

Child Welfare Policy Roundtable



*Supporting Successful
Transitions to Adulthood*





About iFoster

- National non-profit, headquartered in CA
- Largest community in child welfare, with 100,000 members
- Provides 150,000 children/youth with \$260 Million in resources annually
- Runs largest work experience and employment program for foster youth in the country; an award-winning AmeriCorps program and promising practice for foster youth employment
- Produces Voice of Community reports with over 15,000 lived experience survey and focus group participants (youth, caregivers, front-line workers)
- Responsible for CA's statewide GI project for foster youth

Our Transition-Age Youth Crisis

- ~ **4,000 CA youth** age out of foster care every year
- **Unknown numbers** are forced to leave their informal or reunified placements once they become adults
- < **20%** feel prepared to be independent by age 21
- In comparison, **84% of youth aged 18-24** say they are still financially dependent on their parents and **55% are by age 30**

- **Within 4 years of aging out:**

- **50%** are unemployed, those employed only earn \$7,500/year
 - **50%** will experience homelessness
 - **70%** will be government assistance
 - **Only 3%** will achieve a post-secondary degree
- Resulting in a **>\$1 Million economic** burden to society for every youth we fail to help successfully transition to self-sufficiency



Immediate Needs For Youth Transitioning Out of Care

1. Housing
2. Job skills training, paid work experience, and employment
3. Cash assistance and assistance with government benefits
4. Mental health services at no or low cost
5. Coaching and training on life skills

As identified by youth preparing to age out



6 Month and 90 Day Transition Plans

- Mandatory transition plan for youth preparing to exit foster care
- Plan covers:
 - Housing
 - Education
 - Employment
 - Health insurance / medical needs
 - Supportive adults
- Youth indicate planning is widely inconsistent and too often they feel it is entirely left up to them to define and accomplish
- What is missing is **Independence Capability Assessment** and an **Asset Checklist** that matches the plan and ensures **both capability and assets are in place prior to leaving care for a youth to achieve self-sufficiency**



HOUSING CRISIS

- At least 20% of youth exit to homelessness
- Too often post-care housing is not secured prior to exiting care
- Insufficient transitional housing (THP+)
- FYI HUD vouchers are limited and the approval process is opaque, long and arduous
- Landlords deprioritize (don't want) youth renters

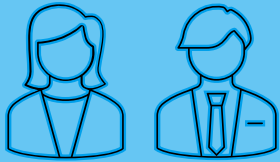


FEDERAL PRO

- FYI HUD vouchers are the solution to housing for former foster youth
- Available in bulk via competition and immediate request (max 10)

FEDERAL CON

- Voucher process requires Housing Authorities to make request and coordinate with Child Welfare departments
- No clear ownership or accountability
- Used to require a level of case management that was unattainable, has been reduced



EMPLOYMENT & CAREERS

- Youth lag their peers in terms of employment post-care and their employment decreases post-care
- Professional work experience where youth can learn in a skills development environment is lacking
- Pathways to permanent employment while scaffolding to careers is lacking (stepping stones)
- Balancing job to pay the bills vs building a career too often means sacrificing a career and college
- Vocational, apprenticeships or other “learn on the job” are too often not open to youth due to FAFSA/Pell/Chafee restrictions or lack of funding

FEDERAL PRO

- AmeriCorps State/National and NCCC alumni have Non-Competitive Eligibility for federal employment (signed by President Biden yesterday)

FEDERAL CON

- WIOA has not been reauthorized
- WIOA Youth programming has been cut by House Appropriations in the 2025 budget due to “lack of programs showing outcomes”
- AmeriCorps State & National has been cut by House Appropriations in the budget due to AmeriCorps’ fiscal issues



Assistance for American Families & Workers

ASSISTANCE & BENEFITS

- Youth are not consistently being enrolled in government benefits when they become adults or before they leave care
- SILPs and other child welfare payments are being used in income determinations leading to ineligibility
- Dual eligible enrollments: MediCal, CalFresh, WIC, etc
- Medicaid 1115 waivers for cash assistance and resources
- Taxation and benefit waivers for guaranteed income and other stipends

FEDERAL PRO

- USDA and other agencies have guidance and pilots regarding dual eligibility and coordination of Medicaid, SNAP, WIC enrollments

FEDERAL CON

- Potential for cuts in federal benefits
- Potential for work requirements

MENTAL HEALTH & LIFE COACHING

- < 20% of youth feel prepared to be independent
- Life skills must be practiced as well as taught (timing of teaching important)
- Medicaid holds a lot of potential for supports beyond medical, move upstream to address social determinants of health
- MediCal Peer Support Specialist: para-professional job and peer support



FEDERAL PRO

- Telehealth
- Virtual case management, social worker visits

FEDERAL CON

- Potential federal funding impacts on Medicaid
- Potential work requirements





How can we expect youth who haven't been built up to be healthy and independent?

— CA Former Foster Youth



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