

# Supporting Transition-Age Youth in the Pandemic and Beyond

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# Agenda

- Data and background about transition-age youth
- Your role in advocating for transition-age youth
- Example areas of support:
  - Education
  - Criminal legal system contact
  - Benefits
  - Housing



# Data Summary

- Number of transition-aged youth in the child welfare system nationally:
  - Total: 171,162
  - Percentage of child welfare population: 25%
- Number of transition aged youth in the child welfare system in TN:
  - Total: 5745
  - Percentage of child welfare population: 41%



# Data Summary

- Extended Care Facts:
  - TN is among 45 states have some form of extended care.
  - TN is among 3 states that include youth from the JJ system.
  - Time in extended care improves outcomes and connection with services.
  - Outcomes for youth who age out of care without permanency continue to be poor.
- Percentage of older youth who discharge to permanency: 43%
- Percentage of older youth who age out to non-permanency: 56%.



# Experiences of TAY in the Pandemic

- Nearly 65% who were working before the pandemic had lost employment.
- 50% of those who applied for unemployment benefits did not receive assistance.
- 52% reported they did not receive the stimulus check.
- 19% reported they had run out of food.
- 23% reported that they are being forced to move or fear being forced to leave their current living situation.
- 37% reported having family members (legal or chosen) to rely on during the crisis.
- 20 % reported that they were entirely on their own.

See a collection of the 6 polls/surveys here:  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/11CSPZArMqEf2D\\_RxF63EwVz0XEpqLxM5UqsZUgOkV5c/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/11CSPZArMqEf2D_RxF63EwVz0XEpqLxM5UqsZUgOkV5c/edit)



# Lessons from the Pandemic

- The focus on permanency and connecting youth with family and community must happen as early as possible.
- Youth must be connected with services to address trauma.
- Transition planning must begin as early as possible, with a special focus on housing.



# The Transition to Adulthood: A Time of Great Potential

- Adolescence and young adulthood is a “critical developmental period” (14-26)
- The transition lasts until a youth’s mid-20s.
- The brains of young adults are still developing in their late teens and early 20s. They continue to need a mixture of support, guidance, and freedom to optimally develop.
- This time period is characterized by risk-taking, seeking greater independence, developing decision-making and coping skills, and exploring their sense of identity.
- Trauma impacts the ability of young people to feel safe, learn and connect with others.



# Family Support and the Transition to Adulthood

- Most youth rely on parents for a significant amount of material and non-material support as they make the transition to adulthood, amounting to,
  - on average, \$38,000 between the time a young person is 18 and 34 and
  - about 367 hours of family help per year.





# What does this mean for your advocacy?

Attorneys, CASAs, and other advocates can make a huge difference in the trajectory of a young person's life. Your advocacy can:

- help youth reach developmental milestones,
- ensure they have the support to do address trauma,
- remove the barriers that are impeding their progress and exclude them from opportunities, and
- help stakeholders, including judges, understand the importance of learning through experience and mistakes and the need for support.
- make sure transition planning begins early and is done well



# Laying the Groundwork for Success Early

- Actively engage with youth in transition planning beginning at age 14.
- Help youth identify and set goals related to family and permanency, education, employment, health, and housing.
- Help youth identify and access benefits and services to support their goals.
- Support youth in developing and practicing self-advocacy skills and decision making.
- Ensure that government agencies being held accountable for supporting youth in transition and permanency planning.



# Tip: Be Proactive in Counseling Youth

- Check in often (even if they act like they do not want you to).
- Communicate in ways they like to communicate. (Text, email, etc)
- Ask how they are doing and about their interests.
- Respect the wishes and views of the teens you work with, but counsel, question, and engage. (Unpack the nos and resistance.)
- Do not take things personally.
- Start talking about transitions, plans, and the future early (by 14)



# Tip: Promote the Option of Extended Foster Care

- TN Statistics on Extension of Foster Care:
  - 717 youth aged out of state custody
  - 626 eligible for EFC
  - 335 accepted EFC—rate of 54%
- Pandemic-related legislation waived education requirements
- New legislation permanently expands eligibility beginning January 2023, new additions bolded:
  - Secondary education or equivalent
  - Post-secondary/career/technical training
  - **Program to promote employment/remove barriers**
  - **Work 80+ hours/month**
  - Disability/medical condition exception



# Education Support: Success in High School

- Understand where a teen is in their HS journey (credits, requirements, etc.) and their path to graduation
- Stability in schooling
  - Best Interest Determinations
- Transition planning for students with disabilities (IEP/504)



# Education Support: Postsecondary Success

- Emotional and logistical support
- Financial support:
  - Chafee Education and Training Voucher (ETV)
  - Tennessee Bright Futures State Funded Scholarship
  - Tennessee Lottery (HOPE) Scholarship



# Collateral Consequence Support: Mitigate the Long-Term Effects of Criminalization

- Age-crime curve and victim-offender overlap
- Collateral consequences
- Juvenile and criminal records
- Expungement and court debt



# Benefits Support: Help Young People Access Benefits as They Leave Care

- Mainstream Benefits
  - SSI if disabled (and related disability supports)
  - TANF and Child Care Assistance
  - SNAP (foodstamps)
  - LIHEAP (energy assistance)
- Foster Care Specific Benefits
  - Chafee services, including aftercare.
  - Medicaid for Former Foster Youth to Age 26.





# Benefits Support: Help Young People File Their Taxes

- Temporary changes in the tax laws make filing taxes advantageous for transition aged youth who are homeless or have experience in foster care.
  - Economic Impact Payments (stimulus checks)
  - Earned Income Tax Credit
  - Child Tax Credit
- Young people could be eligible for several thousand dollars, but they must file their taxes.



# Benefits Support: Help Young People File Their Taxes

- Identify local IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Site.
- Input your zip code here: <https://irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep/>
- Help the youth make and prepare for the appointment.



# HELPING YOUTH FILE TAXES: USING FREE ONLINE ASSISTANCE THROUGH GET YOUR REFUND

- Get Your Refund provides online assistance that can include phone contacts.
- Get Your Refund is a non-profit service built by [Code for America](#) in partnership with IRS-certified Volunteer Income Tax Assistance ([VITA](#)) sites nationally.
- The site connects individuals with IRS certified tax preparers who provide assistance online.
- Link to website:  
<https://www.getyourrefund.org/en>

# HELP YOUTH PREPARE FOR VITA OR ONLINE FILING: GATHERING DOCUMENTS

## Vital Documents and Information

State or other identification

Address

Social Security Number or ITIN

Bank account and routing number

Identity Protection PIN if you have been assigned one.

## Proof of Income

W-2: a document from your employer that shows how much you have made

Form 4852: a form you may need to fill out if your employer did not give you a W-2

Form 1099-NEC: If you were paid as a contractor for jobs like DoorDash or TaskRabbit, you may have received this form to show the amount you were paid

Form 1099-G: a form you should have if you received unemployment

1099-INT: a form that shows any interest you made if you have a savings account

You can find a Tax Prep Checklist here:  
<https://jbay.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Tax-Prep-Checklist-National-2022-1.pdf>



# Housing Support: Help Young People Access Housing

- Family Unification Program Vouchers (FUP)
- Fostering Youth to Independence Vouchers (FYI)
- Chafee Room and Board



# Housing Support: FUP and FYI Vouchers

- FUP and FYI vouchers are Housing Choice Vouchers (“section 8”) for youth aging out of foster care.
- Child welfare agencies and housing authorities must work together to access FUP and FYI vouchers.
- Child welfare agencies and IL workers can refer eligible youth for FYI and FUP vouchers.
- Eligible young people include those who:
  - Are 18 years and not more than 24 years of age (have not reached their 25th birthday),
  - left foster care, or will leave foster care within 90 days, in accordance with a transition plan described in Section 475(5)(H) of the Social Security Act, and
  - are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless at age 16 or older.



# Advocate for High Quality Transition Plans and Oppose Improper Discharges

- Federal law requires that an appropriate transition plan and discharge documents be provided before a case is closed.
- You can use the transition planning guarantee to ask the court to order services or actions or to oppose a discharge without a proper plan.
  - 42 U.S.C.A. § 675(1)(D).
  - 42 U.S.C.A. § 675(5)(H) & (I).



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