

NEWS RELEASE

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

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“FOSTERING YOUTH TRANSITIONS 2023” URGES IMPROVEMENTS TO EXTENDED FOSTER CARE AND TRANSITION SERVICES FOR OLDER YOUTH

BALTIMORE — Permanent families and supportive adult connections, stable housing and postsecondary education remain beyond reach for too many young people with foster care experience, according to “Fostering Youth Transitions 2023: State and National Data to Drive Foster Care Advocacy,” a data brief released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

“Fostering Youth Transitions 2023” examines the experiences of teenagers and young adults in foster care as reported by all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico — and how child welfare systems support their transition to adulthood. The brief expands on the Casey Foundation’s “Fostering Youth Transitions 2018,” which shed light on older youth in foster care and increased awareness about those who age out. State data profiles trace the experiences of young people ages 14 to 21 (“transition-age” youth) who were in foster care between 2006 and 2021, including those who exited without being placed with a permanent family.

Analyzed for the Casey Foundation by Child Trends, the new data show:

- For young people ages 14–21 entering foster care, cases reported as “neglect” increased from 29% in 2006 to 48% in 2021. Neglect — not child behavioral problems or abuse — is the reason cited most frequently when older youth enter foster care.
- Nationally, child welfare systems find families for fewer than half of teenagers and young adults in foster care — and proportionately for fewer today than in 2016.
- More states offer extended foster care and assistance for young people beyond age 18 than did in 2018, but enrollment is low. States also inconsistently document participation, which can complicate efforts to ensure that these young people receive services for which they are eligible.
- Although the size of the foster care population is significantly smaller today than in the past, and fewer young people are placed in institutional settings, children of color remain overrepresented.

- Too few transition-age teenagers and young adults receive the federally funded services intended to prepare them to thrive when they leave foster care. Fewer than half (47%) of transition-age young people received one or more of the services during all the years they were eligible between 2013 and 2021; less than one quarter (23%) were served in 2021.

“It’s clear from the data that states can do more to ensure that young people in foster care have permanent families and receive the services they need to thrive as they transition into adulthood,” said Leslie Gross, director of the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Family Well-Being Strategy Group. “To achieve better outcomes, all decision makers who are designing solutions must authentically partner with young people who have foster care experience.”

Fostering Youth Transitions 2023 recommendations build on the work of the Foundation’s [Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative®](#), a systems-change effort guided by research that shows young people in foster care need permanent and meaningful relationships with supportive adults, reliable resources to meet basic needs and accessible opportunities for education and work. Policymakers, child welfare system leaders, practitioners, advocates and communities are urged to combine “Fostering Youth Transitions 2023” data with firsthand information from young people and families who have experienced foster care and together develop solutions that support permanence, well-being and positive outcomes.

Emerging trends make clear that all must:

- **Address the rise in foster care cases attributed to neglect** by examining the role of underlying issues of poverty and focusing on strengthening families and communities to reduce the need for child removals.
- **Better equip and staff child welfare agencies** to promote permanence and prioritize kinship arrangements for older youth.
- **Improve extended foster care and delivery of transition services** so young people receive what they need to thrive in adulthood, including stable housing, postsecondary education and employment.
- **Improve child welfare agencies’ capacity** and ability to collect, report and strategically use foster care data.

RELEASE INFORMATION

“Fostering Youth Transitions 2023: State and National Data to Drive Foster Care Advocacy” is available at www.aecf.org.

ABOUT THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private philanthropy that creates a brighter future for the nation’s children, youth and young adults by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. In 2021, the Foundation announced its [Thrive by 25® commitment](#) to devote at least half its investments over the next decade to help young people ages 14 and older thrive by the age of 25. For more information, visit www.aecf.org.