



COLORADO

**Office of Children,
Youth & Families**

Division of Child Welfare

HB 18-1319 Former Foster Care Steering Committee

Final Recommendations - March 2019



May 15, 2019

Dear Coloradans,

Youth who emancipate from child welfare in Colorado are resilient, adaptable, passionate, driven, and talented. Unfortunately, you are more likely to hear about the poor outcomes of these young people, who encounter systemic barriers to meeting their basic needs for education, housing, and healthy relationships. The recommendations within this report are meant to ensure youth formerly in foster care have the opportunity to fulfill their potential and their dreams. In the future, when you hear about former foster youth, you will hear about their strength and potential.

A transformed child welfare system will acknowledge that youth are the experts on their lives, and child welfare professionals will come alongside them to provide support and guidance. Youth will have space to practice for the “real world,” make mistakes, and grow within a safety net of support systems as they gradually gain independence.

When we fully support youth and work as a team on their goals, youth are able to envision how they define success and what they want their lives to look like. This report provides concrete steps to make this vision a reality. Recommendations address the need for equitable access to services around the state, for youth-driven case plans, and for all youth in foster care to earn their high school diplomas and have access to tuition waivers for higher education. The recommendations address the need for behavioral health support and for appropriate use of a continuum of housing options so no youth who has been in foster care is ever homeless.

Comprehensive systems change will take hard work and dedication from all of us. It will not be easy, nor will it happen overnight. We embrace this challenge because our foster youth deserve better, and so do their children. We hope you will join us.

Thank you to all the steering committee members who have helped draft these recommendations. All of your hard work and thoughtful deliberation has created a bold vision for change. We especially thank the young people who generously offered their perspectives and stories. This work is for you.

Sincerely,



Michelle Barnes, Executive Director,
Colorado Department of Human Services

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WHERE WE BEGIN

Young people leaving foster care deserve the chance to be a part of loving families, to heal, to learn, to contribute to their communities through meaningful work - to build their own visions of fulfilling lives. However, Colorado's current and former foster youth continue to experience systemic barriers that are in the way of these universal goals. In 2018, the Colorado legislature passed [HB 18-1319](#) to create a steering committee charged with making bold recommendations to improve the lives of young people, ages 18 to 21, who are exiting foster care.

The Former Foster Youth Steering Committee began meeting in October 2018. Committee members included representatives from multiple state and local youth-serving agencies and non-profit organizations. The committee hosted three youth panels, two in Denver and one in Pueblo. The committee worked to develop a shared foundational understanding of the current services available to foster youth and outcomes for foster youth. It heard from young people about their lived experiences. Youth who experience foster care in Colorado are more likely to experience a wide range of [negative outcomes](#) in early adulthood, including homelessness, poverty, and incarceration. While services are available for youth exiting care into adulthood, funding for those services is limited and availability and approach vary greatly depending on where a youth lives. Individual planning for each youth's future is inconsistent and frequently lacks input from the youth. Additionally, youth in care frequently experience instability in education, which disrupts their [developmental needs to maintain peer relationships](#), hampers their ability to be competitive in the workforce, and often traps them in a cycle of housing and employment instability.

While Colorado has taken fragmented steps to address each of these concerns, poor outcomes persist. Young people need and deserve bold changes to dismantle the systemic barriers to their success and ensure that they are supported by all state departments and county departments of human/social services, as well as their community at large. With this report, the Former Foster Youth Steering Committee recommends changes to ensure every youth who leaves foster care in Colorado has the tools necessary to be safe, healthy, educated, connected, and contributing young adults.

All recommendations are grounded in the principle that services must be developmentally appropriate and youth-driven to be effective. Colorado law currently allows youth to remain in the child welfare system and under the court's authority past age 18 when in the best interest of the youth.¹ However, practice varies around the state in whether and how counties serve youth in foster care after age 18. [Available research](#) shows that emancipating youth benefit from extended foster care until age 21, but simply extending traditional foster care is not enough. For the benefits to last, youth in foster care need developmentally-appropriate services, including freedom to test their independence, to make mistakes with proportional consequences and a reasonable safety net, and to choose their own relationships.

Recommendations are divided into two categories: The "Foundations of Successful Adulthood" section addresses the key domains of permanent connections, housing, and education, and the "Pillars of Practice" section addresses practice recommendations which transcend domains to impact all work with young people.

Many of the committee's recommendations will require new funding in addition to creative and efficient use of current funding. Additionally, implementation will require extensive collaboration and patience as Colorado makes bold changes with and for young people in foster care. The committee thanks all the voting members, non-voting partners, their agencies, and the young people themselves who have engaged in this process with a spirit of urgency and hope.

¹ Continuing jurisdiction of the juvenile court to age 21 has long been in Colorado law; it was previously codified at § 19-3-118, C.R.S. until 1986 when it was repealed and replaced by 19-3-205, C.R.S. Federal law did not fund child welfare services past age 18 until the Fostering Connections Act of 2011, and Colorado has only recently modified its federal plan to seek reimbursement for the 18-21 year-old population.



FOUNDATIONS OF SUCCESSFUL ADULthood

All foster youth will have permanent connections

Child welfare professionals at systemic and case levels must make every effort to ensure children and youth gain legal permanency. Professionals should never stop working to build meaningful and durable connections for youth, even if the youth will transition into adulthood from foster care. There is no set age when an adolescent develops into an adult, and not all young people are ready for adulthood during their legal early-adult years (18 - 21).

Therefore, the committee recommends foster youth have the option of continuing support from connected adults and the safety nets of child welfare as they step into adulthood.



Additionally, young people in foster care need timely access to high-quality behavioral health services in order to heal and build healthy relationships. Therefore, the committee connects the goal of permanency for all youth with a recommendation to ensure easy access to robust behavioral health services to address mental health concerns, problematic substance use, and trauma histories.

New funding will be required to fully implement these recommendations.

#1 Youth will leave foster care with at least two, and ideally five, committed permanent connections

- Place high priority on maintaining familial placements.
 - Increase family supports, kinship placements, and adoptions to increase permanency.
 - Make ongoing support available to all adoptive families to support successful transitions for families throughout the youth's development.
- Reevaluate subsidies and supports for families as children age and their needs change.
- Support statewide implementation of Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK), a child-focused, evidence-informed recruitment model, or a similar evidence-based program.
- Support statewide implementation of the CHOICE program, or a similar evidence-based program, to build a permanent, long-term relational adult connections for youth who do not achieve legal permanency.
- County departments will continue family finding efforts and fostering permanent connections for youth up to age 21, including those in foster care and housing programs (such as independent living arrangements).
- County departments will continue working towards permanency while continuing to support each youth in learning the age and developmentally appropriate skills they need to be successful, regardless of their permanency goal or where they are living when they reach adulthood.

"I had a family when I went into the system. How come I don't have one when I'm leaving?"
~ Former Foster Youth

#2 Youth will have meaningful, timely access to behavioral health services

- Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) and the Colorado Department of Healthcare Policy and Finance (HCPF) will work together to improve access to Medicaid services, in particular, behavioral health treatment, for current and former foster youth and their families.
 - Identify the barriers of former foster care youth and their families accessing Medicaid services with an emphasis on behavioral health.
 - Recruit participation from HCPF and CDHS Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) and Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) to create a collaborative approach to address the identified barriers.
 - Determine specific steps to address the barriers and ensure that former foster care youth and their families can have access needed services in a timely manner.
- CDHS will offer youth leaving foster care an incentive to participate in a class that discusses the long-term effects of trauma and how to identify and address triggers. Youth will be given information about how to access behavioral health resources including the Colorado crisis number. This class would be co-developed and co-presented by former foster care youth.

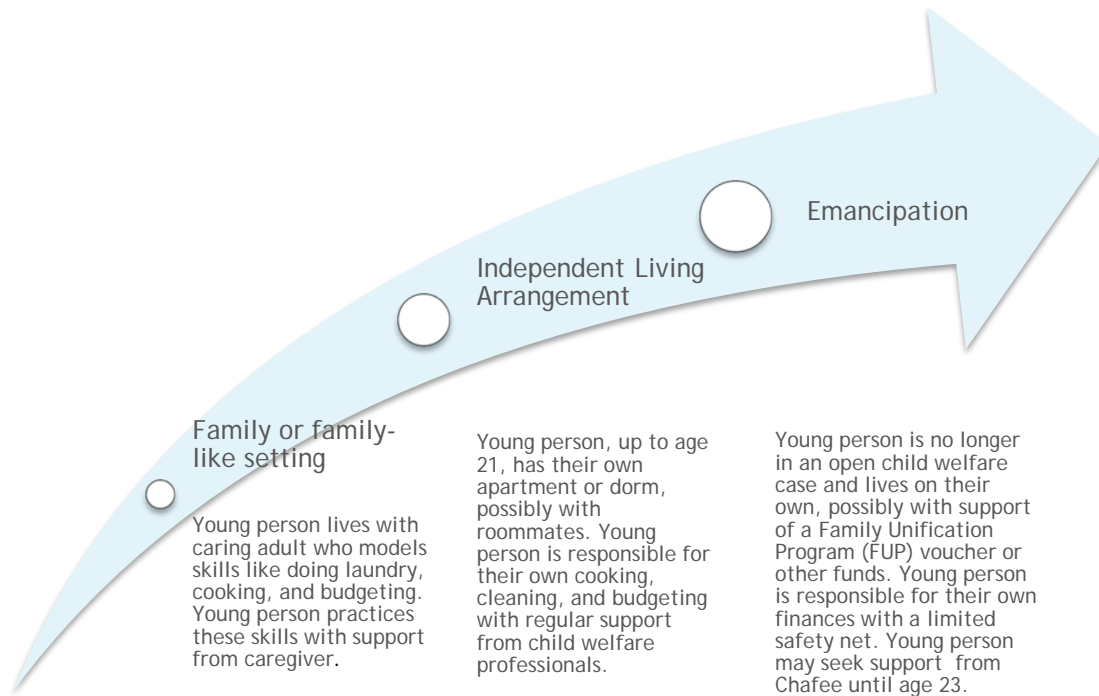
"Most youth know there is a possibility of homelessness, but the reality of it is heartbreaking."
~ Former Foster Youth

All foster youth will have safe and stable housing

Building an environment where current and former foster youth can safely practice and learn to manage a household is imperative. Most people begin learning these skills at a very young age through a continuous series of observations and interactions with their parents, caregivers, and other adults. For youth who are not involved with child welfare, this process

eventually leads to youth leaving their childhood homes so they can get their first apartment with a friend or move into a college dorm room. Youth take these normal, healthy steps toward independence with the security of knowing they have a safe place to return or someone who can help if they need it. For many foster youth, reaching this important developmental milestone means losing their entire safety net before they have had the opportunity to practice these skills, so a simple budgeting mistake can lead to homelessness. This set of recommendations is intended to eliminate many of the barriers facing youth in successfully achieving this key developmental milestone.

Key to giving young people opportunities to practice is gradually removing financial and professional supports and, ideally, replacing them with self-sufficiency skills and supportive long-term relationships. Housing resources should be accessed at the appropriate place on a continuum of relative risk and responsibility for the individual youth.



#1 Expand the use of independent living arrangements (ILAs) for older youth in foster care

Independent living arrangements (ILAs) are a foster care placement where a young person lives on their own with supervision by the child welfare agency.² “Supervision” is interpreted broadly at the discretion of the state agency,³ and can be met by monthly visits from the youth’s assigned county child welfare caseworker. ILAs can include a range of settings such as college dorms, living in an apartment alone or with a roommate, or living with a relative who is not a licensed foster home.

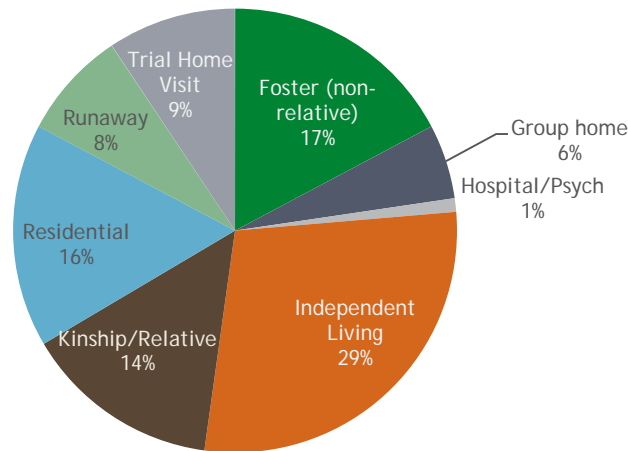
The funds come from Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, just like other foster care maintenance payments, so the youth has to be in an open child welfare case to be in an ILA. The funding amounts vary based on the individual needs of the youth, including cost of living and the gradually increasing ability of the youth to pay their own expenses.

² 42 U.S.C. 672(c).

³ [ACYF-CB-10-11 \(July 9, 2010\)](#)

ILAs are an important option for young people to practice living on their own with support. If something goes wrong, the young person has the support of their caseworker and other professionals to gain new skills and try again. In contrast, if a young person is unsuccessful using a Family Unification Program (FUP) voucher, they are at high risk of homelessness. ILAs are currently underutilized in Colorado while, meanwhile, too many young people leave foster care directly from highly restrictive or structured environments, setting them up for a shocking transition when they are suddenly on their own.⁴

**Figure 1: Last placement before emancipation
(SFY18)**



Specific steps to expand the use of ILAs in Colorado include:

- CDHS will request a formal Attorney General’s opinion to clarify counties’ concerns about liability stemming from the use of ILAs.
- CDHS will convene a task group out of the Child Welfare Sub-Policy Advisory Committee to explore ILA rule changes⁵ and determine the circumstances when youth under age 18 should be able to access an ILA, with the understanding federal reimbursement is unavailable for ILAs for youth under age 18. The committee believes youth who are under 18 should be able to access ILAs in certain circumstances, such as to live in a college dorm or to live with an adult sibling. In SFY18, eight 17-year-olds and four 16-year-olds were in ILAs in Colorado.⁶

#2 Allow youth ages 18-21, who have left foster care, to return if they decide they need continued support

In Colorado, if a young person has his or her child welfare case closed, they cannot currently return to child welfare for additional services and supports after their 18th birthday. Young adults who are not involved with child welfare usually “try on” their independence with the financial and emotional safety net of their families, including returning to live in their parents’ homes well into their twenties.

In contrast, independence is a one-way street for youth exiting foster care, who often have nowhere to turn when plans go awry. While it is developmentally appropriate and expected for young people to want to be out on their

⁴ Colorado Results Oriented Management (ROM); excludes secure Division of Youth Services placements (3/1/19).

⁵ 12 CCR 2509-4, 7.305.1 - 7.305.2.

⁶ ROM.(3/1/19)

own at age 18, a developmentally normal experience also includes a safety net of natural supports. In acknowledgement of this discrepancy in the experience of youth who emancipate from foster care, the committee recommends creating a process for young people who emancipate to return to access child welfare supports in certain circumstances.

The committee recommends a workgroup of county, state, non-profit, and youth stakeholders continue meeting to consider the details necessary to implement this complex change. Ensuring the process is developmentally appropriate for this population will require this workgroup to carefully consider changes to legislation and rule, existing training and practice models, and even messaging to young people about their options. The committee recommends the following as a baseline for further exploration:

- Create a statutory process for young people ages 18-21 to return to child welfare under certain circumstances.
- Determine the criteria for a young person 18-21 to return. For consistency, the committee recommends mirroring eligibility for Chafee services: those who exited care through adoption/guardianship after age 16 and youth who exited for any other reason after age 14.
- Determine the specific case requirements for youth who return to child welfare between ages 18-21, considering differences, if any, between cases for returning youth and cases for youth who have been continuously involved.
- The committee recommends any option for youth to return to child welfare be designed to allow federal Title IV-E reimbursement for eligible youth. This would include meeting the minimum case management practices and court oversight necessary to draw down federal IV-E funding.
- Participation with child welfare agencies should be voluntary for youth over age 18, regardless of whether they are returning to child welfare or have been continuously involved. Committee members expressed a concern that youth over age 18 are currently involved involuntarily in some cases, due to the uncertainty about their current readiness to successfully enter adulthood and their inability to return for future help if the case is closed. If a process for returning is established, youth-serving professionals may feel more comfortable supporting a young person's wishes to have their cases closed.
- Services for young people over age 18 must be youth-driven and developmentally appropriate. See the Pillars of Practice section in this report for more discussion on these issues.

*"Yes, it would help to know that I could come back for support. I know I'm not all grown up."
~ Former Foster Youth*

#3 Build, and fully fund, a strong network of housing supports for young people leaving foster care

When current and former foster youth begin to explore housing options, they discover a complicated housing system designed for adults. Rules are frequently confusing and misunderstood by landlords and case management agencies. Landlords are wary of renting to youth who have no prior rental history and no cosigner, and counties fear they could be liable for unpaid rent or damages if the youth doesn't meet their financial obligations. Colorado should mitigate the real and perceived risks of housing programs for young people leaving foster care.

- Raise awareness of how housing program rules can allow former foster youth to have roommates.
 - There is a lack of understanding by many landlords and case management agencies that it is allowable for youth with ILAs and rental assistance to have roommates under existing statutes. An awareness campaign should be developed to help those individuals and agencies understand how to support youth in navigating the process if they would like to have a roommate.



- Build a strong partnership and network of housing options across the state for former foster youth. This network needs to include family, traditional landlords, private landlords with individual units, and those with rooms to rent.

"I wanna be somewhere successful. I want to just live a comfortable life, and so I just pushed myself education-wise." ~ Former Foster Youth

- Track and monitor wait times for youth entering housing and develop annual budgets and appropriation requests to close the housing gaps for youth.

- Ensure that communities have access to fully funded, high-fidelity wraparound services to ensure the successful transition into adulthood.

- Develop a landlord mitigation/incentive fund to assist counties developing housing options. This incentive fund could assist with:

- Concerns of liability.
- Establishment of guarantee for co-signer.
- Establishing a rental history.
- Update the current runaway and homeless youth (RHY) host home rules to allow for youth in a Transitional Living Program host home to remain for 540 days per federal statute.⁷ Currently, the host home statute in Colorado limits RHY to 21 days at a host home.⁸
 - Establish an expedited process for host home certification.

#4 Ensure child welfare and runaway and homeless youth providers coordinate services for young people

Many agencies who work with transition-age youth compete for resources and do not understand the challenges their partner agencies face in serving and supporting transition-age youth. As a result each agency becomes siloed and services are less effective than they could be if those agencies worked closely together. The [Collaborative Management Program \(CMP\)](#) has led the charge in breaking down barriers between agencies, and the Pathways to Success demonstration project has shown benefits when child welfare and runaway and homeless youth (RHY) providers work closely together to improve outcomes for youth. This set of recommendations will help build strong interagency teams to support youth during their transition into adulthood.



- Create the position of Housing Partner within CDHS to increase awareness and knowledge of housing resources and work with the Division of Housing to develop a continuum of housing options that can be implemented to align with the specific needs of young people in foster care and after they emancipate. The Housing Partner would provide technical assistance to county departments on the use of the continuum of housing options. They would collaborate with the county departments, RHY providers, and youth to reduce the barriers in accessing the full continuum in a way that promotes positive outcomes for former foster youth.
- Revise the Collaborative Management Program (CMP) statute to encourage the inclusion of RHY providers in CMP memorandums of understanding. An estimated 12 of 46 CMP programs address or focus on youth. Model language should be drawn from § 24-1.9-102(1)(a.5), C.R.S. which pertains to family resource centers partnering with CMP.
- Amend the confidentiality statute⁹ to add runaway and homeless youth (RHY) providers to the list of entities who can have access, to the extent necessary, to provide and coordinate services, to child abuse or neglect records and reports.

⁷ [34 U.S.C. § 11222\(a\)\(2\)](#).

⁸ § 26-5.7-105(4) and (7), C.R.S.

⁹ § 19-1-307, C.R.S.



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- This recommendation would affect youth who are under 21, are seeking services and support at RHY agencies, and may need child welfare intervention due to abuse or neglect.
- With greater sharing of information between the departments of human/social services and RHY providers, each agency will be better able to respond with available resources, and if necessary, provide more formal, coordinated intervention.
- The committee recommends county departments of human/social services be permitted to share with RHY providers information necessary to provide and coordinate services, such as whether there is a current or prior child welfare case and the services being provided.

All foster youth will earn a high school credential

#1 Every foster youth over age 18 will have a high school credential prior to case closure

Graduation rates among current and former foster youth are substantially lower than the general population. The [most recent \(2017-18\)](#) four-year graduation rate for foster youth is 24.8%, which is much lower than the general population. Without a high school credential youth struggle to get jobs that pay a living wage and escape poverty. These recommendations will smooth communication between schools and child welfare agencies, while connecting youth with programs to provide meaningful support in earning a high school credential.

- Increase intervention services for youth who are struggling academically at the secondary level through the creation of partnerships with innovative programs like [First Star Academy](#) and the Jefferson County Public Schools and Jefferson Child Youth Leadership Commission's educational liaison pilot.
- Utilize [individual career and academic plans \(ICAPs\)](#) to ensure each foster youth's educational pathways are aligned with his/her interests and ambitions.
- The Colorado Departments of Education (CDE), Higher Education (CDHE), Human Services (CDHS), and Labor and Employment (CDLE) will adopt joint educational benchmarks and indicators in conjunction with state level plans to increase education stability and support effective educational transitions (e.g. reduction in average number of school moves for foster youth, decrease in school transfers tied to placement changes, successful completion of course, grade advancement, completion of FAFSA, completion of career exploration and financial literacy course).
- CDHS and CDE will work together to create a plan and ensure resources are provided to help young people achieve this goal.



#2 Develop and maintain effective, real-time communication systems and data sharing across local child welfare and school systems

Child Welfare Education Liaisons (CWELs) are responsible for ensuring students have access to the educational rights afforded to them by school stability laws (e.g. free lunch and fee waivers). Currently, the electronic systems (i.e., Trails, Infinite Campus, and Power School) are not integrated to provide real time data between county child welfare agencies and schools. The committee recommends improvements to these systems to allow seamless, real-time sharing of information between systems to provide timely information for Best Interest Determination meetings and notice to school districts when students enter foster care.



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- Creating an infrastructure that allows the exchange of information at the local level is critical for addressing the educational needs of the students entering in or changing out-of-home placements. The system would need to enable county child welfare caseworkers to alert schools within 24-48 hours of an out-of-home placement and allow for education information to be provided to the caseworker (e.g. attendance, grades, and behavior reports).
- At the state level, current data sharing practices can be expanded and improved to provide an accurate accounting of areas of need in counties and school districts to target funding and supports needed to reduce barriers for students in out-of-home placement.

"Everyone starts somewhere - though no one chooses where they start. Every person chooses where they go. Fears open the possibility for courage. Hardships make way for triumphs!"

~ Former Foster Youth

All current and former foster youth will have access to the post-secondary education and training they need to succeed in their chosen career path

The pathway to a successful adulthood is often built on the accomplishment of academic goals after high-school. The [earning potential](#) of former foster care youth increases with academic achievements and workforce experience when they are provided the ability to remain in these environments. Colorado has scholarship programs, localized post-secondary supports, and workforce services, but these are inconsistently utilized and are insufficient to address the needs of all former foster care youth. Nationally only 2-9% of former foster care youth complete a four-year degree,¹⁰ and very few access services through workforce centers. One of the main financial aid resources available to current and former foster youth is Educational and Training Vouchers (ETV), which are primarily utilized for the cost of housing (36%) and tuition (21%).

#1 Waive tuition and fees for Colorado state colleges, universities, and technical schools for current and former foster youth up to age 30

Expanded educational options such as Career and Technical Education (CTE) and enrollment in two-year and four-year institutions should be easily accessible to current and former foster youth. The committee recommends waiving tuition and fees for former foster youth who enroll in in-state postsecondary education and apply for the tuition waiver by age 30. The committee evaluated several states' current best practices in developing the following recommendations.

- Criteria to receive the waiver:
 - Mirror the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards when appropriate, with consideration of modifications specific to this population in developing program rules:
 - Maintain a minimum GPA 2.0 in the program of study.
 - The student meets a course completion rate set by the school.
 - Course load cannot be below part-time.
 - Waived tuition/fees are only available for Colorado state schools/programs.
 - The current/former foster youth must enroll and apply for the waiver by their 30th birthday.
- Determine program rules to maximize former foster youth's eligibility in financial aid programs and rely on state funds after accessing federal and private grants/scholarships.
 - Education and training vouchers (ETV) should continue to be accessed prior to federal Pell Grants.
 - Provide support for youth to apply for at least three scholarship programs.
 - Ensure youth complete the FAFSA and secure independent status where appropriate.

¹⁰ Fostering Success in Education: National Factsheet on the Educational Outcomes of Children in Foster Care (2014).

#2 Implement the navigator model at all institutions of higher education

Current and former foster youth often encounter multiple barriers when attending institutions of higher education. These barriers often center on the lack of support and guidance navigating financial aid requirements, institutional academic expectations, as well as significant struggles outside of school (i.e. child care, unstable housing, financial instability, transportation needs, etc.). All of these need to be addressed for former foster youth to truly be successful in higher education.

Currently there is one higher education navigator for current and former foster youth at CDHE. This position focuses on reducing systemic barriers in higher education and direct supports to ETV recipients. Expanding the navigator model to all campuses would allow more current and former foster youth to opt in to this support.

- Expand the navigator model to all two and four-year Colorado state colleges and universities.
- Support students with the Next Generation Education, Training, and Career Platform, which is a system that connects individuals to opportunity.
 - This system replaces College in Colorado. It will link state services to eliminate redundant programs and improve ease of use.
 - The online resource will deliver a sustainable, modern, and personalized web-based service that securely stores and organizes education, training, and career planning information into user portfolios with professional case management.
 - County child welfare caseworkers should be aware of this new resource to assist current foster youth in using the platform and uploading relevant school records and legal documents.
 - A foster youth's proof of independence can be uploaded to this resource
 - K-12 education providers should upload the Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) to the platform to ensure youth and county staff have access.

#3 Support collaboration between the child welfare system and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program (WIOA) to increase workforce readiness and options to attain industry certifications

The [Training for Youth](#) program at the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) is a federally funded program which includes GED preparation and support for high school graduation, tutoring assistance, and employment opportunities including internships, support services, and work skills. However, data reports from the program indicate these programs are either not accessed by foster youth and/or that data reporting is incomplete. Foster youth on panels and in groups did not identify having received services through these programs or through local workforce centers.

These recommendations address the underutilization of a very important service to enable former foster youth to work towards their identified career goals.

- Add targeted funding and recruitment efforts for the foster care population to WIOA services at CDLE.
- Provide workforce navigators that are available to all foster youth.
- Provide paid opportunities to develop workforce skills. Paid apprenticeships in state organizations could be one way to provide workforce opportunities, such as through [CareerWise](#).
- Raise awareness of WIOA, apprenticeship programs, and online career tools among case workers.

PILLARS OF PRACTICE

All foster youth will create individualized, developmentally appropriate case plans inspired by their own hopes and dreams

Since the rollout of differential response in Colorado, child welfare practices have increasingly reflected each family's own unique set of strengths and needs: planning with families is most successful when it is done as a partnership led by the parents. This type of respectful, client-led engagement is also the most effective way to work with youth. These recommendations emphasize meaningful youth engagement, highlighting some of the most impactful elements of the Pathways to Success model, where caseworkers engage youth in a "coach-like way," walking alongside youth with the assumption that every youth in foster care has the capacity to be successful, approaching them with thoughtfulness and caring, and honoring the youth's ability to determine and advocate for their own best interest with the support of their guardian ad litem (GAL).

#1 Professionals will ensure every youth's hopes and dreams drive the case plan and each interaction

- A casework practice model based on "Engaging Youth in a Coach-Like Way" and the Pathways to Success model intervention will be implemented statewide.
- The Colorado Child Welfare Training System (CWTS) will design and implement a youth services specialization track for youth-serving caseworkers and supervisors.
 - This specialization will include youth-specific coursework emphasizing the principles of [Positive Youth Development \(PYD\)](#) and supporting the new practice model.
- Individualized services to assess and mitigate the effects of trauma should be integrated into the service plans as well as ensuring staff are trained in trauma informed care to best facilitate meaningful support.

*"I don't need people
to feel sorry for me. I
need to move on.
What I need is to be
respected for trying
to make the best of
the life I've got"*
~Former Foster Youth

#2 Youth will have a stronger voice in court proceedings

- Youth re-entering the system at or after age 18 shall have direct client representation. Furthermore, the Office of the Child's Representative (OCR) should explore other models of representation for younger youth including direct client representation.

All current and former foster youth will experience normal adolescence, including the opportunity to succeed and make mistakes

Youth in foster care deserve to have the same opportunities as any other youth to grow their independence with developmentally appropriate support and guidance. As discussed previously in this report, the transition to adulthood for any youth is full of starts, stops, mistakes, and successes. Youth panelists shared with committee members that when they struggled with this transition, they were coached out of care, not because they were ready or had the skills to be successful but because they acted exactly as professionals would expect a youth who is 18-20 years old to behave. The following recommendations are intended to ensure foster youth are given the opportunity to experience a more normal transition into adulthood.

#1 Youth will experience appropriate developmental milestones while in foster care

- Youth in foster care will have access to developmentally appropriate case management when and where they are in need of services, with youth guiding the direction of their own lives.
- Simplify the process for foster youth to obtain legal documents.
 - Allow foster youth to easily access services and supports including legal identification and driver's licenses.
 - Train county child welfare case workers to assist foster youth in obtaining legal documents in complex situations.
- Support foster parents in implementing the "reasonable and prudent parent standard," allowing youth to have jobs and participate in social activities when appropriate.

#2 County departments will support each foster youth in transitioning to adulthood in a developmentally appropriate way

- Provide county child welfare case management through the 21st birthday if the foster youth deems it necessary.
 - This support should be regardless of the youth's living arrangement (foster family, transitional housing, independent housing, with kin), and should continue until the youth turns 21 or it is otherwise in their best interest to close the case.
 - Continue at least monthly check-ins from county child welfare caseworkers, with visits focusing on the youth's self-identified needs and goals.
- Allow and support youth in all counties to continue in foster care through their 21st birthday or sooner if in their best interest by following the established eligibility criteria.

*"I need to be able to make mistakes,
learn, and not lose all my support."
~ Former Foster Youth*

- Youth must meet at least one of the following eligibility requirements to remain in foster care after age 18 (§ 19-3-205, C.R.S. and [Title IV-E](#)):
 - The youth is working to complete a high school diploma or the equivalent;
 - The youth is enrolled in a postsecondary or vocational program;
 - The youth is participating in a program designed to remove barriers to employment;
 - The youth is employed for at least 80 hours per month;
 - OR the youth is incapable of any of the activities listed above due to a documented medical condition.
- Clarify the continuing jurisdiction statute (section § 19-3-205, C.R.S.) to provide that the evidentiary standard for case closure for youth under 18 is in the "best interests of the child."
 - This recommendation, if adopted, would affect youth who are under 18 and are currently in the child welfare system.
- Amend the continuing jurisdiction statute (section § 19-3-205, C.R.S) to require the following prior to case closure for youth over age 14:
 - All vital documents must be obtained and provided to the youth and must reflect the same legal name.
 - Create a streamlined process under Title 19 for this name change to occur.
 - Trails must reflect the same legal name.



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- Youth must receive a copy of their credit report. Any identified issues must show evidence of an attempt to be resolved, or if timely resolution is not feasible referred for assistance for resolving, prior to case closure (reflecting the intention of the current law in 19-7-102, C.R.S.).
 - CDHS should fund credit resolution services for youth in or leaving foster care who have inaccuracies on their credit report.
- Amend the continuing jurisdiction statute (§ 19-3-205, C.R.S.) to include specific language regarding case closure for youth who have current dependency and neglect cases and are on runaway status. This recommendation would affect youth who are under 18 and are currently in the child welfare system but are currently runaway youth.
 - The runaway youth's case cannot be closed if the youth is under 14.
 - For youth between age 14 and 18, the case cannot be closed unless legal permanency has been achieved (reunification, guardianship, adoption) or the youth has been on the run for over 6 months.
 - 6 months was chosen to balance competing desires to remain available for these young people while also allowing resources to be reallocated to foster youth currently engaged in the system.
 - *The committee's support of this recommendation is contingent upon implementation at the same time of the recommendation allowing foster and former foster youth to reopen their case should they meet the eligibility criteria for re-entry.* That way, cases are not being closed due to a youth's runaway status without the youth having the opportunity to seek needed supports in the future.

The John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood will provide effective services to eligible youth statewide



The John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee) is a federally-funded grant program providing states a flexible and supplemental funding source to support youth who are at risk of leaving foster care without achieving permanency. Currently, these services are only available to youth in half of the state, programs serving youth are inconsistent, documentation requirements can vary between programs, and program eligibility is more restrictive than what is allowed by the federal grant. Often, youth who move counties and were receiving services suddenly find

themselves on a long waitlist or unable to access services in their new community. These services can be provided more effectively and efficiently. This has become increasingly apparent through the work being done as a part of the Pathways to Success (Pathways) grant. These recommendations will ensure statewide, high quality, consistent services that are based on the needs and strengths of each individual youth.

#1 All eligible Colorado former foster youth will have the opportunity to participate in the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee) until their 23rd birthday

- CDHS will work with stakeholders to redesign the Chafee program so that services are provided to youth consistently throughout the state, regardless of their county of residence.

- The Pathways to Success model intervention will be integrated into services delivered through Chafee as the Pathways grant allows.
- CDHS will recommend rule changes to expand program eligibility to the maximum extent of federal law.

MEASUREMENT AND MONITORING

It is important to track the progress of implementation plans as well as to monitor outcomes to ensure the recommendations are effective at improving young peoples' lives. Colorado is fortunate to operate in a data-rich environment where systems to track many key outcomes and lead measures already exist. If the committee's recommendations are adopted, Colorado can expect to see improvement across many different measures, such as reduced numbers of former foster youth reporting homelessness and increased four and five-year high school graduation rates. The following is not an exhaustive list and will evolve to integrate data from new collaborations between agencies.

- [National Youth in Transition Database \(NYTD\)](#) - Participating in this data tracking is a federal requirement for accessing Chafee and Educational Training Voucher (ETV) funding. The state is required to follow cohorts of youth involved in the foster care system and complete a survey with them at age 17, 19, and 21. The youth answer questions related to their housing stability, permanent connections, employment history, educational achievement, public benefits access (including medicaid), and well-being. The independent living services that were provided to all youth in foster care are also tracked with this data submission. The state is provided with a [NYTD Snapshot](#) that details how our youth are prepared for adulthood.
- [C-Stat](#) - Is a performance-based analysis strategy that allows CDHS programs to better focus on and improve performance outcomes to identify areas of improvement or success. Current areas that are specific to this population:
 - Completion of the Roadmap to Success (formerly known as Independent Living Plan)
 - Children who re-enter care within 12 months
 - Children/Youth who are in congregate care (highly structured environment)
- **Permanent Connection Tracking** - Permanent connections are incredibly important for providing ongoing support to the young people who are emancipating from our system and ensuring they are supported into their adulthood. Sustaining the connections throughout the time of the county child welfare case, and after, will provide that continuous support. This could be tracked in the following ways:
 - Baseline could be addressed by analyzing the permanent connections that are identified in the Roadmap to Success and the Emancipation Transition Plan.
 - For ongoing supports this could be tracked through data provided by Chafee cases as well as Pathways to Success and NYTD data.
- [Colorado Results Oriented Management System \(ROM\)](#) - This online reporting tool was created to give state and county child welfare staff the ability to analyze current child welfare data to more effectively address challenges with specific populations. Examples of relevant information available for this population:
 - Roadmap to Success completion rates
 - Demographic information for youth in care
 - Length of stay and number of placements
 - Numbers of youth emancipating from foster care or achieving legal permanency
 - Information on the type of placement that youth are currently in (ILA, residential, group home, kinship placement, etc.)
- *Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Provider data* - This is a very important resource in looking at the housing outcomes of former foster care youth and how the services youth received in foster care prepared them.



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- Point in Time - This is a HUD requirement and the main source of data for homeless youth in the state. Homeless youth are surveyed about demographic information and their experiences, including if they have experienced foster care system.
- Homeless Service Provider data, including Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Provider data - Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is the main data source for tracking homeless services utilization and housing outcomes for former foster care youth.
- HMIS data sharing - CDHS is working with the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), Division of Housing (DOH) and Colorado's Continuum of Care regions (CoCs) to create the necessary data sharing agreement(s) to access HMIS data associated with youth utilizing homeless services or related housing resources, including RHY-HMIS data, coordinated entry data, and any data related to housing waitlists or housing needs. This would enable CDHS to access youth identifiers determine whether youth experiencing homelessness or housing services had also experienced foster care. This will establish a baseline on which the state can improve and ensure that former foster care youth are not experiencing homelessness.
- The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) - Office of Dropout Prevention and Student Re-Engagement publishes data annually including outcomes for students in foster care, including graduation and completion rates, dropout rates, and student mobility.
- Housing Voucher Waitlist - To ensure that all former foster care youth have access to stable housing it will be imperative to monitor the Family Unification Program (FUP) voucher and other relevant housing voucher waitlists through the Division of Housing. When progress is made in assisting youth accessing the full housing continuum this will reduce the immediate need for housing vouchers and they can be accessed when youth truly need them. Additional data points can be analyzed including housing retention, re-entry, and earnings.
- Judicial involvement - As youth are provided the opportunity to establish themselves in a successful adulthood there will be a reduction in their involvement in both the juvenile and adult criminal court systems. The goal of the recommendations is to create housing, behavioral health, and financial stability that will lend itself to decreased involvement in the criminal justice system.
 - Reduction of charges that are related to homelessness and survival.
 - Decreased charges related to behavioral health and/or substance use and their consequences.
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) Access - Statewide WIOA funded workforce centers are charged with preparing the workforce and increasing the ability to earn more. A targeted population for WIOA is current or former foster care youth but this resource has been severely underutilized in the state. The implementation of these recommendations will lead to increased access to the services and ultimately better career preparation.

IMPLEMENTATION

Section 26-5-114(3), C.R.S. states, "*The implementation plan recommended by the steering committee pursuant to this section is not required to become operational unless adequate state and federal funding is available.*" Systemic change takes both time and resources. CDHS, in conjunction with other state departments, and the Colorado legislature will analyze fiscal requirements of each recommendation.

"We should be pushed to independence, but we should be helped if we aren't ready. We should be set up to succeed."
~ Former Foster Youth

In this process, the committee recommends that consideration of scalable efforts and permissive strategies first be utilized where applicable. For example, expanding data-driven programs (e.g., Wendy's Wonderful Kids, First Star Academy, and similar efforts) to more regions throughout Colorado is a good first step if statewide expansion is not possible all at once. Similarly, a fund to increase former

foster youths' access to higher education would be a positive step even if all eligible youth could not be served in the first year - this would be comparable to the existing Education and Training Vouchers program, where funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis to eligible students.

In other instances the recommendations are of significant magnitude, such as allowing youth cases to be reopened after age 18, and more extensive stakeholder engagement is required to refine recommendations to be successful and actionable in Colorado.

Specific steps for implementation of each recommendation are included in the "Factors Leading to a Successful Adulthood" and "Pillars of Practice" sections. Each of these will require continued interagency collaboration and stakeholder engagement to be successful. *In particular, CDHS is committed to forming work groups to gather more stakeholder input on the specific directions of these two of the committee's more complex committee recommendations:*

1. Create a process for youth ages 18-21 to return to child welfare

- The recommended work group is responsible for analyzing how other states have integrated these changes. This will be accomplished through extensive research as well as seeking the input from experts that have assisted other states with the process and will include a fiscal analysis.
- The group will draft recommended legislative changes.
- The group will present findings and recommendations for necessary changes and the most effective way to implement them (including dissemination of information, staff training needs, technology/database updates, and ongoing support).

2. Youth will have meaningful, timely access to behavioral and mental health services

CDHS and the Colorado Department of Healthcare Policy and Finance (HCPF) will work together to improve access to Medicaid services, in particular, behavioral health treatment, for current and former foster youth and their families.

- Identify the barriers of former foster care youth and their families accessing Medicaid services with an emphasis on behavioral health.
- Recruit relevant staff members from HCPF, CDHS executive team members and staff from the Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) to create a collaborative approach to address the identified barriers.
- Determine specific steps to address the barriers and ensure that former foster care youth and their families can access needed services in a timely manner.

CONCLUSION

The recommendations in this report are written with the belief that every current and former foster youth is worthy of compassionate support and capable of success.

The current foster care system unintentionally perpetuates the cycles leading to child welfare involvement. Funding and implementing these recommendations will help build a modern system that will serve as a platform to launch youth to success.

Foundations for a Successful Adulthood, such as re-entry for youth who exit care after they turn 18, ensuring every foster youth has a high school credential, and tuition waivers, will disrupt a multi-generation cycle of poverty and child abuse and neglect. The Pillars of Practice will serve as a foundation guiding the Colorado Child welfare



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system's approach to youth engagement while making key supports available to every youth who is eligible, regardless of their geographic location.

While these changes may take time to fully implement, this report should serve as an important first step towards creating a future for the foster youth of Colorado that we can all be proud of. The Colorado Department of Human Services is grateful to the committee members for giving of their time and expertise to support young people. They are also grateful to the many young people who were willing to share their experiences and provide personal insight and expertise as the report was created.

*"If you are able to do all of this, it
will make a difference for my
brother who is still in foster care."
~ Foster Youth Panelist*





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Former Foster Care Youth Steering Committee Members

Appointed Voting Members

- Georgina Becerril (Denver County Department of Human Services)
- Derek Blake (Department of Human Services)
- Shawn Bodiker (Department of Health Care Policy and Financing)
- Jamie Burciaga (Department of Higher Education)
- Christina Carlson (Urban Peak)
- Minna Castillo Cohen (Department of Human Services)
- Ashley Chase (Office of the Child's Representative)
- Kippi Clausen (Unfolding Directions)
- Melinda Crowe (Jefferson County Department of Human Services)
- Courtney Daugherty (El Paso County Department of Human Services)
- Betsy Fordyce (Rocky Mountain Children's Law Center)
- Brittany Gardner (Mesa County Department of Human Services)
- Lee Hodge (Pueblo County Department of Human Services)
- Kelly Krause (Weld County Department of Human Services)
- Erin Medina (Mile High United Way)
- Kristin Myers (Department of Education)
- Heather O'Hayre (Larimer County Department of Human Services)
- Gini Pingenot (Colorado Counties Incorporated)
- Pastor Tamara Quansah (Love is Trinity Child Placement Agency)
- Melody Roe (Adoption Exchange)
- Gary Sanford (Burnes Center - University of Denver)
- Tammy Schneiderman (Division of Youth Services)
- Tori Schuler (Fostering Great Ideas)
- Dana Scott (Department of Education)
- Meghan Shelton (Office of Behavioral Health)
- Lindi Sinton (Volunteers of America)
- Chaz Tedesco (Adam's County Commissioner)
- Kristin Toombs (Division of Housing)
- Margo Valaika (Denver County Department of Human Services)
- Catherine Weaver (Larimer County Department of Youth Services)
- Steve Wright (Department of Labor and Employment)
- Claudia Zundel (Department of Human Services)

Non-voting Attendees

- Brian Brant (Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains)
- Adam Burg (Adams County)
- Alexis Kuznick (Denver Human Services)
- Sarah Lipscomb (Denver Human Services)
- Kristin Melton (Department of Human Services)
- Jerene Petersen (Department of Human Services)
- Cheryl Secorski (Division of Housing)
- Barbara Smith (Department of Human Services)
- Trevor Williams (Department of Human Services)

Facilitators

- Rox White (Strategy With Rox)
- Donalyn White (Strategy With Rox)
- Griffin Scherma (Strategy With Rox)

APPENDIX A: COLORADO'S CURRENT EFFORTS FOR EMANCIPATING YOUTH

Colorado is one of several states attempting to create better outcomes for youth exiting foster care. To date, 25 states and the District of Columbia have been granted approval by the federal government to receive federal funding to extend foster care services beyond the age of 18 under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, as enacted in the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act. While current Colorado law allows for young people to remain in care beyond the age of 18, the state has only recently begun to access this federal funding and does not currently allow young people whose cases have been closed after their 18th birthday to re-enter and access services to support their transition to adulthood. In addition, current Colorado practice may not be developmentally appropriate, thereby deterring youth from seeking continued support. In addition, ten states have enacted significant rules, regulations and legislation to support best and emerging practices for youth. These states were studied and their laws are summarized to illustrate the range of approaches which are underway to support youth.

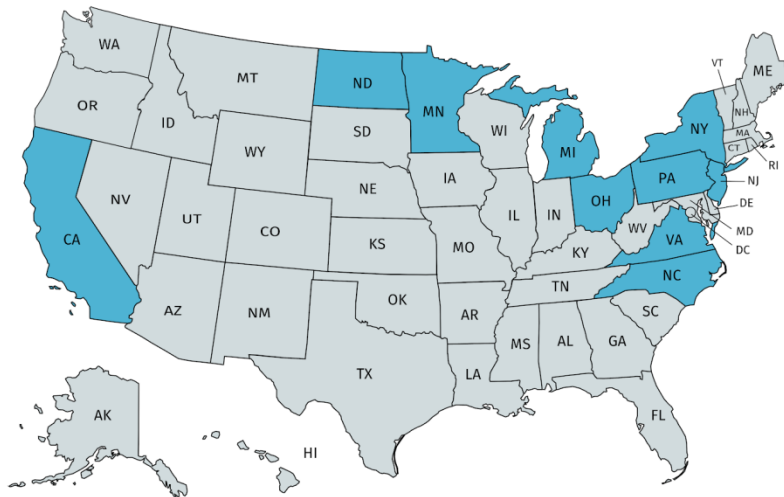


Figure 1. Ten states examined for background research: CA, NY, MI, NJ, PA, MN, NC, ND, OH, VA

National data was gathered to assess the landscape of foster youth in America. States are using a combination of rules, regulations and collaborations to help young people better transition from foster care to permanency. Ten states, shown above, were chosen because of the advanced practices, positive evaluations, and systemic approach. These particular states have been willing to provide state funding to support better outcomes for foster youth and have undergone external reviews and data collection. [The Extension of Foster Care Beyond Age 18](#) report by the Children's Bureau provided extensive background on current state practices. The Annie E. Casey Foundation has conducted research on [Foster Youth Transitions](#) (2018), along with rolling out programs like [Evidence2Success](#) and [Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development](#). Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago had completed extensive research and evaluation of these efforts including the [Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Function of Former Foster Youth](#) (2011) and [Improved Outcomes at Age 21 for Youth in Extended Care](#) (2018). Within those ten states, local and state policy were examined to help guide best practices. In addition to state efforts, national nonprofits were studied as states utilize non-profit service providers in their efforts to address the needs of young people. In particular, the efforts of [First Place for Youth](#) in California, Mississippi, and Massachusetts which are very similar to [Mile High United Way's Bridging the Gap](#) in Colorado; [Runaway and Homeless Youth](#) programs nationally as well as in Colorado; and [The Adoption Exchange: Wendy's Wonderful Kids](#), which is a national program that is also operating in Colorado, offered promising and evidence-based

solutions in select areas of Colorado. These organizations were selected based on research and knowledge of services and steering committee members.

To fully understand and appreciate these national efforts, it is essential to first understand what Colorado has in place to support youth as they transition from foster care. In Colorado, the Department of Human Services (CDHS) provides the primary leadership for services to youth in foster care. CDHS is joined in these efforts to support current and former foster youth by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE), Colorado Division of Housing (DoH), Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Finance (HCPF), the judicial branch, and a myriad of nonprofit and faith based organizations.

Current Services and Need in Colorado

In October 2018, 3% (40) of the 1184 foster youth age 15 or older who were in out-of-home placements were able to access Independent Living Arrangement placement. According to data from CDHS, approximately one quarter of 18-year-old foster youth remain in foster care to their 19th birthday. These youth often still need the support and assistance that they have received from the state up to this point, but are often unable to continue receiving care due to state policy, or funding constraints.

In Colorado, the data indicates the struggles faced by young people exiting the foster care system are severe. This is particularly concerning, because 30% of former foster youth aged 19 - 21 years old experience homelessness. During the [2018 Colorado Point-In-Time Count](#), a HUD-mandated annual census of people experiencing homelessness, 38% of respondents reported involvement with foster care, and 39% of respondents reported involvement with corrections across the country. When the respondents who identified as former foster youth were asked how they exited care, 47.3% reported leaving in an unsuccessful way (aged out, runaway, and/or unsuccessful discharge). Furthermore, the youth experienced barriers to successful transition including: 81.3% of former foster youth reported having difficulties accessing housing assistance, and foster youth reported being twice as likely to lack a trusted adult as their peers from intact families. The current state of youth exiting foster care without the services and supports needed to thrive shapes our recommendations with the intention of improving the long-term life outcomes for this population.

Youth who are served through the child welfare system are entitled to a number of supports and services. However, the child welfare system in Colorado has been historically underfunded and youth become a lower priority. In 2014, [The Colorado Child Welfare Workload Study](#) found that the child welfare system was underfunded and that there was a need for 574 additional caseworker FTE positions and 122 supervisory positions. While Colorado has worked to close these gaps, significant underfunding continues. Counties appropriately place the priority on immediate child protection needs.

Family and Children's Programs

[The Family and Children's Programs](#), commonly referred to as the Core Services Program (CORE), is the primary allocation of funds for child welfare services. Core serves families with children who are at imminent risk of out-of-home placement, in need of services to reunify, or in need of services to maintain a placement in the least restrictive setting possible. The goals of Core are to focus on the strengths of the family by directing intensive supportive services to the family/child as needed, to prevent out-of-home placement, to return children/youth in placement to their home, to unite children with their permanent family, and to provide protective services to children/youth. These goals are met by allocating Core funding to counties. Core offers a host of services to help attain the previously stated goals; however, there are limited dollars available to distribute to the counties of Colorado, with the need far exceeding the available funds. In addition, counties must prioritize children at immediate risk for abuse and neglect. While [House Bill 18-1319](#) clarified the law to ensure that in addition to the steering committee work counties could access Core funding for former foster care youth ages 18 to 21, counties continue to report inadequate funding to prioritize older youth, particularly those who are exiting the child welfare system.



Chafee Foster Care Independence Program

The John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (Chafee) was created by Congress to offer assistance to states to help current and former foster youth achieve self-sufficiency. This Act succeeded the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999. The Chafee program provides states with funding to implement supplemental programming to prepare foster youth for a successful transition into adulthood. In Colorado, counties apply annually for Chafee funding by submitting a plan regarding what services will be implemented and how the funds will be utilized. In Colorado, the Chafee Program serves youth ages 14 - 21 who have experienced an eligible out-of-home placement (including Department of Youth Services), with 861 youth receiving Chafee-funded services in fiscal year 2018.

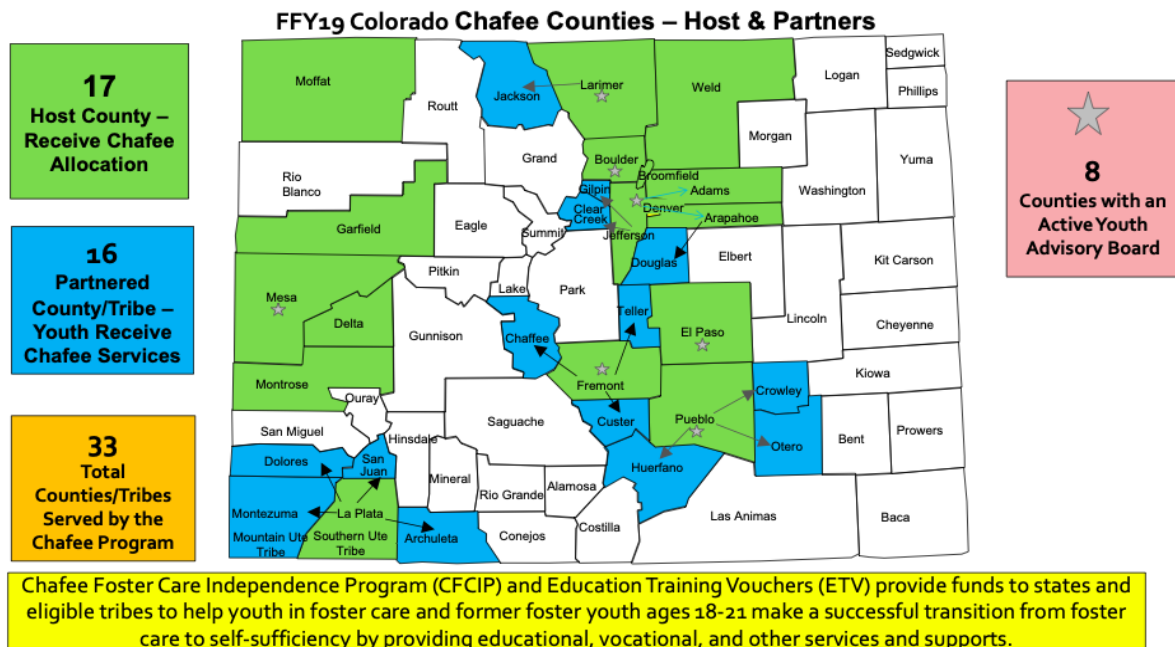


Figure 2. Colorado counties receiving Chafee funding in FFY19

In FFY2019, Chafee programs operated in 33 out of the 64 counties in Colorado. In addition to funding county programs, 30% of Chafee funding can be utilized on former foster youth ages 18 - 21 to support their housing needs. Additionally the state receives a separate allocation for Educational and Training Vouchers (ETV), which support youth in pursuing post-secondary education. ETV provides up to \$5,000 per year for the cost of attendance for youth aging out of the foster care system. However, these resources are not available in all counties, and some counties report waitlists due to high need.



Figure 3. Chafee allocations by county in FFY19

In select counties, a federal Administration of Children and Families' grant to prevent homelessness supports the Pathways to Success program. This program delivers an intervention designed to reduce or end homelessness among current and former foster youth. The project seeks to mitigate homelessness through coach-like engagement of the youth, flexible funding that removes immediate obstacles to care, and transparent focus on supporting youth in building supports within the five pathways of the model (permanency, employment, education, well-being, and housing). The secondary services provided by Pathways to Success are assisting youth in securing and maintaining safe and stable housing, providing immediate small scale financial assistance when needed, advancing permanency using permanency/community roundtables, appropriating referrals for securing resources or addressing barriers, utilizing case planning and assessment tools, and identifying community connections and transitioning youth to other supports. Through supporting youth in these auxiliary ways while pursuing the overarching goal of engaging youth in a coach-like way, Pathways to Success seeks to provide holistic care to current and former foster youth. The Pathways to Success model is currently being implemented in three collaborative sites across Colorado: Denver (urban), Boulder (suburban/smaller city), and several rural counties. These collaborative sites were chosen with the goal of seeing how Pathways to Success influences current and former foster youth in different regions of the state.

And yet, in spite of all these efforts, some Colorado youth are being left behind as they exit foster care. To understand how this occurs, it is important to first understand that over half of youth over age 15 in foster care are living in group home or facility settings. They do not have options for family settings for numerous reasons ranging from multiple failed placements to acuity of needs. Not only are these youth more likely to emancipate from foster care, but they are also transitioning suddenly from a highly structured environment to on their own. Of the youth who emancipated in FFY18 the vast majority (63%) transitioned from a non-family like environment. Eleven percent of the youth emancipated from a more family like setting, and 26% from an independent living arrangement, which provides the youth an opportunity to practice life skills while still receiving the support of the department of human/social services.

Behavioral Health Funding

Youth and case workers report that one critical factor for successful transition from foster care is access to behavioral and mental health. Under Federal law and state practice, [behavioral and mental health services](#) must be made available to current and former foster youth; however, youth and caseworkers report that these services are frequently not accessed by youth. According to data from the Office of Behavioral Health, usage of services drops as the youth age, often at the exact time when need for support and services increases. There is a drop in usage by 28% between ages 17 -18 and an additional 30% between ages 18 - 19. This is compounded by transition age youth having higher clinical severity scores than either children or adults, as well as being much more likely to

develop bipolar or schizoaffective disorders during their transition years. For former foster youth, accessing these services can be harder than it would be for non-foster youth. This is due, in part, to child and adult mental health care systems currently being separated, meaning that a foster child would need to navigate the additional barrier of transferring their care to a new service provider during a time of their life that, statistically, they may not even access the services regardless of ease of use. Compounding upon this, former foster youth would need to re-qualify for benefits. This points to a need to streamline behavioral and mental health services to promote a healthy lifestyle among current and former foster youth and to continue services uninterrupted as youth exit the child welfare system.

The Colorado Department of Education: Foster Care Education

[The Foster Care Program](#) within the Colorado Department of Education was established in 2012 to help youth in foster care with academic achievement, credits toward graduation, and opportunities toward a path for post secondary success. Each local school district designates a person to act as the Child Welfare Education Liaison (CWEL) for the district. These liaisons work to help students with placement, transfer, and enrollment. Among foster youth, the four-year high school graduation rate is 23.6%, and the dropout rate is 8.4%. These numbers are compared to the Colorado four-year high school graduation rate of 79%, with a 2.3% dropout rate as of 2017.

The Colorado Department of Labor and Employment: Workforce Initiative Opportunity Act (WIOA)

The [Training for Youth](#) program at the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment is a federally funded program which includes: GED preparation and support for high school graduation; tutoring assistance, and employment opportunities including internships, support services, and work skills. However, data reports from the program indicate that these programs are either not accessed by foster youth or that data reporting is incomplete. Foster youth on panels and in groups did not identify having received services through these programs or through local workforce centers.

The Colorado Division of Housing: Youth Housing

[The Office of Homeless Youth Services](#) is located with the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Division of Housing, and was created in Colorado statute in 2002. This legislatively mandated program is designed to coordinate services for homeless youth, of which the majority have been involved in the child welfare system. The staff members work intensively on documentation and counting of homeless youth, the presenting reasons for homelessness, and resources for helping the youth with housing assistance. In conjunction with the [Division of Housing](#), nonprofits, counties, and other state agencies, they work to provide rental assistance and permanent supportive housing to young people. These housing resources are essential, and inadequate, to meet the needs of former foster youth. It is difficult, particularly in rural communities, to find private landlords. In addition, the regulations exclude some youth from housing options due to personal circumstances, backgrounds, or needs. Providers and youth report extensive wait times, difficulties with re-entry after a move or failed housing attempt, and a lack of flexibility in configurations of housing (pets, roommates, etc).

The Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing: CHP+ and Medicaid (Health First)

CHP+ and Health First work closely with human services to provide health care coverage for youth in foster care. [Foster youth eligibility](#) extends to age 26 for youth who remained in the child welfare custody on or after their 18th birthday. Coverage includes medical, behavioral health, and dental benefits. There is no co-payment requirement. Youth are automatically enrolled provided they are in foster care on or after their 18th birthday. A significant barrier to automatic enrollment exists for youth who left care before the age of 18 and who must complete the enrollment process independently.

The Colorado Judicial Branch: Youth Services

In Colorado, all youth in a dependency and neglect proceedings receive a [Guardian ad Litem](#), a court-appointed attorney to represent their best interests. The [Office of the Child's Representative](#) provides training and oversight



for all contracted guardians ad litem in the state. The advocacy of these attorneys only extends through the duration of the court case. In addition, by law, these are best-interest attorneys, representing what they believe is best for the youth, as opposed to the youth's wishes, regardless of age. Youth from the metro-Denver area spoke highly of their relationship with these representatives and expressed desire to continue to receive such legal representation should they have the opportunity to re-enter and access additional services in the future.

APPENDIX B: COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS IN COLORADO

In addition to the state and county efforts to support young people, a number of nonprofit organizations are working on behalf of the young people and in collaboration with state and county efforts. The following list is not exhaustive but is provided to illustrate the depth and breath of efforts being undertaken on behalf of young people transitioning from foster care.

- [Burnes Center on Poverty and Homelessness at the University of Denver](#)
 - The mission of the Burnes Center is to educate and partner with policymakers, practitioners, and the public on issues of poverty, housing, and homelessness to transform the lives of people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Their goals include:
 - Access to housing
 - Data-driven research, policy and practice
 - Sharing their learning to improve lives
- [The Children's Law Center](#)
 - The Children's Law Center's mission is to transform the lives of abused, neglected, and at-risk children and youth through compassionate legal advocacy, clinical services, education, and public policy reform. Their values include:
 - Listening to the youth they serve to explore every option for safety, stability and success
 - Being reliable advocates who work collaboratively
 - Being resourceful
- [Colorado Children's Campaign](#)
 - The mission of the Colorado Children's Campaign is to realize every chance for every child in Colorado. The goals of the Colorado Children's Campaign are to:
 - Eliminate gaps in student achievement and health outcomes between children of different demographic and socio-economic backgrounds
 - Provide all children in Colorado with high-quality early learning and development opportunities
 - Secure affordable, quality health care for all Colorado children to support healthy communities
 - Ensure all children in Colorado have access to a quality K - 12 education to prepare them for their college experience, career, and life
- [Court Appointed Special Advocates \(CASA\)](#)
 - The mission of CASA is to ensure that every child who has experienced abuse and neglect has a consistent adult to advocate for his or her well-being.
 - CASA volunteers are specially trained to act as a voice for children in child welfare with the goal of helping the youth find safe, loving homes
 - There are 18 CASA programs in Colorado serving 18 of the 22 Judicial Districts
- [Fostering Great Ideas](#)
 - The mission of Fostering Great Ideas is to improve the lives of children as they struggle in foster care. Their goals to achieve this are to:
 - Support all children in foster care to feel valued and cared for during periods of stress and uncertainty
 - Develop a sense of dignity in foster care youth
 - Cultivate relationships - a key to long-term well-being
 - Develop community wherever possible to support caring individuals coming together
- [Gates Family Foundation](#)
 - The Gates Family Foundations is a philanthropic organization with the goal of improving quality of life in Colorado. They seek to:



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- Close the educational achievement gap between low-income and affluent children
 - Support rural communities in the changing economy
- [Love is Trinity Child Placement Agency](#)
 - Love is Trinity is a child placement agency dedicated to partnering with foster families to provide safe, well-educated homes for children in placement. As a placement agency, they stress that foster families should stay connected to each other well beyond the child welfare experience.
- [The Adoption Exchange](#)
 - The Adoption Exchange is a child welfare organization with the goal of establishing safety and permanence in the lives of foster children. Through collaboration with state, federal, and other relevant agencies, the Adoption Exchange seeks to find waiting children caring and loving relationships that last through adoptive and mentoring programs.
- [Mile High United Way: Bridging the Gap](#)
 - Bridging the Gap provides supportive services to youth ages 18 through 24 as they transition out of the child welfare system. Supports include:
 - Housing
 - Coaching
 - Employment
 - Educational programs
- [Urban Peak](#)
 - Urban Peak is a comprehensive program for runaway and homeless youth in Denver and Colorado Springs that provides a full convergence of services for youth aged 15 - 24 who are experiencing homelessness or are at immediate risk of experiencing homelessness. Services include:
 - Emergency shelters
 - Day-time drop-in centers
 - Street outreach
 - Education & employment programming
 - Supportive housing
- [Volunteers of America](#)
 - The Volunteers of America Colorado Branch works to identify and provide the services required by individuals and families most in need within Colorado. For youth, they provide:
 - Housing
 - Employment
 - Independent living skills
 - Parenting skills

APPENDIX C: HIGHLIGHTS FROM STATE PRACTICES

State Practices on Permanency

Across America, youth continue to transition to adulthood without being successfully adopted, reunified, or having long-term connections and supports. Some of the current best practices designed to increase the number of youth achieving legal permanency are described below. These represent a combination of practice, regulatory, and legislative reforms.

California

- [AB12](#) allowed foster care for eligible youth to extend beyond age 18 up to age 21. Eligible foster youth are designated as “non-minor dependents” (NMDs). This legislation also recognized the importance of family and permanency for youth by extending payment benefits and transitional support services for the Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) and the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment (Kin-GAP) Program.
 - Basic Eligibility Requirements:
At the six month hearing prior to youth turning age 18, the social worker/probation officer must have a plan to ensure the youth meet at least ONE of the following participation criteria:
 - Working toward completion of high school or equivalent program (e.g. GED)
 - Enrolled in college, community college or a vocational education program
 - Employed at least 80 hours a month
 - Participating in a program designed to assist in gaining employment
 - Unable to do one of the above requirements because of a medical condition
 - Non-minor dependents must sign an agreement to reside in an eligible placement location and agree to work with a social worker/probation officer to meet the goals outlined in their Transitional Independent Living Case Plan.
 - Remaining in foster care after age 18 is voluntary. Non-minor dependents can exit at age 18 or at any subsequent time before age 21. Youth who exit at age 18 can re-enter foster care at any time before age 21.
- AB 604 allows older foster youth who were involved in sex trafficking to access extended foster care benefits. It also removes some barriers for older transition-age youth to re-enter foster care if they experienced a failed guardianship or adoption after age 18.

New York

- Youth may stay in Foster Care until age 21.
 - Care may extend beyond age 21 - a provider agency may request an Exception to Policy to allow an individual to remain in care.
- [NYS Guardianship Assistance Act](#).
 - This act provides a monthly stipend for the care and maintenance of foster children until the child is age 18, or if the child was over 16 when their kinship guardian was appointed, until the child is 21 provided the child attends school, vocational training, or is employed for 80+ hours per month.
- Provided funding for community initiatives.
 - \$2.45 million for Settlement Houses to provide community services including job training and employment programs, early childhood education, after-school youth programs, literacy education, legal counseling, mental health and home care, housing, and senior centers.

Michigan

- Michigan offers the following services through the [Foster Care Independence Program](#) to increase the permanency of former foster youth transitioning out of care.



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- Identifying foster youth who are likely to remain in foster care until age 18 and helping these youth make the transition to self sufficiency by providing services such as:
 - Assistance in obtaining a high school diploma
 - Career exploration
 - Vocational training
 - Job placement and retention
 - Training in daily living skills
 - Training in budgeting and financial management skills
 - Substance abuse prevention
 - Preventive health activities, including smoking avoidance, nutrition education, and pregnancy prevention
- While the services listed above are direct-services such as trainings or job placement, wraparound services are also provided to foster youth such as:
 - Helping young adults who are likely to remain in foster care until age 18 navigate the system to receive education, training, and services necessary to obtain employment
 - Helping young adults who are likely to remain in foster care until age 18 prepare for and enter postsecondary training and education institutions
 - Providing personal and emotional support to youth aging out of foster care, college through the provision of mentors and the promotion of interactions with dedicated adults
 - Providing financial, housing, counseling, employment, education, and other appropriate support and services to former foster care recipients between age 18 and 21 to complement their own efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and to assure that program participants recognize and accept their personal responsibility for preparing for and then making the transition from adolescence to adulthood

New Jersey

- The [state of New Jersey's Extended Foster Care Program](#) is committed to providing services to adolescents, age 18 - 21, to assist with a successful transition to independence. The department encourages youth who are age 18 or older to remain service-active with the department until they turn age 21. However, when there are no child protective services concerns or other legal reasons to keep a service case open, an older youth (age 18 or older) may request that his or her case be closed; the department is required to heed such a request; however, former foster youth can reverse that decision and re-enter care conditionally.
 - The [Department of Children and Families](#) shall provide services to an individual between 18 and 21 if (a) the individual was receiving services from the department on or after the individual's 16th birthday; (b) on or after the individual's 18th birthday, they have not refused or requested that such services be terminated; and (c) the commissioner determines a continuation of services would be in the individual's best interest and would assist him in becoming "an independent and productive adult."
 - The criteria for cases remaining open are as follows:
 - Received services from the Department of Children and Families at age 16 or older
 - Is in a Child Protection and Permanency-supervised or funded out-of-home placement and agrees to accept continued case management services from Child Protection and Permanency, including continued board payments. This includes adolescents in foster care or independent living settings
 - The Worker and Supervisor, as part of an assessment that actively engages the adolescent, conclude that continuation of services is in the adolescent's best interest, e.g., to facilitate completion of high school, GED< post-secondary education, vocational program
 - Clinical reasons exist
 - Continued work towards the goals outlined in his or her Transitional Plan for Adolescents



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- Fully employed (30 hours per week or more) and earns less than 150% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines for a family of one or needs non-financial CP&P services
 - The foster youth is pregnant
- In order to extend services to a foster youth who has turned 18:
 - Six months prior to the foster youth's 18th birthday the caseworker engages the youth in a service needs assessment. Areas assessed include the need for services to facilitate the goals of independence and self-sufficiency, education, financial stability, housing stability, and health care.
 - The caseworker must meet the foster youth to check in at least once every month, and must visit their residence at least once every three months. If the youth is attending college out of state, but still receiving services, the caseworker must check in with the youth at least once whenever they are back in the state.
- Youth may re-enter care.

Pennsylvania

- [Fostering Connections to Success Act in Pennsylvania](#) was created through two laws [Act 80](#) and [Act 91](#) to provide greater opportunities and supports for older youth in foster care.
- Regarding the availability of foster care services past age 18, the court will assess the following at each permanency hearing:
 - The services needed to assist a foster youth who is age 14 or older to make the transition to successful adulthood
 - Whether the youth continues to meet the definition of "child" pursuant to PA §6302 and has requested that the court continue jurisdiction if the child is between ages 18 - 21
 - That a transition plan has been presented in accordance with section 475 of the Social Security Act (49 Stat. 620, 42 U.S.C §675(5)(h))
- At any time prior to a foster youth reaching age 21, they may request the court to resume dependency jurisdiction if:
 - The youth continues to meet the definition of "child" pursuant to PA §6302
 - Dependency jurisdiction was terminated within 90 days prior to the youth's 18th birthday, or before the youth turns 21
- As part of their Independent Living Plan, Pennsylvania provides foster youth with the following group counseling and workshop opportunities to promote permanency:
 - Self-esteem courses
 - Self-confidence courses
 - Development of interpersonal and social skills courses
 - Preparation for transition to independence and termination from substitute care
- Stipends will be provided to youth for participation in and completion of independent living activities.
 - These are activities that promote and assist youth, and their children if applicable, in making the transition out of foster care

Minnesota

- A youth in foster care can, immediately prior to their 18th birthday, express interest in remaining in foster care past age 18. They are able to remain in foster care unless:
 - The youth can safely return home
 - The child is in placement pursuant to the agency's duties under [MN §256B.092](#) to meet the youth's needs due to developmental disability or a related condition, and the youth will be served as an adult
 - The youth can be adopted or have permanent legal custody transferred to a relative prior to the youth's 18th birthday
- The responsible social services agency shall assist the youth in obtaining the following documents before the individual exits foster care:



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- A Social Security Card
- An official or certified copy of the youth's birth certificate
- A state identification card or driver's license, tribal enrollment identification card, green card, or school visa
- Health insurance information
- The youth's school, medical, and dental records
- A contact list of the youth's medical, dental, and mental/behavioral health providers
- Contact information regarding the youth's siblings, if the siblings are in foster care

Nevada

- Child Welfare and Education are coordinating data sharing in the best interest of education attainment.
 - Information technology professionals at Nevada County Human Services collaborated with the district to have their version of the TRAILS system to automatically upload the notice of out-of-home placement to the school district's student information system (e.g. Infinite Campus, Powerschool, etc.)
 - Caseworkers have access to the same school information a parent would (e.g. grades, attendance, behavior, etc.)
 - Schools have limited access to the county human services database (e.g. name, birthday, date of placement, address, etc.)
 - Counties and schools use this information to ensure they are providing high-fidelity wraparound supports for children and youth in foster care. Educational goals, progress, and other relevant educational information is shared to ease the burden on the student

North Carolina

- North Carolina's efforts extend from the [Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 which were revised in 2015](#)
- The relevant agency must make the following documents available to current and former foster youth:
 - An original or certified copy of the youth's birth certificate
 - A Social Security Card
 - The youth's latest complete immunization record and all other medical records
 - All educational records
 - Copies of any legal documents that the youth may need for employment or benefits, including verification of eligibility for extended foster care Medicaid, legal residency documentation, a letter verifying agency custodial responsibility at age 18, and other pertinent legal documents

Ohio

- Expansion of [Wendy's Wonderful Kids](#) to increase permanency.
- The [Department of Job and Family Services](#) provided independent living supports and is coordinated with the [Bridges to Success](#) work which provides housing, education, employment and well-being support for youth aging out of foster care.
- Health services, education, and risk prevention training is available, which includes
 - Hygiene, nutrition, fitness, and first-aid training
 - Medical and dental care benefits
 - Assistance maintaining personal medical records
 - Sex education, HIV prevention, pregnancy prevention, and family planning training
 - Substance use education, prevention, and intervention

Virginia

- Virginia has had some of the highest percentages of [youth aging out of care](#) without permanent connections. As a result, [Virginia](#) has changed supports.
- Youth placed in foster care before age 18 may continue to receive Independent Living services from the child-placement agency between the ages of 18 - 21 if:



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- The youth is making progress in an educational or vocational program, has employment, or is in a treatment or training program
- The youth agrees to participate with the local department in (i) developing a service agreement and (ii) signing the service agreement
 - Service agreements must require, at a minimum, that the youth's living arrangement shall be approved by the local department and that the youth shall cooperate with all services
- The youth is in permanent foster care and is making progress in an educational or vocational program, has employment, or is in a treatment or training program
- Local department shall provide any person who chooses to leave foster care or terminate Independent Living services before their 21st birthday written notice of their right to request restoration of Independent Living services

State Practices on Education and Employment

Education and skills development is vital to individuals becoming productive and successful members of the community and improve their prospects for developing financial assets. According to the Colorado Department of Education, for foster youth, the high school graduation rate is 23.6%, and the dropout rate is 8.4%. These numbers are compared to the Colorado high school graduation rate, which is 79%, with a 2.3% dropout rate. This large discrepancy points to foster youth in Colorado falling between the cracks of our education system. Child Welfare Education Liaisons currently exist in schools across Colorado, and foster youth are currently required to have an Individual Career and Academic Plan; however, these measures are not enough to support foster youth through their educational careers. The development and widespread adoption of Single Points of Contact in every school across Colorado, attempting to streamline foster youth's education by minimizing school transfers, and ensuring that foster youth understand and have access to postsecondary education and supports is essential to improving educational outcomes of foster youth in Colorado.

According to Fostering Success in Education 20% of foster youth who graduate high school go on to attend college (compared to 60% of high school graduates overall). Only 2-9% of those foster youth attain a bachelor's degree.

California

- [AB 1567](#) provides information to self-identified foster youth to support youth at selected campuses with supportive programming and guidance.

New York

- [Foster Youth College Success Initiative](#) provided \$4.5 million to support a program with the goal of helping foster youth successfully attend and excel in college.

Pennsylvania

- As part of their [Independent Living Plan](#), Pennsylvania provides foster youth with the following educational and skill supports:
 - Career planning;
 - Preparation for a GED or higher education;
 - Tutoring or other remedial education;
 - Job readiness training;
 - Job search assistance;
 - Job placement; and,
 - Job follow-up activities.

North Carolina

- County Departments of Social Services may provide [Foster Care Assistance Payments](#) to support continued education if the following factors are established:
 - The youth is younger than age 18 and is:
 - A full-time student in a secondary school; or,
 - Enrolled in the equivalent level of vocational or technical training; and,
 - May reasonably be expected to complete the program before reaching age 19.
 - The youth has not reached the age of 21 and is a full-time student, or has been accepted for enrollment as a full-time student for the next school term pursuing one or more of the following:
 - A high school diploma or its equivalent;
 - A course of study at the college level; or,
 - A course of vocational or technical training designed to prepare them for gainful employment.
- With monthly supervision and oversight by the director of the County Department of Social Services or a supervising agency, an individual receiving this benefit may reside outside of a foster care facility in a college or university dormitory, or other semi-supervised housing while continuing to receive benefits.

Ohio

- [Independent living services](#) include, but are not limited to:
 - Expansion of Wendy's Wonderful Kids to increase permanency.
 - Academic support, including literacy training and help the youth access educational resources.
 - Postsecondary educational support, including information about financial aid and scholarships.
- Career preparation services include, but are not limited to:
 - Vocational and career assessment, guidance in setting and assessing vocational and career interests and skills, and help in matching interests and abilities with vocational goals.
 - Job seeking and job placement support, writing resumes, completing job applications, developing interview skills, writing resumes, completing job applications, developing interview skills, understanding employee benefits coverage, and securing work permits.
- Educational financial assistance is available for the following:
 - The purchase of textbooks, uniforms, computers, and other educational supplies;
 - Tuition assistance;
 - Scholarships;
 - Payment for educational preparation and support services; and,
 - Payment for GED or other educational tests.

National Housing Practices

The availability of safe and affordable housing for youth who transition from foster care to adulthood was identified as a barrier. Youth want and need safe and stable housing. This is generally achieved when youth have access to supportive housing with case management services that meet each youth's individual needs. Barriers to safe and stable housing are the result of:

- Policies and laws that do not support the needs of transition age youth.
- A lack of case worker awareness and understanding of housing options and funding requirements.
- The lack of safe and affordable housing for transition age youth.

Some county departments of human/social services have created policies that limit the types of housing youth are allowed to access due to rental agreements and liability. Federal law does not permit the state to claim Title IV-E funds for youth who have not reached the age of 18 and might benefit from living in an age-appropriate

independent living arrangement. Once a youth has reached the age of 18, it is very difficult for them to sign a lease until they are at least 21 years of age without a cosigner on the lease.

Many communities do not have any independent housing options for youth under the age of 18, and even emancipated youth are viewed as high risk tenants by landlords. Youth who are over 16 but under the age of 21 or even 26 find it very difficult to stabilize in housing. Youth need to experiment with varying types of housing situations, roommates and locations. However, youth who exit stable housing either by choice or due to evictions find it almost impossible to quickly re-enter or find alternative housing.

The primary funding source for youth housing comes from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Runaway Homeless Youth funds from Health and Human Services. These are invaluable sources of housing for many youth. However, for other youth, HUD supported housing comes with restrictions that can make it difficult for current and former foster youth to navigate, or restrict access to services. Some HUD services require the status of homelessness to receive benefits, which can result in youth being temporarily forced into homelessness to receive services. Long-term housing options via permanent supportive housing vouchers and directed HUD grants to providers are currently designed to serve adults, removing the ability for former foster youth to either access them or experience normal youth development. This points to a larger issue with HUD services, that they are not focused on providing age and developmentally appropriate services. HUD income calculations aren't normed for costs or expenses of older youth, making loss of services due to the cliff effect a serious consideration. Nor are most youth adequately prepared for independent housing and the responsibilities that come with independent housing. Youth are more likely to succeed with supportive housing that includes on-site services, landlords, and assistance.

County child welfare caseworkers who are not specifically trained in housing options do not always understand the available housing options and varying rules which can make the development of a strong ILA difficult. Youth often feel that, during their transition to adulthood, they are not treated as adults in regards to decision making and planning, and they are often not prepared for the full array of housing decisions. Some foster youth also reported that they were not given complete information on what housing services were available to them. Colorado youth also experience very uneven distribution of housing resources between rural and urban communities. It is very difficult for most 18-21 year olds to navigate housing, transportation to work or school, tenant disputes, and apartment life.

With these barriers in mind, some of the current best practices that other states have begun to utilize include continued care and services (CA, FL), direct payment of supports to the youth (CA, FL, MN and OH), and continued support for foster or adoptive families (CA, FL and AK). HUD has detailed promising practices in their report, [Housing for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care](#) and the National Council of State Legislators has provides overviews in their report [Extending Foster Care Beyond 18.](#)

California

- There are [three options](#) for foster youth in California:
 - Remain in an existing home of a relative or guardian; licensed foster family home; certified foster family agency home; home of an unrelated legal guardian whose guardianship was established by the juvenile court; or a group home (youth may remain in group homes after age 19 only if the criteria for a medical condition is met and the placement is a short-term transition to an appropriate system of care).
 - THP - Plus Foster Care (THP + FC) - this program has three models: a Host Family where the youth lives with a caring adult who has been selected and approved by the transitional housing provider; a Single Site where the youth lives in an apartment, condominium, or single family dwelling rented or leased by the housing provider with an employee(s) living on site; or a Remote Site where the youth lives independently in one of the housing types listed above with regular supervision from the provider.



- Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP) - this placement option allows youth to live independently in an apartment, house, condominium, room and board arrangements, or college dorm, alone or with a roommate(s), while still receiving the supervision of a social worker/probation officer. The youth may directly receive all, or part, of the foster care rate for renting

Mississippi

- Mississippi offers rooming houses with supervision from a licensed placement agency that is an additional source of housing for the Independent Living Arrangement program.
 - Caseworkers refer foster youth into these placements, and monitor their progress regularly.

Florida

- Florida has several options for youth to [receive housing assistance](#)
 - Remain placed at a foster home;
 - Licensed group homes, and supervised living arrangements (i.e. college dormitories, rental homes, or apartments); and,
 - When youth are denied extended foster care, they can appeal that decision by submitting a formal application for re-entry. They receive a fair hearing process to make their case. All current and former foster youth also receive a standard payment once they turn 18 to continue pursuing educational and vocational goals.

New Mexico

- Current and former foster youth are able to obtain Independent Living Placement Status (ILPS)
 - This allows an eligible youth to become their own vendor to receive monthly maintenance payments. These payments allow the youth to live as a tenant with a foster parent, or to live independently with limited parental or state supervision regarding safety and appropriate use of funds.
 - This model puts responsibility in the hands of foster youth, who often feel that they are not being given a chance to “try out” being an adult in their formative years.

New Jersey

- [New Jersey](#) has a similar program to direct payment method of New Mexico
 - Youth ages 18 - 21 who are in an independent living placement may receive an independent living stipend if they have signed the voluntary services agreement and are in compliance with the expectations therein, including participation in the development of their transition plan, have an income less than 150% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines for a family of one, and have agreed to and signed the Independent Living Stipend Responsibility Agreement. Youth in licensed resource homes or congregate care placement are not considered to be living independently.

Arkansas

- Arkansas has developed a youth sponsor program that provides ongoing support through current and former foster youth's 21st birthday
 - Sponsors visit youth at school, provide a framework of normalcy through supporting the youth in normal activities, assist with financial guidance, and other coach-like supports.

Pennsylvania

- As part of their [Independent Living Plan](#), Pennsylvania provides foster youth with the following housing supports:
 - Money management training;
 - Home management training;
 - Consumer skills development;



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- Support identifying and utilizing community resources;
- Transportation assistance;
- Assistance locating housing;
- Problem-solving and decision-making training; and,
- Time management and communication skills training.

Minnesota

- Independent Living Plans in Minnesota should all include, but are not limited to:
 - Education, vocational, and/or employment planning;
 - Health care planning and medical coverage;
 - Transportation including, when appropriate, assisting the youth in obtaining a driver's license;
 - A money management plan;
 - A housing plan;
 - Social and recreational skills development;
 - Establishing and maintaining connections with the youth's family and community; and,
 - Regular opportunities to engage in age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate activities typical for the youth's age group while taking into account the capacities of the individual.

Ohio

- Housing and home management services include:
 - Assistance or training in locating and maintaining housing, filling out rental applications, acquiring a lease, handling security deposits and utilities, and understanding tenants rights and responsibilities; and,
 - Instruction in food preparation, laundry, housekeeping, living cooperatively, meal planning, grocery shopping, and basic maintenance and repairs.
- Room and board financial assistance is available, including rent deposits, utilities, and other household start-up expenses.

Virginia

- Housing assistance is extended to former foster youth age 18+ to provide the following services:
 - Local departments and licensed child-placing agencies shall provide Independent Living services to any person between ages 18 - 21 who is in the process of transitioning from foster care to self-sufficiency. Any person who was committed or entrusted to a local board or licensed child-placing agency may choose to discontinue receiving Independent Living services any time before their 21st birthday in accordance with regulations adopted by the State Board of Social Services. A local board or licensed child-placing agency shall restore Independent Living services at the request of that person provided that (i) the person has not yet reached age 21 and (ii) the person has entered into a written agreement with the local board or licensed child-placing agency less than 60 days after Independent Living services have been discontinued.
 - Local departments and licensed child-placing agencies shall provide Independent Living services to any person between 18 - 21 years of age who (i) was in the custody of the local Department of Social Services immediately prior to their commitment to the Department of Juvenile Justice, (ii) is in the process of transitioning from a commitment to the Department of Juvenile Justice to self-sufficiency, and (iii) provides written notice of their intent to receive Independent Living services and enters into a written agreement for the provision of Independent Living services with the local board or licensed child-placing agency within 60 days of their release from commitment to the Department of Juvenile Justice.