

FIVE WAYS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AFFECTED YOUNG PARENTS IN FOSTER CARE

Welcome and Overview



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The Annie E. Casey Foundation

Agenda

- Communicating during the webinar
- Our presenters
- About the Annie E. Casey Foundation and what we hoped to learn about the pandemic's effect on young people with foster care experience
- About the study
- Five major themes
- Implications for the future
- Your questions
- Resources for learning more

Our Panel



Elizabeth M. Aparicio
University of Maryland



Svetlana Shpiegel
Montclair State University



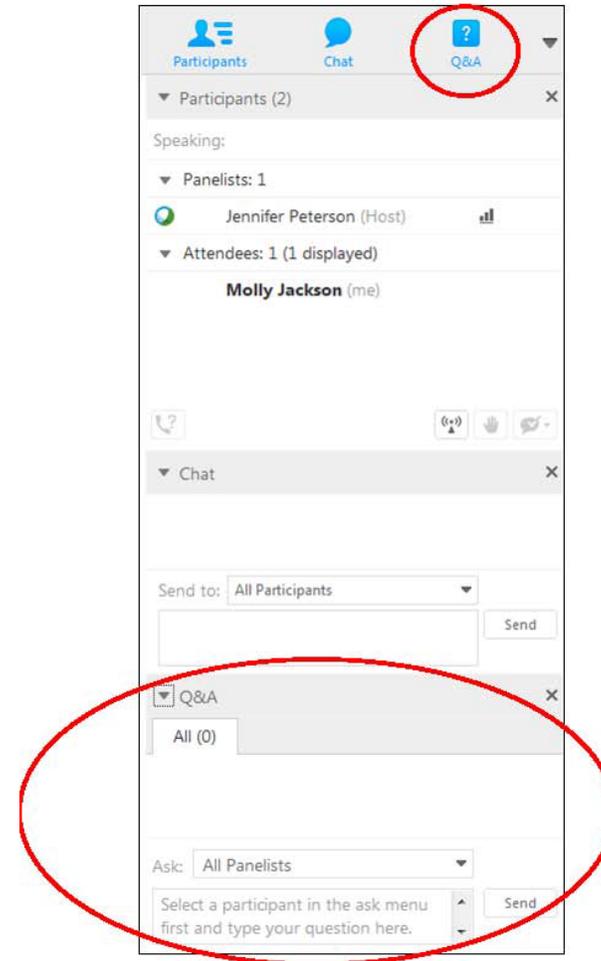
Alexander Sanchez
Youth Co-Researcher



Tammi Fleming
The Annie E. Casey Foundation

Communicating During the Webinar

- Communicate with us using the Chat or Q&A window in the lower right corner of your screen.
- Type questions for the panel at **any time** during the webinar; no need to wait for the end!
- This webinar is **being recorded** and will be available soon at aecf.org/webinar.





The Annie E. Casey Foundation develops solutions to build a brighter future for children, families and communities.

What We Set Out to Learn



How a broad, multifaceted crisis affected a particular group of young people



How youth voice could advance understanding and make meaning of other data



How a different methodology could add value to quantitative research on this topic



How this information could help the Foundation invest in designing responses and solutions together with young people

About the Study

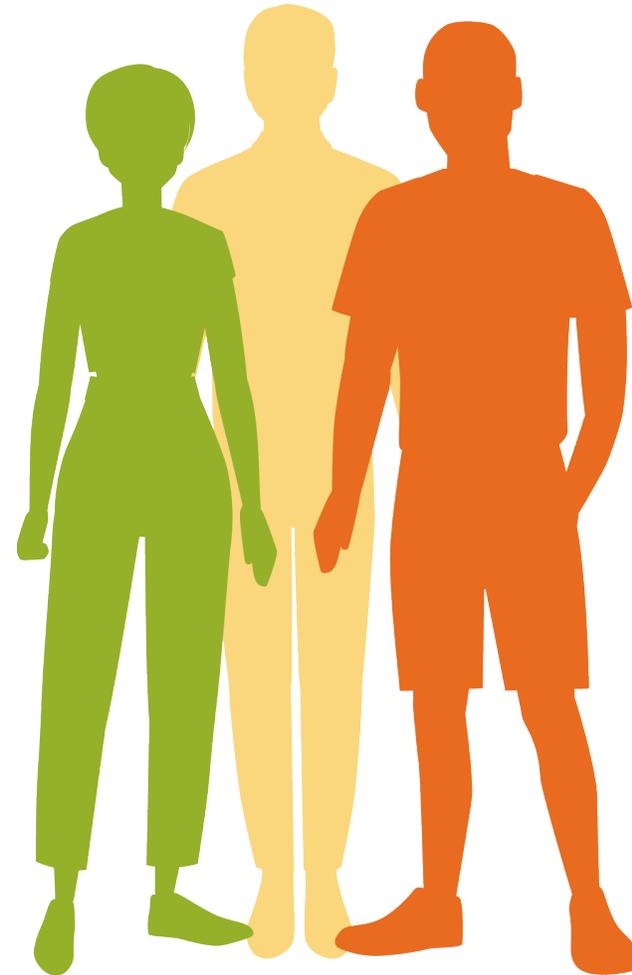
Study Team and Partners

- University, community-based organization and community-based youth researchers
- Co-principal investigators: Svetlana Shpiegel and Elizabeth Aparicio
- Data collection partner: Genevieve Martinez-Garcia
- Youth co-researchers: Alexander Sanchez and Sheila VanWert
- Graduate students: Marissa Ventola, Michelle Jasczynski, Amara Channell Doig and Jennifer Robinson
- Collaborator: Rhoda Smith, Erikson Institute



Study Design

- Multiple qualitative methods
- 26 participating youth ages 18 to 26 years
 - Four focus groups with young mothers
 - Three individual interviews with young fathers
 - Photovoice project with nine youth
- Data collected January to March 2021



Study Design

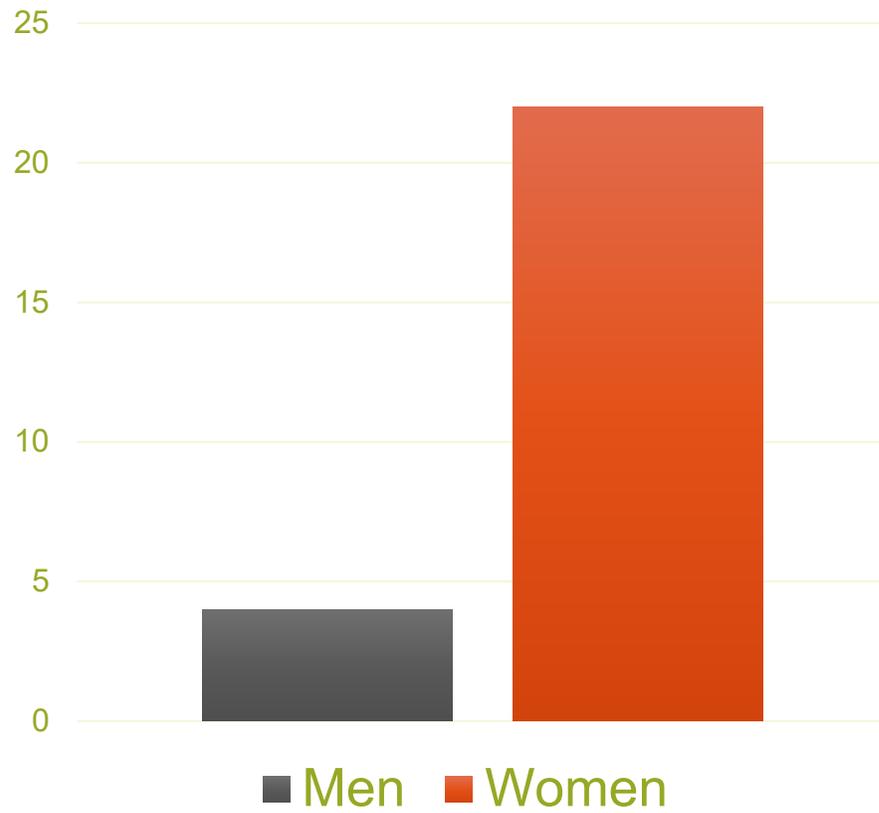
- Semi-structured interview guide for focus groups and individual interviews:
 - COVID-19 pandemic effects on housing, employment, health, mental health, family and parenting
 - Attitudes about COVID-19 vaccination
 - Strengths, sources of support, services

Study Design

- Photovoice project:
 - Two Photovoice cohorts
 - Three sessions with prompt: “Show your experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.”
- Transcription and thematic analysis
 - Verbatim transcription
 - Identification of prominent themes

Demographics

Gender



Race and Ethnicity

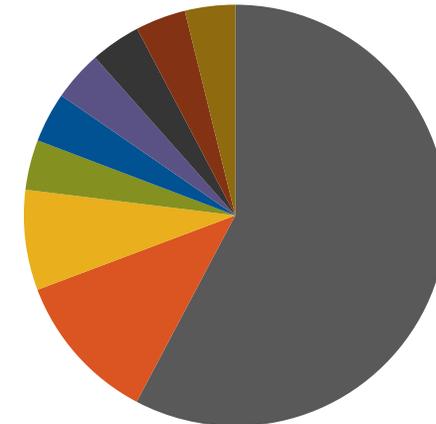
Total

American Indian or Alaska Native	1
Black or African American	5
Hispanic or Latino	7
Multiracial	
- Black/White	4
- Black/Latino	1
- American Indian or Alaska Native/Latino	1
Non-Latino White	6
Prefer Not to Respond	1

Demographics

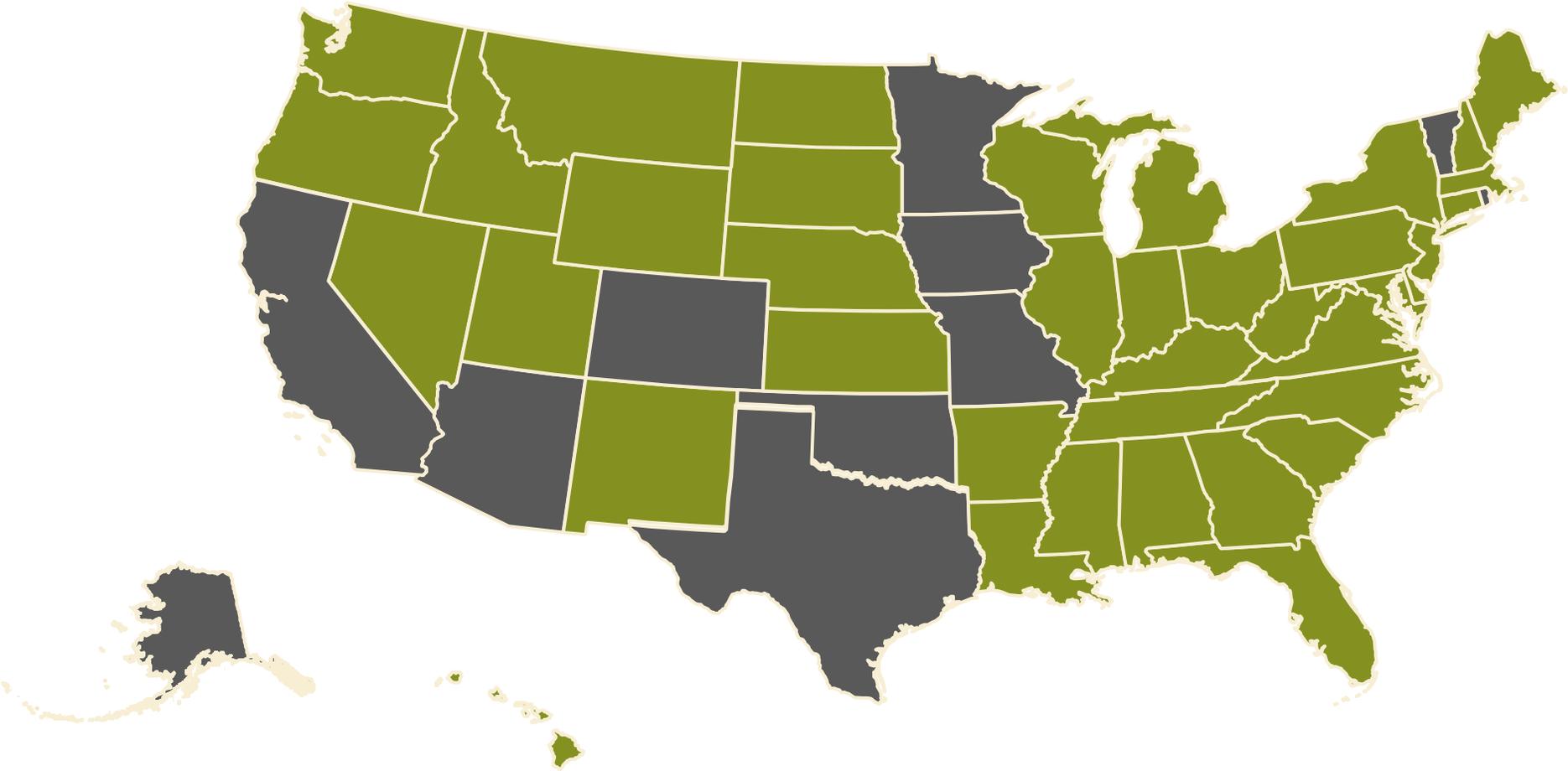
- Youths' ages: 18 to 26 years (mean 21.96)
- All currently in or recently transitioned from foster care
- Number of children
 - Biological: 1 to 4
 - Non-biological: 0 to 1
- Children's ages
 - Biological: 4 months – 10 years
 - Non-biological: 1 – 17 years

Current Living Situation



- Own Apartment
- Spouse or Partner who is Parent of Child
- Spouse or Partner who is not Parent of Child
- Biological Parent or Relative
- Shared Housing With Friend
- Family of Child's Father
- Homeless Shelter
- Homeless - Couch-Surfing
- Independent/Transitional Living Program

Demographics



Five Major Themes

Theme 1: Employment Disruptions and Economic Hardship

“...I lost my job, and, um, trying to figure out like bills and whatnot. Thankfully, our electricity has not been turned off because we — I used to pay the electricity bill, and now we’re so far behind, but they can’t turn the electric off during the winter here in Vermont....” – **Rose,* age 22**

“Um, I was working with the county, and right when they got the okay to shut everything down, they let a lot of people go. So like I was providing on that income, and when my job just left, it was so hard because of my two — at the time, he was two. He needed diapers, and it was so hard to get diapers”. – **Chris,* age 24**

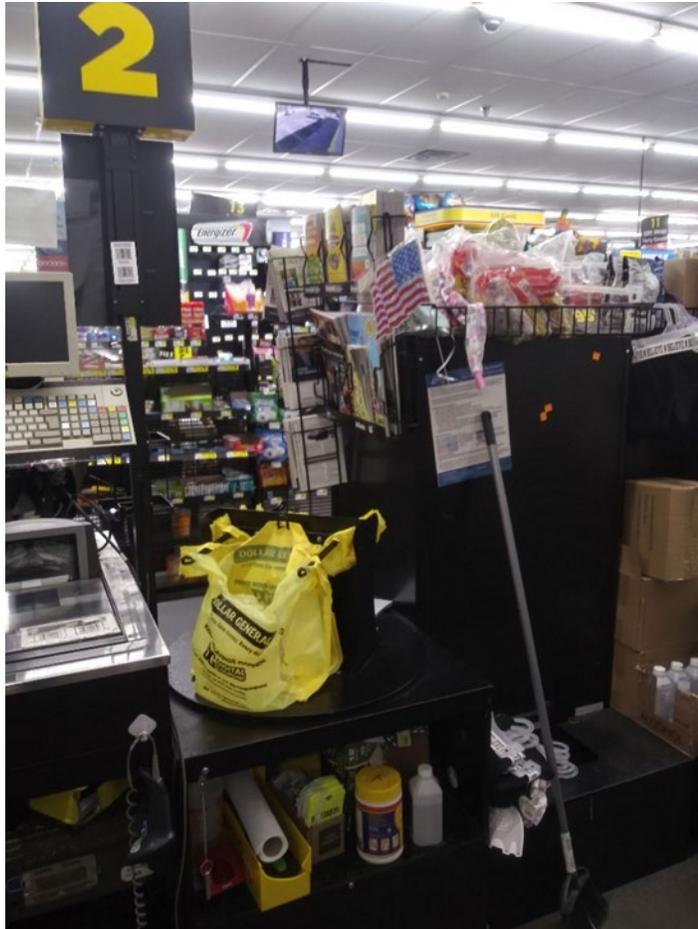
*all names are pseudonyms

Theme 1: Employment Disruptions and Economic Hardship

“Um, financially, I guess one of my biggest issues right now is probably, uh, food. ’Cause I used to get food stamps towards the beginning of COVID. And now, right now, I’m not. Um, I have to reapply for them. But, uh, food and definitely, like, buying diapers and some, like, some of the, like, essential things for my son is difficult right now just ’cause I don’t have an income”.

– Angel,* age 19

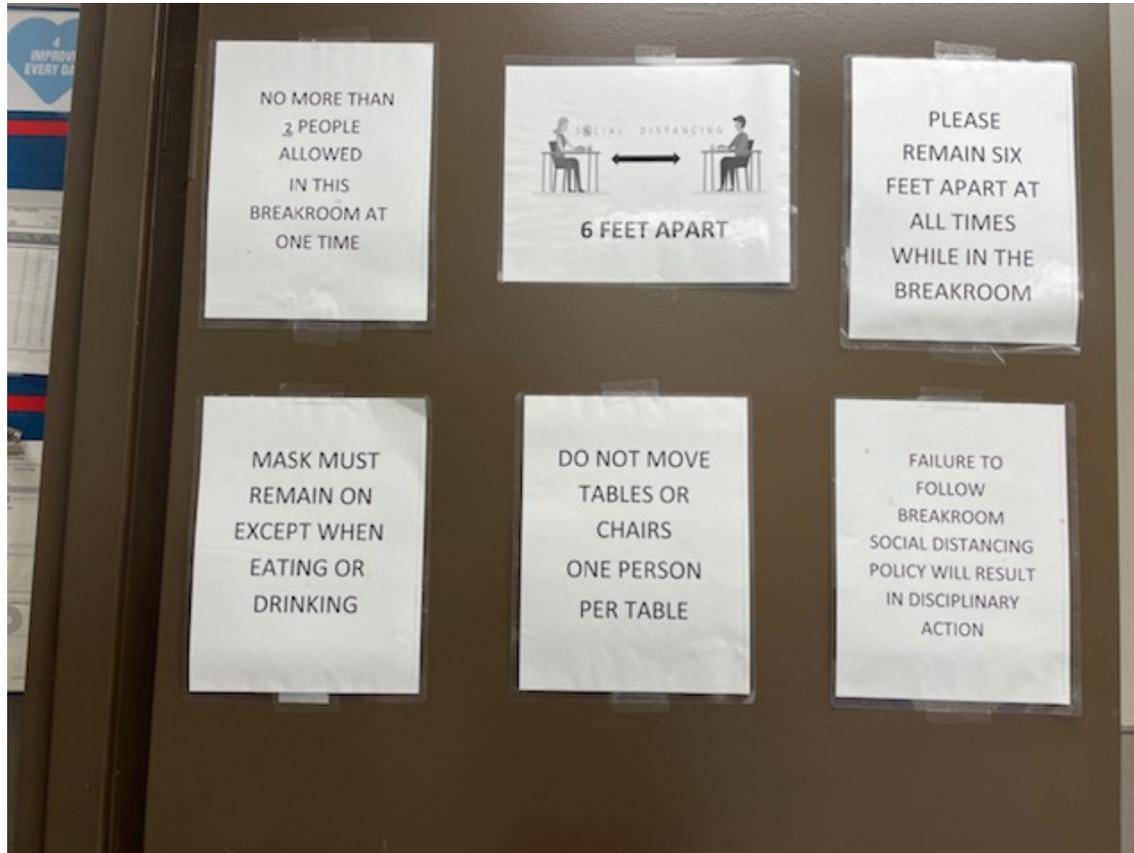
Theme 1: Employment Disruptions and Economic Hardship



“It’s good money, but I don’t work as much. Without daycare, it’s hard to get a better job or a second job right now.”

– Alexx,* age 20

Theme 1: Employment Disruptions and Economic Hardship



“No break even when you’re on a break.”

“I stopped going to work because COVID cases were spiking at my job. Like, someone was testing positive every week.”

– Sam,* age 20

Theme 2: Educational Challenges

“...I’m going to school, ’cause I’m a student, and everything switched virtually, um, it was really hard to...connect and communicate with professors.” – Aja, age 22*

“Um, so, right now, I’ve been tryin’ to graduate for a while now. But when COVID started, it was difficult when it came to, like, when I was going into classes...And, um, it made it really difficult for me because, as somebody who’s been trying to graduate for a while, I couldn’t go in and do my classes. I couldn’t go in and study. I couldn’t go get the books I needed ’cause the library out here closed...” – Angel, age 19*

*all names are pseudonyms

Theme 2: Educational Challenges

“Um, for me, the impact it had was because of my mental stability. Um, with COVID and then all the extra things that I was doing every day and then not being able to go out and get that interaction that I needed, um, it kinda mentally impaired me from being able to focus on my classes. Um, like, when I would sit down, like, my quality of my work was — is, um, not where it should be as well as, um, the effort and the time that I’m willing to put towards it.” – Juliet, age 24*

*all names are pseudonyms

Theme 2: Educational Challenges

“Working and learning from home as a family.”

“While I try to work from home, my kids want to play. My kid doesn’t like online school. He finds it hard to get up in the mornings and jump on the iPad.”

– Asteria Sakari,* age 25



Theme 3: Mental Health Challenges

“Um, it definitely made me depressed. Um, I mean I didn’t really go very many places beforehand, but I mean now I’m like stuck home and can’t really do much. So it - it really impacted my life and made me feel more depressed during the whole COVID.”

– Rose,* age 22

“...I've been really stressed out... You know, I-I'm homeless. I don't have a car. I need to get a job, and then, like, lack of child care and plus, like, trusting the place that I choose to put my daughter at...Um, so I guess a lot of anxiety for me. I've always had really bad anxiety, but I think it's definitely worsened this year.”

– Lily,* age 21

*all names are pseudonyms

Theme 3: Mental Health Challenges

“...Now, I don’t know about anybody else, but it’s really, really hard to, like, talk to a therapist and try to work through things over the phone.” – Hope, age 20*

**all names are pseudonyms*

Theme 3: Mental Health Challenges



“During COVID-19, we were glued to our electronic devices. I needed help for my depression and anxiety. I didn’t want to live like this. It was affecting my family, too. We all needed a break. We love to go out on adventures. We’ve grown so much this last year. As a couple, we grew stronger in our communication. My children know we are in this together and we will get through the tough times.”

– Asteria Sakari,* age 25

Theme 3: Mental Health Challenges

“Sunshine on the other side.”

“Before COVID hit, we used to take a bunch of trips everywhere. Now I can’t even think about going anywhere without falling into depressive thoughts, like, this is closed and this is closed. There’s not even a point in going. So, taking [my son] to my bed in the morning and looking out the window and seeing him excited about this trampoline has helped a lot with that.” – John, age 20*



Theme 4: Insufficient Resources and Barriers to Service Receipt

“ ...The stimulus checks were based off of 2019, um, taxes. And all the way up until the end of 2019, I was a ward of the state, so I was in OCS custody. So...I was never able to get mine or get one for my son because I was claimed on someone else's taxes. And until now, I still have no, like, no way to see how to get that money or how to figure that out...” – Tita, age 20*

“Since the stimulus went off of, uh, the previous [year's] taxes, I wasn't able to get it. And that was a big need, or it is still a big need for my family. Um, so I'm still working on getting that or seeing how I could fix that, um, but yeah.” – Lilly, age 21*

Theme 4: Insufficient Resources and Barriers to Service Receipt

“I have access to everything, but sometimes I don’t understand it. And so, being able to get into touch with the right people that you need to, when you need to, especially when you have deadlines for stuff, and then all of a sudden, you get something in the mail, and they’re like, “You need to do this, this, and this.” And it’s like, “Okay. [Laughter] How do I go about doing this?” There’s not anybody there to turn around and be like, “Hey, this is how you do it. Let me sit down with you, show you, or talk to you about it.”

- Juliet,* age 24

Theme 4: Insufficient Resources and Barriers to Service Receipt

“Happiness in a box.”

“I [used to] cook or bake something like rice, chicken. But now, it’s just a lotta work with him, work, and school. My son should be eating better than that, but what can I do?”

– Latti,* age 23



**all names are pseudonyms*

Theme 5: Silver Linings

“I guess, um, it has been, also, good 'cause I've gotten to spend a lot of time with, um, my kids and my newer baby. So, I didn't have a job to worry about, like maternity leave and stuff like that, you know? So, I've gotten to kind of just soak in all the newborn baby stuff. So, that's been good.”

– Hope,* age 20

Theme 5: Silver Linings

“I just feel proud of the food I can cook.”

“Growing up in group homes and spending time in hospitals, I never learned how to cook. I used to have to always eat out and spend money. To have your own place and actually make your own food feels much better.”

– Alexx,* age 20



*all names are pseudonyms

Theme 5: Silver Linings

“Setting up the nursery with all the extra time I have.”

– Athena,* age 22



**all names are pseudonyms*

Summary

- Numerous negative effects of the pandemic on young parents
- Services and supports insufficient or difficult to access/navigate
- Mental health challenges that have not been addressed
- Strength, resilience and “silver linings”

Panel Discussion

Implications for the Future

Implications



- The need to be prepared for future emergencies
 - The importance of planning ahead; incorporating youth voice



- Availability of emergency support does not guarantee access.
 - Lack of knowledge; difficulty navigating application



- Barriers for accessing mental health services
 - Availability; finances; trust; cultural barriers

Your Questions



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