There are several metro-area youth transitional housing programs outside of Kansas, but if a youth wants to continue receiving DCF services and benefits, they must reside in state. Participation in transitional living services is completely voluntary, and the youth is responsible for contacting DCF to receive services.

“There’s got to be a way to make the transition from [KVC] case worker to [DCF] independent living worker easier. Make it really clear who you are supposed to talk to after you leave.” – former foster youth, age 20

Staffing and Funding: The Kansas foster care system is thought to be well-funded compared to other states, particularly the state contractors. However, financial resources do not always guarantee quality of service. One common observation is the high rate of turnover among case managers at KVC and DCF. One youth reported having three case workers during her last four years in foster care, making the transition process especially difficult. There are varying opinions about why case worker turnover is so high: some say the case workers are inexperienced and unprepared to deal with the cases, while others blame the low pay, heavy caseloads, and the burnout effect. One stakeholder suspects that contractors under-bid to win the contract, and therefore simply do not have the budget to support an adequate number of case workers. There

“My frustration was that I had three case workers over four years. I was never made aware when a worker left, and someone should have communicated with me.” – Former foster youth, age 21

is also a real cost associated with turnover and training new staff; by some estimates, that costs can be as much as \$6,000 per person. Most of the agencies that serve youth after they leave care are community-based agencies who compete with one another for public and private funds.

Foster Parent Support: A large network of foster parents is a major strength of the Kansas system, but they do not always feel supported. Good case management for foster parents is an important and often overlooked piece of the puzzle for helping youth age out successfully. Support for foster parents who have transitional-age youth in the home comes in many forms,

but primarily from community-based and foster parent advocacy organizations. Two foster parents stated that they did not have enough information or support to guide their foster children during the transition planning process. Another suggested that more transparency within the system would help community based organizations be more proactive in supporting foster parents, but releasing those names to advocacy groups comes at the discretion of the child placement agencies.

“KVC Behavioral Health is like a big box hardware store that has everything you need, but they are overwhelmed and understaffed. Community organizations are like that small local hardware store that might only have a few products but they will give you great service every time. And that’s what foster parents need when they have a kid who is aging out.” –Local foster parent

Privatization: Kansas’ private foster care system comes with both benefits and challenges. The “one-stop shop” nature of KVC leads to efficient administration and oversight. However, it can also create a silo effect where other agencies provide specialty services to youth but don’t have the benefit of understanding all needs, struggles, and goals. Some stakeholders are also concerned about how payment for contracted services in agencies of all types creates the potential for conflict of interest, where agencies make decisions based on how much money it will bring in rather than making decisions in the best interest of the child in care.

“Sometimes I feel like we exist just to pick up the extra load that KVC can’t manage.” –community-based case worker

PRIORITY STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT FOSTER YOUTH IN TRANSITION

Researchers and practitioners in the fields of child welfare, adolescent development, and human services have explored various strategies and best practices to support and prepare youth aging out of foster care. The recommendations from these sources are as varied and diverse as the youth and their experiences. The previous assessment suggests priority strategies for the transitional-age foster youth population that lives in the Johnson County community. These strategies intersect with others that may not be fully explored due to the limited scope of this report, but are no less relevant.

TRANSITION PLANNING

Ideally, youth will achieve permanency before they leave the foster care system. Permanency, whether adoption or reunification or guardianship, gives youth a stronger foundation for success. That does not always happen, unfortunately. That’s why it is critical that youth are prepared for the day that they leave foster care with a solid plan and positive outlook.

Youth leave foster care on a specific day on or after their 18th birthday, but the process of planning that transition is not a singular event. It can take months of planning and thoughtful consideration about where the youth will live, how they will meet their basic needs, and what kinds of support they need to live independently for the first time in their lives.

Transition planning is surrounded by a number of challenges, both individual and systemic. Many youth lack the resources and supports needed to successfully transition. They do not have a permanent place to live after they leave custody, nor do they have adequate credit to secure safe and affordable housing. Lack of credit also impacts the ability to buy a car for transportation to a job or to school. Community-based agencies are occasionally able to fill in the gaps and provide these critical supports, but that safety net is inadequate to meet the needs of all young people.

Additionally, foster parents, biological relatives, teachers, and other mentors might not have the capacity to navigate all of these resources, leaving case workers with heavy loads and limited time. Perhaps the biggest challenge is that youth transitioning out of foster care are so similar to other teenagers: they desire control and independence, and meeting the goals of a transition plan might feel overwhelming, authoritative, or not important. Unlike other teenagers, however, these young people do not have the same built-in support of family to catch them when they fall.

Models and Promising Practices for Transition Planning

- **EPIC E Makua Ana Youth Circles – Hawaii^{ix}**

Effective Planning and Innovative Communication (EPIC) is a nonprofit organization in Hawaii dedicated to strengthening families through conferencing, facilitation, and program development. The organization has offered E Makua Ana Youth Circles since 2004, designed to support foster youth age 16-24 in transitioning out of the system to independence. *E Makua Ana* means “becoming an adult” in the local language. The program draws on a youth’s support system to generate options and resources that support the youth’s goals and informed decision-making. The program ensures that the transition planning process is culturally sensitive, youth centered, and strengths-based. Youth Circles are guided by five values: youth choice, positive environment, planning, informed-decision making, and collaboration. EPIC is funded by private contributions and grant funds.

Learn more at: <http://www.epicohana.info/youthcircle.aspx>

- **The Iowa Dream Team – Iowa^x**

The Iowa Dream Team is a youth-centered practice model organized through collaborative community partnerships throughout the state that empowers youth to develop their goals and transition plans. Youth aging out of foster care choose to start a Dream Team, select and recruit the supportive adults and peers who will join the team,

and facilitate meetings with the support of a trained formal facilitator. The team helps the youth make connections to resources, education, employment, health care, housing, and supportive personal and community relationships. Dream Teams are voluntary, youth-focused and youth-driven, and participants can only attend with permission of the youth. Funding for the meetings, facilitator training, and other Dream Team resources are provided by the state.

Learn more at: http://www.ifapa.org/resources/transitioning_to_adulthood.asp

Recommendations for Transition Planning

- **Plan Early and Often.** DCF begins transition planning for youth at age 16, which is a national best practice. However, the process must be just that – a process with multiple meetings, check-ins, and reviews. That might mean that planning begins with setting big goals and exploring various options, and becomes more specific and targeted as time progresses. As planning becomes more specific, supporters can refer to community resources that will be most likely to assist youth in reaching their goals. Continuing education and/or employment pathways are especially important topics for regular planning, as these goals change often and require significant preparation (for example, applying for student financial aid or job training programs).
- **Youth-Led Planning.** Foster youth in transition, like all young people that age, need to balance thoughtful guidance on their transition planning process with opportunities to practice decision-making, learn from success and failures, develop social connections, and develop confidence in their own abilities and goals. The traditional model of transition planning, led and directed by case workers, is not likely to help youth develop these competencies and may even hinder effective planning. The planning process should be based on the youth’s unique strengths, wants, and needs. Additionally, youth should be adequately prepared by supportive adults to take a leadership role in their transition planning.^{xi}
- **Accountability.** The planning process must include specific instructions about who is responsible for each step of the plan. This will help ensure that necessary steps are taken to move from planning to action. Regular meetings with a youth’s team should include accountability check-ins to track progress towards goals.
- **Collaboration among all individuals, agencies, and systems.** A youth’s planning team need not be limited to professionals in the child welfare and judicial systems. At the discretion of the youth, foster parents, biological family, friends, foster peers, and others who are familiar with the youth’s experience can be invited into the transition planning process. Coordination with school districts may help youth who are still in high school plan more successfully. Additionally, transition planning could have added success with the integration of other systems like higher education, public housing, and workforce development professionals. Cross system-collaboration, done early, ensures that youth do not fall through any cracks as they transition to adulthood. This may also include sharing past case files with approved agencies (in accordance with federal, state, and local laws) to ensure that they have a strong understanding of the youth’s history and needs.

SAFE AND STABLE HOUSING

Safe and reliable housing is one of the most critical needs that youth aging out of foster care have. Transitional-age foster youth have likely already experienced some degree of housing instability during their time in foster care, as housing experiences for children in custody can range from stable to constantly shifting between foster homes, group homes, and residential centers.

As youth exit the system, they do not have steady incomes, rental histories, stable credit, bank accounts, or experience negotiating a lease. This situation makes finding suitable housing a difficult task. National data shows that youth who age out of foster care are more likely than peers in the same age group to experience homelessness at some time after they leave care. On average, one in five youth who age out of foster care will experience homelessness as an adult. Running away more than one time or engaging in delinquent behavior while in foster care also increases the chances of homelessness after a youth ages out.^{xii} Youth frequently report high residential mobility, making several moves soon after leaving care. Additionally, this population is more likely than non-foster youth to have difficulty making a rent payment or to get evicted from a rental property.^{xiii}

Homelessness takes on many forms. Studies show high rates of “couch-surfing” and “doubling up” among transitional-age foster youth.^{xiv} Interviews with two Johnson County youth revealed that they both “couch-surfed” within the first six months of leaving state custody. The 2016 Homelessness Point-in-Time Count revealed that 7 of 10 unsheltered persons were youth ages 17-24; 5 of them had come out of the foster care system.^{xv}

In Johnson County, youth are at increased risk of housing instability. There is no transitional housing for youth in Johnson County. Further, the cost of housing is often prohibitive to youth who have no or low incomes. Youth who choose to pursue higher education at the local community college do not have the benefit of finding affordable housing on or near campus, as the college does not have student housing.

The lack of system coordination is another barrier to safe, stable housing for youth. Youth in foster care are part of many public systems, ranging from the child welfare system, to the public school system, to the legal system. Agencies within these systems often coordinate efforts and communicate case needs while a youth is in care, but that level of integration can decrease rapidly after a youth ages out due to legal barriers and privacy concerns. Further, transitional-age youth suddenly become part of other systems, including the workforce and higher education. Each of these systems and associated agencies has varying priorities, and meeting individual housing needs is often not prioritized. Likewise, public housing agencies and housing assistance programs do not necessarily see transitional-age foster youth as a target population for programs and services.

Models and Promising Practices for Safe and Stable Housing

- **Supportive Housing Network of New York^{xvi}**

In New York City, a coalition of supportive housing providers come together under a membership organization called The Supportive Housing Network of New York, or the Network. The Network provides public education, research and policy analysis, advocacy, training and technical assistance to the supportive housing community, government and the public to ensure the effectiveness and sufficiency of supportive housing. Nearly 40 Network member organizations provide supportive housing and services to homeless and at risk youth; at least 200 of the housing units are designated for youth who have aged out of foster care. Half of the units are in a single-site, and half are scattered site. Housing units are funded through a city-state agreement, while the program is managed by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Support services are provided through various children and families agencies at the city and state levels. In addition to funding provided by the city-state partnership, member organizations piece together and share funding from public and private sources each year to support their programs.

Eligible tenants are young adults ages 18-25 years who are at risk of homelessness and have either recently left or are leaving foster care, or were in foster care for more than a year after their 16th birthday. Each program has its goals and own benchmarks for success; two of them have demonstrated the ability to avoid some of the negative outcomes associated with transitional-age youth.

- Chelsea Foyer: Since the beginning of the program in 2004, 85% of youth who completed the program were employed; 98% secured stable housing; and 54% saved an average of \$100 per month.
- Lantern Community Services: In 2014, 61% of clients had increased their income since program entry.

Learn more at: <http://shnny.org/learn-more/youth-programs/ny-ny-iii-housing/>

- **Youth Moving On - California^{xvii}**

Youth Moving On is a program that provides transitional-age youth age 16-25 with a continuum of support services to help them achieve self-sufficiency and independence. The program offers two types of housing: transitional housing at a single site with weekly support services and case management; and permanent housing for up to two years that includes workforce development, health and wellness, and life skills support services. The program is funded through combination of government contracts and private contributions.

Outcomes for the program include:

- 95% of youth are employed within the first three months of receiving workforce services.
- 86% of youth pay rent on time and in full.
- 94% of youth who exit the program move into safe, stable housing.

Additionally, the program partners with other local agencies to form the Transition-Age Youth Collaborative (TAYC), which has created a comprehensive evidence-based workforce education curriculum to teach youth skills needed on the job. In 2015, 34 youth completed the program and all found employment.

Learn more at: <http://youthmovingon.org/impact>

- **First Place for Youth – California**

First Place for Youth’s “My First Place” program is designed to house and support transitional-age foster youth age 18-24 in the Los Angeles and Bay Area counties of California. The program model is comprised of case management, scattered-site rental housing, property management, organizational leadership and program management, and strategic collaboration of community partners. Youth who enter the program have spent an average of 8 years in foster care, with an average of six placements during state custody. Fifty-eight percent reported experiencing homelessness before the program, and 76 percent were unemployed at the time of entry. Ten percent of youth report no relationships with supportive adults.

A formative evaluation published in 2012 found significant program success along four target dimensions: Healthy Living, Education, Employment, and Housing.^{xviii} Among the documented outcomes in the first six to 12 months:

- 68% enrolled in education programs.
- 72% found employment.
- Participants reported significant improvement in their housing situation on the basis of quality, safety and security.
- Participants indicated lower levels of depression and greater positive social supports.

The program does not publish post-program outcomes; however, anecdotal evidence from annual reports and media stories shows that maintaining stable housing and employments are common trends for youth who exit the program.

Learn more at: <http://www.firstplaceforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/First-Place-Formative-Evaluation-Summary-Brief.pdf>

Recommendations for Safe and Stable Housing

Avoiding high rates of homelessness and housing instability is an important goal for transitional-age foster youth. However, it should not stop there. Proactively seeking safe and reliable housing options should be a priority for all agencies that serves youth aging out of care. Evidence from other successful programs indicates best practices for helping transitional age youth obtain housing and avoid homelessness.

- **Thoughtful Program Location.** Location is critical in Johnson County, a sprawling community where public transportation is limited and the cost of housing is higher than other areas of the region. Programs should focus on housing that is close to major transportation hubs and other resources so that youth can easily access education, employment, and other services. Housing programs might also incorporate alternative transportation options, such as shuttles or taxi vouchers, to surmount the transportation barriers.
- **Delivery of Supportive Services.** Once stably housed, youth aging out of foster care need support in other areas, which might include employment, education, mental health care. Housing programs should include ready access to these services, either through a staff case worker or off-site resource referrals. Some programs might even offer GED classes or an on-site job that allows for work experience.
- **Youth Contributions.** Programs should incorporate elements that allow youth to practice being independent adults. While some programs may choose to offer rent-free or reduced-rate housing, a youth savings plan or contribution towards rent is also a good way to give the youth some responsibility for securing their current or future housing. Youth can contribute in other ways through community service or household chores.
- **Partner with Public Housing.** Rental subsidies are a limited service, and the supply of subsidized housing options in Johnson County is small compared to neighboring communities. Nonetheless, state and local housing authorities should partner with community-based agencies to pool resource and enable more former foster youth to access housing support. Some states, including Arkansas, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, and New York prioritize youth aging out of foster care as recipients of rental assistance vouchers. Agencies might also identify certain landlords who would be willing to set aside subsidized units for youth who are homeless or in transition. In 2010, the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) allocated \$3 million for rental assistance over a two-year period at nine homeless youth projects around the state. Grants were awarded to affordable housing contractors who guaranteed that at least 25 percent of their clients would be foster youth in transition.^{xix}
- **Supportive relationships with adults.** Youth who feel close to at least one family member or other supportive adult are 50 percent less likely to experience homelessness by age 19 than those who do not have that relationship.^{xx} These relationships provide a “safety net” that youth can use if they ever fall short on rent or need a temporary place to stay. They can also help develop those critical informal life skills, such as cooking, budgeting, and being a good neighbor, which youth in foster care have little or no opportunity to practice.

INNOVATION AND INVESTMENT

Youth who age out of foster care pay the price for system failures, as demonstrated by the poor national outcomes in education, employment, housing stability, family planning, and mental health. Society also must deal with real costs associated with homelessness, safety net reliance, unplanned pregnancy, and decreased earning potential of these young people. Society need not wait to see these outcomes appear; they often occur in the weeks and months immediately following release from custody. Researchers and field experts have recently begun to explore the costs of negative outcomes for local municipalities and states when youth transition out of foster care without permanent support, as well as the potential benefits of quality intervention.^{xxi} A 2013 study by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative estimated that when examining high school dropout rates, unplanned or too-early pregnancy, and criminal justice system involvement, outcomes for youth leaving foster care cost the nation nearly \$8 billion annually. Using the same methodology that the Casey study used, Johnson County youth who age out of foster care could generate an estimated annual cost to society of up to \$12 million with those three outcomes.^{xxii} See Appendix 4 for methodology.

Recommendations for Innovation and Investment

System-wide investments and innovations could significantly decrease costs and improve the lives of youth who age out of foster care. Some of these changes might be small and simple, and relatively easy to implement given the models and successes from other communities. Others will require more risk and better collaboration, but could ultimately transform the lives of youth who transition out of foster care.

- **Flexible Extended Custody.** Federal law give states the flexibility to allow youth to stay in foster care until the age of 21. Research shows that youth in extended custody have reduced rates of homelessness, higher educational attainment, and more lifetime earnings.^{xxiii} While Kansas does provide this option, once a youth leaves custody they cannot return. Young people are often anxious to be independent when they turn 18, but may not realize the level of responsibility they must have until after they are released by the courts – and by then, it is too late to go back. A re-entry component would give youth a place to recover and continue growing after experiencing the initial shock of full independent living.
- **Experimental Staffing Models.** Turnover of staff case workers has been named as a system challenge that impacts youth while in care and long after they leave. While some research still needs to be done to determine the source of local staffing issues – burnout, low pay, lack of experience, low workforce supply, or other factors —there are some ways that the foster care system can try to reduce the problem. These might include loan forgiveness for social workers, job sharing, and enabling workers to operate remotely or in the field.
- **Public/Private Partnerships.** The community can build relationship between the public agencies who serve foster youth, and the private organizations who have a financial interest in their long-term success, to creatively approach the challenges of transitional-

age youth. A relatively new but promising strategy is a financing tool called social impact bonds, otherwise known as “pay-for-success”. It taps into the private and philanthropic sectors to support early investors for otherwise cost-prohibitive public programs. Using this strategy, government does not pay for the program; it sets aside a portion of program expenses, receives the upfront investment, and delivers the services (directly or through contracts) to achieve desired outcomes. Investors are paid back as program outcomes are achieved. It is a long-term strategy, requiring high levels of accountability, transparency, and communication between entities. Pay-for-success models are currently being piloted for child welfare initiatives in Ohio and Massachusetts.

- **Incentivize Good Choices.** Youth who age out of foster care are motivated by many of the same things as other young people, including personal freedom and financial independence. Several existing programs help youth work towards buying a car or saving money, keeping youth engaged and committed to completing the program. The Kansas foster care system could expand this by investing in similar “rewards” as youth achieve specific program milestones aimed at reducing negative outcomes.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH SUPPORTIVE ADULTS

Research has shown a definitive link between a permanent supportive relationship with an adult, and the overall health and well-being of youth and young adults.^{xxiv} It is therefore essential that any strategy for helping transition-age foster youth include an emphasis on developing and maintaining such relationships. Young people who age out of the foster care system must deal with two transitions: the transition from a child welfare system to total autonomy, and the transition from childhood to adulthood. Neither of these transitions is easy, and they become even more difficult when youth lack supportive personal relationship and social networks.

Faced with the prospect of “independent living”, youth often feel unprepared due to a lack of stable family and community supports to guide them into adulthood. Unlike many children who are not in foster care, transitional-age foster youth sometimes cannot rely on someone to help them pay rent, teach them how to budget and pay bills, or allow them to move in until they get stable housing. Further, emotional support is frequently cited as lacking by youth and young adults who age out of foster care.

If possible, a relationship with the biological family or kinship relationship should be encouraged and emphasized as a youth prepares to leave the foster care system. In cases where family relationships are not possible or inadequate, other types of relationship may be beneficial in providing advice and emotional support to a young person. Recent research shows that mentors, support families, caseworkers, even peer groups considered “very important” to the youth can provide significant emotional support in the life of a young person.^{xxv}

Not all nonparental relationships are successful of course – particularly in programs where relationships are arranged, assigned, temporary in nature, or for the express purpose of intervening or responding to a youth’s negative behavior.^{xxvi} Rather, relationships that can be characterized as naturally-occurring, even within a program setting, tend to last longer and yield

more positive outcomes for both the youth and the adults in the relationship.^{xxvii} Therefore it is critical to understand the unique paths through which foster youth develop and maintain relationships with nonparental adults.

A Local Model

One of the most well-known models helping youth form relationships with supportive adults comes from the Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Passport program. Designed as a financial literacy program to help youth save for major assets (a car, for example), the program also includes personal and emotional support from adult mentors.^{xxviii}

A Johnson County nonprofit organization called YOUTHRIVE adapted the Opportunity Passport model. Established in July 2015, YOUTHRIVE that is focused on empowering foster youth as they transition to adulthood through supportive relationships.^{xxix} YOUTHRIVE contains several program elements that are attractive to young people on the verge of independence. A matched savings program helps youth with purchasing a car and saving for the future. Monthly financial education classes with an evidence-based curriculum helps youth learn about the relationship between money, attitudes, and behaviors. The program also provides assistance with driver's education, driver's license attainment, and car purchases. At the center of the program, however, is the transition team of trained volunteers who support and coach youth beginning in their last year of foster care.



“I have issues with male relationships because of my dad. [My male mentor] and I struggle a bit because he is dad-like; we’ve made leaps and bounds but it has taken work on both of our parts. The youth/mentor relationship is what you make it.” – YOUTHRIVE participant, age 20

The volunteers, called “support families”, are trained not to be directive in their relationship with youth. Rather, their role is to complement existing supportive adult relationships in the youth’s life, and enter a partnership of mutual learning and benefit. Key findings from the pilot year of the program have revealed the following promising practices that are in line with other research from the field:

- Relationships must develop organically, and be a good fit, in order to be successful. Forcing a relationship might lead to lower participation in both volunteer and youth.
- Asking youth what they want and need should be an ongoing part of program development.
- While the volunteer commitment to the program itself might be term-limited, setting an expectation that the relationship is long-term helps youth and volunteers stay engaged.

YOUTHRIVE is funded by a combination of state contracts, private foundation grants, and individual contributions.

Recommendations for Relationships with Supportive Adults

- **Let them occur naturally.** Relationships that develop independently of program intervention are often the most sustainable. While it may be helpful to identify and match adult mentors with youth for certain activities, permanent relationships will more likely occur if both youth and mentor feel comfortable with one another. This might mean recruiting adults who are already a part of the youth's life – a teacher or coach, for example – to commit to supporting the youth in the months and years after they leave foster care.
- **Make it a program component.** Many successful programs for transitional-age foster youth include some element of a mentor or supportive relationship. Stand-alone “mentoring programs” are not necessary, but mentoring can be included as an expectation of another type of program. For example, a life skills class could include time with a mentor to practice cooking or budgeting; or, a housing program might include weekly peer mentoring sessions.
- **Train mentors.** Ensure that mentors have common expectations about their role and the relationship they will have with youth. Establish clear boundaries and accountability structures. Likewise, make sure youth know what the role of their mentor is and is not.

NEXT STEPS FOR CONSIDERATION

UCS recommends that relevant stakeholders use this report to advance collaborative action for the benefit of transitional-age foster youth.

1. **Develop** collective responsibility across systems and agencies for youth who age out of foster care. Collaborate and make strategic decisions about funding, staffing, and other resources to ensure sufficiency, quality, and sustainability of services and supports for these youth. Share data, program successes, and other valuable resources so that all partners have a common understanding of the opportunities and challenges.
2. **Learn** more about the characteristics transitional-age foster youth in Johnson County, their needs, and their challenges. Local data may be available from the Kansas Department for Children and Families, or from the federal Children’s Bureau, through the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). Work across systems to request access to this and other important information.
3. **Connect** with potential allies outside of the traditional partners. Public school systems, public housing, higher education institutions, law enforcement, city or county governments, private business, and job training programs might all be able to contribute to building a better system for transitional-age foster youth.
4. **Advocate** at local and state levels for public policies that support positive outcomes for youth, including policies that enable greater cooperation and collaboration across agencies.
5. **Expand** the network of potential mentors to provide relational support to transitional-age foster youth. Equip them with appropriate tools and training to serve as a positive, consistent support for young people.

DATA SOURCES

UCS relied on various sources of information to compile this report. Those sources include, but may not be limited to: national think tanks and universities; interviews with professionals and practitioners locally and from other communities; interviews and focus groups with foster youth, foster parents, and other local stakeholders; and publicly accessible data from the Kansas Department for Children and Families, the National Youth in Transition Database, and the U.S. Census Bureau. A full list of sources can be found in the Appendix and Endnotes of this report.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During this course of this project UCS held conversations with people in various positions of knowledge about the issues facing transitional-age foster youth. We thank them for their time and perspective. To gain a clearer understanding of the impact of certain practices and policies on the lives of this population, UCS convened two conversations with key stakeholders, including representatives from The Kansas Department for Children and Families, KVC, KVC Behavioral Healthcare, Inc., CASA of Johnson and Wyandotte Counties, YOUTHRIVE, KidsTLC, TFI Family

Services, and Hillcrest Transitional Living. Their commitment to clients and their willingness to build a better system is admirable, and greatly appreciated. Special thanks to Karen Wulfkuhle and Tim Gay for guidance during the research and development of this report. Finally, thank you to the 10th Judicial District Court of Johnson County for funding this project through the Domestic Violence Special Program Fee Grant. We appreciate the support.

APPENDIX 1

The PPS 3059 serves as the Transition Plan for Successful Adulthood form for youth in the custody of the Secretary of DCF who are 16 or older with a case plan goal of Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (OPPLA), and the youth is expected to leave foster care at age 18, or for youth with case plan goals other than OPPLA, a Transition Plan for Successful Adulthood shall be completed with the youth after they turn 17. The Transition Plan for Successful Adulthood shall not be held on the same day as the case planning conference.

The Transition Plan is a strategy for assisting these youth in achieving self-sufficiency. The PPS 3059 is completed immediately prior to the case plan when the youth is 16 or older with a case plan goal of OPPLA, and is updated prior to each case plan thereafter. It shall be forwarded to the court with the court report form/cover sheet and attached to each case plan.

Beginning when the youth is age 17, regardless of the youth's case plan goal, the Transition Plan for Successful Adulthood is updated to reflect the services provided and supports in place for self-sufficiency, and forwarded to the court. See section 3214 of the PPS PPM for more information.

- **Guidelines for Completion**

Youth shall be involved in developing the Transition Plan for Successful Adulthood. This form shall be completed together in a cooperative manner between the youth and the case manager. The process is youth directed and based upon encompassing the youth's goals for the future, while utilizing the strength's based perspective. It is encouraged that each section of the plan be utilized as prompts for guiding case management discussions during monthly worker / child visits with the youth, to introduce the section domains over a period of time. This will also assist with familiarizing the youth with the form so they are comfortable with it. The form utilizes personalized wording such as "My Education Plan" and "Steps I need to take..." to encourage youth ownership in the planning process.

- The top of the PPS 3059 is identifying information about the youth.
- The "Summary of progress since the last plan / update" is intended to reflect ongoing progress for the youth. The box NA shall be checked initially for the first completion. The summary of progress after initial completion shall include all previous updates to the plan, indicated by date with the top entry as the most recent and shall specify the first and last name of the case manager or family support worker updating the plan. The summary shall reference the Section the information is updating.
- The Transition Plan for Successful Adulthood shall be signed and dated each time transition planning occurs.

- **Section 1: My Identifying Documents**

Section 1 of the Transition Plan for Successful Adulthood focuses on the youth's identifying documents. The status of each personal document shall be checked, along with a location for who has physical possession of these documents. The step(s) needed to be taken shall identify what documents are missing and the plan for obtaining the missing documents prior to release from custody. It is of vital importance that the youth is assisted in obtaining their identifying documents. Progress shall be noted at each subsequent update following the initial plan development. Youth shall be provided these documents upon leaving care. Youth shall be guided with development of a secure place to keep all identifying documents upon release of custody.

- **Section 2: My Education Plan**
Section 2 of the Transition Plan for Successful Adulthood shall include a strategy for the youth to complete their secondary education which may include an alternative educational program or a GED. Plans for higher education shall be addressed by indicating if the youth plans to attend college, junior college, or a vocational school. Educational settings and financial assistance shall be addressed, and steps to transition from high school to further education shall be included in tasks on the case plan. If the youth is receiving special education services, the IEP/504 plan shall be coordinated. If it is identified the youth is behind in attainment of their secondary education the case manager shall assist the youth in checking for missing secondary education credits. The youth shall also be assisted in checking to see if Kansas State Statute #38-2285 applies, also known as Senate Bill 23. This provision allows for foster youth to attain a minimum of 21 credit hours. Additional information can be located on the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) website. The step(s) needed to be taken shall address what has been check marked underneath the heading "I would like more information..."
- **Section 3: My Housing Plan**
Section 3 is a strategy for where the youth will live once they are no longer in foster care. Housing options include the youth living in their own apartment, Foster Care Transition Support, an adoptive home or permanent custodianship/guardianship arrangement, relatives, college dormitory, or some other type of setting. The youth shall be guided to formulate a plan that is achievable. The PPS 7000A Independent Living Monthly Budget Plan can be utilized to assist the youth in financially planning housing options. The step(s) needed to be taken shall address what has been check marked underneath the heading "I would like more information..."
- **Section 4: My Employment**
Section 4 is a strategy for employment. In addition to employment, the plan may include other financial supports such as Independent Living funds, Foster Care Transition Support payments, HCBS waivers, and SSI. Vocational training and support, self-employment, supported employment and Working Healthy options shall be explored. Youth shall be assisted in accessing their local Workforce Center's Youth Education, Employment, & Training Programs via the Workforce Investment Opportunities Act (WIOA). The step(s) needed to be taken shall address what has been check marked underneath the heading "I would like more information..."
- **Section 5: My Health Plan**
Section 5 is a strategy for addressing the youth's health needs. Where the youth will receive services and how they will be paid for shall be addressed. Continuing coverage by Medicaid shall be explained in the Transition Plan. If the youth is receiving mental health services or taking medication, plans for the continued assessment of need, provision of the prescriptions necessary, and payments shall be made. The step(s) needed to be taken shall address what has been check marked underneath the heading "I would like more information..."
- **Section 6: My Transportation Plan**
Section 6 is a strategy for addressing the youth's transportation needs. Transportation options shall include walking, bicycling, bus rides, arrangement of rides with friends, plans for purchasing a car, or completing driver's education. Youth shall be guiding in development of the fiscal cost of their intended transportation plan and ways the youth can achieve the plan. The step(s) needed to be taken shall address what has been check marked underneath the heading "I would like more information..."

▪ **Section 7: My Connections for Success**

Section 7 is a strategy for developing Connections for Success via individuals, community supports, and services. The relational supports a youth has or will have shall also be documented. An individual shall be listed for help with overall / everyday living. Community supports may include mentors, legal guardians, faith based organizations, community agencies (Mental Health Centers, CDDOs, Independent Living Centers, etc.), DCF divisions (Rehabilitation Services, APS) family, and other relationships the youth has established. If the youth is eligible for HCBS services, this shall be included in the information and the case manager from the agency shall be included in the Transition Planning. Kansas Youth Advisory Council (KYAC) and Regional Youth Advisory Council (RYAC) participation shall be documented, along with the youth's desire for future participation. The step(s) needed to be taken shall address areas the youth will need support and work towards ongoing development of connections.

▪ **Section 8: Exit Interview**

Section 8 shall be completed immediately prior to release from custody in conjunction with the Youth, Case Manager, and DCF Independent Living Coordinator or designee.

- The youth's contact information after release of care shall be indicated, along with a back-up contact. If the youth is willing a back-up contact shall be listed to include a possible contact available on social media.
- Boxes shall be checked indicating the individual documents the youth has been provided along with the area identified for secure storage of these documents.
- The youth's most recent plans shall be indicated for education and employment.
- Five individuals who would know how to contact the youth shall be listed.
- The youth shall be informed they may be surveyed at 19 and 21 years of age for the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD).
- Indicate the services and supports the youth is interested in receiving from DCF Independent Living after release of custody.
- The youth shall be provided the DCF's Independent Living Coordinator's Contact information.
- Participants of the Exit Interview shall sign and date when the exit interview has been completed.
- The youth shall be provided a copy of their completed Transition Plan for Successful Adulthood, with the Section 8: Exit Interview completed.
- The following documents shall be sent to the DCF Independent Living Coordinator immediately prior to release of custody: copies of the youth's identifying documents, the PPS 3050 series, confirmation the youth was assisted in applying for aged out medical, if eligible, and the last completed Casey Life Skills Assessment (CLSA).



Strong Families Make a Strong Kansas

Source: "Transition Plan for Successful Adulthood Instructions" Prevention and Protection Services, Kansas Department for Children and Families, 2016. Retrieved from http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Documents/PPM_Forms/Section_3000_Forms/PPS3059_Instr.pdf

APPENDIX 2

Average Number of Youth Who Age Out* of Foster Care in Kansas City Region

	Johnson	Wyandotte	Leavenworth	Atchison	Douglas	KC Region
	# of Youth Who Age Out					
2011	35	27	6	2	2	72
2012	21	6	2	2	1	32
2013	37	19	3	5	5	69
2014	47	18	6	3	5	79
2015	35	27	9	0	8	79
2016	39	18	8	1	5	71
Annual Average Number of Youth Who Age Out	36					67

*Data reports use the term “emancipation” to describe the custodial status of youth who age out of foster care. The average age of emancipation in Johnson County is 18.

Source: “Length of Stay and Reason for Ending Out of Home Placement”, SFY11 –SFY16. Kansas Department for Children and Families. Retrieved from <http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Pages/FosterCareDemographicReports.aspx>

APPENDIX 3



Data Snapshot Kansas

Youth Services

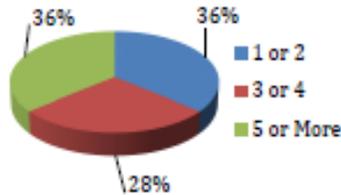
(FY 15 total served: 2,340 youth)

Includes information about all youth who received at least one independent living service paid for or provided by the state CFCIP agency.

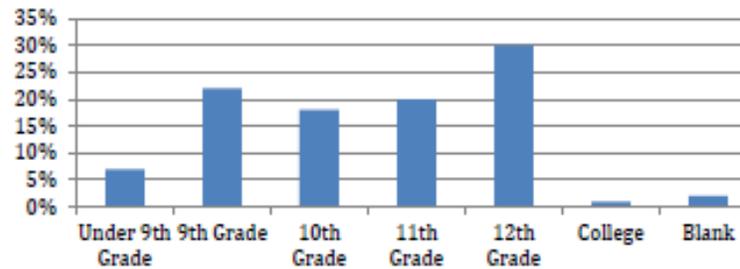
Characteristics of youth receiving services (FY 15)

Male	45%	In foster care	53%
Female	55%	In federally recognized tribe	3%
White	78%	Adjudicated delinquent	8%
Black	23%	Receiving special education	13%
American Indian	3%	Age range	14-23
Other Race	1%	Mean age	18
Hispanic	13%		

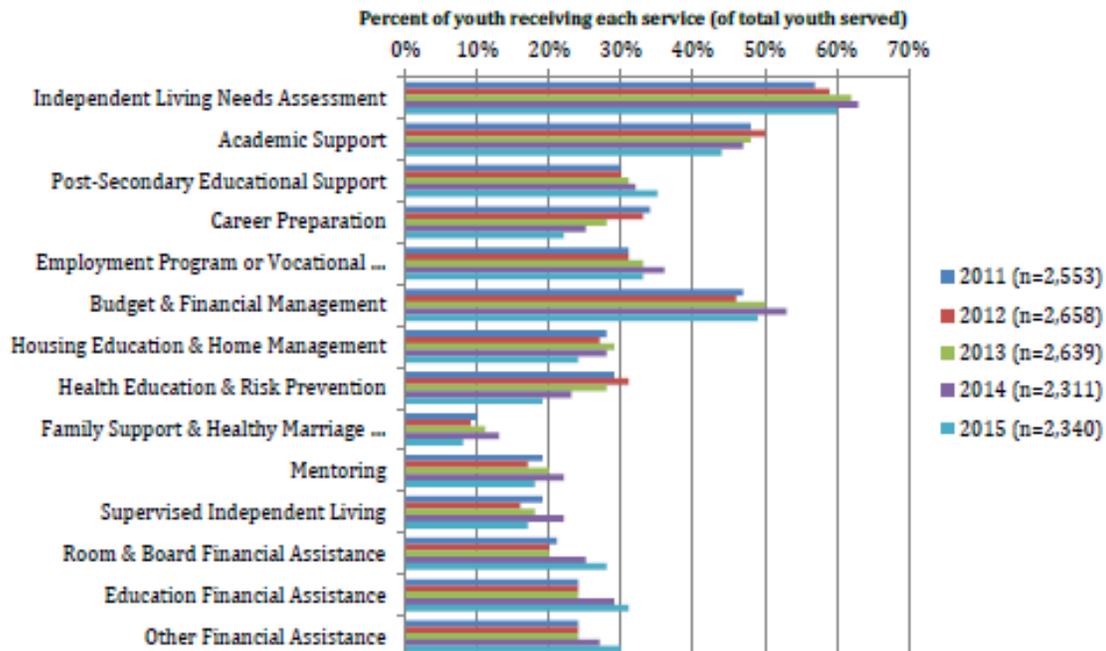
Number of services received (FY15)



Education level of youth receiving services (FY 15)



Type of services received (FY 11-15)



This snapshot was prepared by the Children's Bureau and contains a summary of highlights from NYTD data reported by states between Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 and 2015. The data are current as of December 2015. Please contact NYTDinfo@acfhhs.gov if you have any questions about information in this data snapshot.



Youth Outcomes			
Includes information about all youth who were eligible to take the NYTD survey at ages 17, 19 and 21.			
	Baseline Population (17-year-olds in foster care, FY 11)	Follow-Up Population (19-year-olds, FY 13)	Follow-Up Population (21-year-olds, FY 15)
Cohort 1 survey participation, FY 11-15	<p>563 eligible 443 surveyed</p> <p>79% surveyed</p>	<p>431 eligible 313 surveyed</p> <p>73% surveyed</p>	<p>387 eligible 236 surveyed</p> <p>61% surveyed</p>
Characteristics of survey participants			
<i>Male</i>	56%	54%	43%
<i>Female</i>	44%	46%	57%
<i>White</i>	80%	81%	80%
<i>Black</i>	23%	23%	24%
<i>American Indian</i>	2%	2%	2%
<i>Hispanic</i>	14%	12%	11%
<i>In foster care</i>	100%	0%	0%
Reasons for non-participation			
<i>Youth declined</i>	7%	4%	<1%
<i>Parent declined</i>	<1%	0%	0%
<i>Incapacitated</i>	1%	1%	3%
<i>Incarcerated</i>	1%	2%	9%
<i>Runaway/missing</i>	6%	0%	0%
<i>Unable to locate</i>	5%	23%	34%
Outcomes reported			
<i>Employed full- or part-time</i>	18%	39%	53%
<i>Receiving public assistance</i>	N/A	29%	38%
<i>Finished high school or GED</i>	3%	59%	67%
<i>Attending school</i>	96%	36%	26%
<i>Referred for substance abuse treatment</i>	40% (in lifetime)	17% (in past 2 years)	9% (in past 2 years)
<i>Incarcerated</i>	47% (in lifetime)	38% (in past 2 years)	25% (in past 2 years)
<i>Had children</i>	7% (in lifetime)	15% (in past 2 years)	39% (in past 2 years)
<i>Homeless</i>	12% (in lifetime)	17% (in past 2 years)	34% (in past 2 years)
<i>Connection to adult</i>	95%	97%	95%
<i>Medicaid coverage</i>	93%	69%	69%

Source: "Data Snapshot, Kansas". National Youth In Transition Database (NYTD), 2011 – 2015. The Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

APPENDIX 4

DO-IT-YOURSELF COST AVOIDANCE WORKSHEET

Projections of costs at a national level, such as included here, may be useful in calling attention to this population and helping to explain the scale of the problems and the cost of failure and/or inaction. Even more powerful, however, would be localized data that brings the estimates home to a community or state. (A caution: For some communities the numbers may be too small and volatile, and contain misleading spikes.)

Local or state costs can be crudely estimated by building on the methodology used in this report.

Method #1:

Calculate:

- » The number of youth aging out of care each year, based on an average of several years.
- » Multiply that number by \$300,000. The resulting figure will be a rough estimate of the costs of poor outcomes in educational attainment, too early pregnancy and involvement with the criminal justice system, using the methodology in this report.
- » Example: a community with an average of 100 young people transitioning from foster care could estimate social costs of \$3,000,000 for each cohort year.
- » Example: a state with an average of 1,000 young people transitioning from foster care could estimate social costs of \$30,000,000 for each cohort year.

Method #2:

Method #2 is far more difficult. To the extent accurate data is available, communities and states can make more precise local estimates of social costs by:

- » Determine graduation rates for youth; teen pregnancies rates; and incarceration rates for both young people transitioning from foster care and the general population in your state or community.
- » If dependable local data are unavailable for all three areas, calculations and estimates can still be made using the figures in this report.
- » To replicate the estimates in this report use the following calculations:

EDUCATION

1. Identify the graduation rates for young people transitioning from foster care for your state or community _____
2. Identify comparable national or state graduation rates (differentiate by age – 18, 19, 21, etc.) _____
3. Calculate the number of additional graduates there would be if young people transitioning out of foster care graduated at the average rates of young people as a whole _____
4. Multiply the number of additional graduates #3 above times \$260,000 (lost wages) + \$60,000 (lost taxes) _____
5. The result is an estimate of the economic impact of a lower-than-average graduation rate among an annual cohort of young people transitioning from foster care _____

Source: Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. Cost Avoidance: The Business Case for Investing In Youth Aging Out of Foster Care. May 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.jimcaseyouth.org/cost-avoidance-business-case-investing-youth-aging-out-foster-care>

APPENDIX 5

List of Stakeholders Interviewed, Alphabetical Order by Organization

Name	Organization
Abby Banden	CASA of Johnson and Wyandotte County
Name withheld	Former foster youth
Jordan	Former foster youth
Briana	Foster youth mentor
Jim	Foster youth mentor
Chuck Arney	Hillcrest Transitional Living
Emily Diebolt	Hillcrest Transitional Living
Mary Pitnick	Johnson County Department of Corrections
Judge Kathleen Sloan	Johnson County District Court
Bubba Dowling	Kansas Department for Children and Families
Diju Skariah	Kansas Department for Children and Families
Julie Lane	Kansas Foster Parent Association
Joshua Henges	Kids TLC
Stefanie Werth	KVC Behavioral Health Inc.
Sarah	Local foster parent
Joni Hiatt	Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Agency
Mitra Pedram	Synergy Services
Emily Hermes	TFI Family Services
Tim Pennell	Third Sector Capital Partners
Tim Gay	YOUHRIVE

ENDNOTES

- ⁱ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009-2013. Retrieved from <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>
- ⁱⁱ Dworsky, A. and Courtney, M. "Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth." Chicago, IL. Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, 2011.
- ⁱⁱⁱ "Comparing Outcomes Reported by Young People at Ages 17 and 19, NYTD Cohort 1", The Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. December 2014. Retrieved from: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/nytd_data_brief_4.pdf
The NYTD survey is administered to cohorts of youth who aged out of care at ages 17, 19, and 21. The response rates vary from state to state, with an overall response rate being 67 percent in the most recent survey in 2013. Survey participation attrition can be attributed to a variety of factors, including the youth or parent declining participation, incapacitation or incarceration of the youth, or inability to locate the youth – the most common cause of attrition.
- ^{iv} "Data Snapshot, Kansas". National Youth In Transition Database (NYTD), 2011 – 2015. The Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- ^v "Data Brief #4". National Youth In Transition Database (NYTD), 2014. The Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/nytd-data-brief-4>
- ^{vi} "Privatization In Kansas", Kansas Legislative Research Department, November 2015
- ^{vii} "Length of Stay and Reason for Ending Out of Home Placement", SFY11 –SFY16. Kansas Department for Children and Families. Retrieved from <http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Pages/FosterCareDemographicReports.aspx>
- ^{viii} "Policy and Procedure Manual", Prevention and Protection Services, Kansas Department for Children and Families, January 2016. Retrieved from http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Documents/PPM_Forms/Policy_and_Procedure_Manual.pdf
- ^{ix} E Makua Ana Youth Circle, Program Description. Retrieved from <http://www.epicohana.info/youthcircle.aspx>
- ^x Iowa Youth Dream Teams, Program Description. Retrieved from http://www.ifapa.org/resources/transitioning_to_adulthood.asp
- ^{xi} Walters, et. al. "Transition Planning with Adolescents: A Review of Principles and Practices Across Systems". National Resource Center for Youth Development, 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.jimcaseyyouth.org/transition-planning-adolescents-review-principles-and-practices-across-systems>

^{xii} Dworsky, A. and Courtney, M. *Assessing the Impact of Extending Care beyond Age 18 on Homelessness: Emerging Findings from the Midwest Study*. Chicago, IL. Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, March 2010.

Reported homeless rates vary depending on a variety of factors, including the age at which the former foster youth were interviewed, the geographic region where the youth had been in care, the length of time since exit, the representativeness of the sample, and the definition of homelessness.

^{xiii} Dworsky & Courtney, 2011

^{xiv} Ibid.

^{xv} “Homelessness in Johnson County”, United Community Services of Johnson County, April 2016. Retrieved from <http://ucsjoco.org/Uploads/Homelessness-in-Johnson-County-20151.pdf>

^{xvi} NY/NY III Housing, Program Description. Retrieved from <http://shnny.org/learn-more/youth-programs/ny-ny-iii-housing/>

^{xvii} Youth Moving On, Impact. Retrieved from <http://youthmovingon.org/impact>

^{xviii} “More is Possible”, Formative Evaluation Findings, First Place for Youth, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.firstplaceforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/First-Place-Formative-Evaluation-Summary-Brief.pdf>

^{xix} Golonka, S. “The Transition to Adulthood: How States can support Older Youth in Foster Care”. National Governor’s Association Center for Best Practices, December 2010
<http://www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/1012FOSTERCARE.PDF>

^{xx} Dworsky & Courtney, 2010

^{xxi} Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. *Cost Avoidance: The Business Case for Investing In Youth Aging Out of Foster Care*. May 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.jimcaseyyouth.org/cost-avoidance-business-case-investing-youth-aging-out-foster-care>

^{xxii} Ibid.

^{xxiii} Dworsky & Courtney, 2010

^{xxiv} Beam, M. R., Chen, C., & Greenberger, E. “The nature of adolescents’ relationships with ‘very important’ nonparental adults”. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 30(2) (2002): 305–325.

^{xxv} Spencer, R. “Understanding the mentoring process between adolescents and adults”. *Youth & Society*, 37(3) (2006): 287–315.

^{xxvi} Ibid.

^{xxvii} Beam, Chen & Greenberger, 2002.

^{xxviii} Samuels, G. *A Reason, a Season, or a Lifetime: Relational Permanence Among Young Adults with Foster Care Backgrounds*. Chicago, IL. Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, 2008. Retrieved from <http://www.chapinhall.org/research/report/reason-season-or-lifetime>

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