



JIM CASEY YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES INITIATIVE

WHO WE ARE

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative® works to ensure that young people — ages 14 to 26 — in the United States who have spent at least one day in foster care after their 14th birthday have the relationships, resources and opportunities to achieve well-being and success. The Jim Casey Initiative does this by creating opportunities for young people to form permanent family connections, experience stable housing, achieve positive outcomes in education, become economically secure and make informed decisions about parenting.



MEASURING SUCCESS

The Jim Casey Initiative uses data to drive its decision making and strategy development, making it a leader in the collection of data from young people who are in or have been in foster care after age 14.

We share this data with site partners, researchers, youth councils, policymakers and others to inform and improve child welfare policy, practices and services that help youth achieve positive outcomes. We closely monitor data on all young people in foster care, especially those with the greatest need, to understand how they are faring and how to better support them. National data show young people of color are overrepresented in foster care and often have the steepest climb to long-term stability. We measure data that inform efforts to:

Stable Housing

Provide youth with a safe place to live that they can call home.

Permanency

End the pipeline of youth exiting foster care without permanent families and connect them with caring adults who will support them for a lifetime.

Education & Economic Security

Connect youth with work opportunities and help them earn a high school diploma and high quality credential or postsecondary degree.

Pregnancy Prevention & Parenting Support

Prevent unintended pregnancies. Support young parents with the necessary tools to ensure family well-being.



WHY WE DO THE WORK

The Jim Casey Initiative aims to address the steep climb to well-being and success encountered by many young people who have experienced foster care. Areas of focus include housing, educational attainment, employment, personal finances and building relationships that can help them navigate adulthood.



714,000+

young people have spent at least one day in foster care after their 14th birthday. Of young people ages 16 and older who exited care in FY 2021, 52% achieved permanence (reunification, adoption, guardianship or kinship care).

QUARTER CENTURY OF ACHIEVEMENT

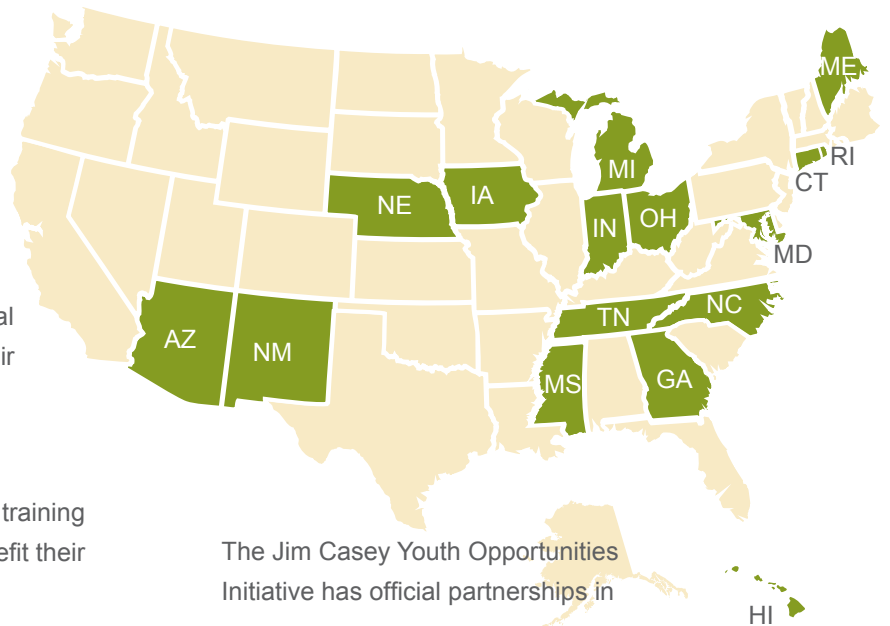
Since 2001, the Jim Casey Initiative and its network partners have worked at the local, state and national levels to improve outcomes for older youth who have experienced foster care:

393 state policy and practice wins have improved resources and opportunities for older youth, since 2001. Young people helped achieve 87% of the wins recorded in 2024.

21,000 young people received financial education and saved \$12.8 million to invest in their future since Opportunity Passport® began.

115+ Jim Casey Fellows received advocacy training to become partners in creating solutions that benefit their peers in foster care.

\$1.2 billion+ collectively leveraged by Jim Casey Initiative network sites in private and government investments to improve outcomes for youth in foster care.



16 States

Learn more about Jim Casey Initiative partner sites [here](#).



Each year, nearly **19,000** young people exit foster care without permanent families.



Only **79%** of 21-year-olds who have experienced foster care will obtain their high school diploma or GED.



By age 21, only **56%** young people who have experienced foster care will be employed.



26% of young people who have experienced foster care will become parents by age 21.





HOW WE DO THE WORK


Our approach is a systems-change effort designed to dramatically improve how communities and states respond to the needs of young people who are transitioning from foster care to adulthood. Paramount to this work is a commitment to making sure all young people in the United States — regardless of where they live — have opportunities to achieve well-being and success.


BEST PRACTICES

The Jim Casey Initiative's approach rooted in adolescent brain research, integrates these best practices:

 Engage young people in the decisions that shape their lives, including the design of policies and practices in systems that serve them.


 Work collectively to improve relationships, resources and opportunities for the young people who have experienced foster care with the greatest need.

 Leverage community partnerships to align efforts and develop resources for youth.


 Use data and evaluation of progress to improve outcomes.

 Build public will to create better policies that sustain enhancements over time.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE FIELD

 **ADOLESCENT BRAIN DEVELOPMENT**
With knowledge of how the adolescent brain matures, young people are equipped to navigate transitions from foster care to adulthood to ensure supportive relationships, well-being and success. Read our report, [The Road to Adulthood](#), to learn more.


 **JIM CASEY FELLOWS**
Young leaders who have experienced foster care are trained in leadership and advocacy skills and play an integral role in shaping our strategies and recommendations for improving child welfare systems. Read [examples](#) of systems-change efforts led by Jim Casey Fellows.


 **THE SOUL FAMILY FRAMEWORK**
The **SOUL Family framework**, developed by Jim Casey Fellows, can be adapted by states to create a new permanency pathway for young people ages 16 and older. A SOUL Family is a circle of caring adults who provide support, opportunity, unity and legal relationships for young people. As they move from foster care toward adulthood, older youth need the anchor of a nurturing, lifelong family.

PATHWAY TO SUCCESS:

OPPORTUNITY PASSPORT

Learning financial capability during young adulthood can develop budgeting, saving and money management skills for a lifetime and build a pathway to economic security. Since 2003, Jim Casey Initiative partner sites have administered **Opportunity Passport**[®], which provides financial education and support for opening and using a bank account and matches young people's savings for developmentally appropriate assets dollar for dollar, with a \$3,000 lifetime limit. Participants who save and invest in their life goals report better outcomes than peers who do not.

 **VEHICLES**
2.6x
higher odds of having adequate transportation for school and work

 **EDUCATION**
2.8x
higher odds of being in school

 **HOUSING**
1.5x
higher odds of reporting they have stable housing

 **EMPLOYMENT**
1.7x
higher odds of having a job, if they have a vehicle

SOURCE: Opportunity Passport Participant Survey, 2003-2024