



STRENGTHENING THE VOICES  
OF CASA STATEWIDE

# HB 2632 & SB 1084: IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH WHO ARE OLDER & TRANSITIONING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

## BACKGROUND

Older youth in foster care, including those at risk of aging out, face extremely difficult challenges. Youth who transition out of foster care are often not prepared for adulthood and, as such, have disproportionately adverse outcomes compared to young people their age who did not leave the foster care system at 18.<sup>1</sup> Some of these outcomes include:

- ✂ higher pregnancy and incarceration rates before the age of 21,
- ✂ lower likelihood of completing high school with a diploma,
- ✂ higher likelihood of experiencing homelessness,
- ✂ lower likelihood of having an ID or driver's license,
- ✂ higher likelihood of being underemployed or unemployed, and
- ✂ higher likelihood of experiencing physical and mental health challenges.

The pandemic has intensified challenges for these young adults related to food, housing, health care, technology, finances, employment, transportation, education, household supplies, and child care.<sup>2</sup>

Pursuant to Senate Bill 1758 (SB 1758), 85th Legislative Regular Session, the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) formed a stakeholder workgroup comprised of 20 members that specialize in providing services to and/or work with youth and young adults in the foster care system and alumni. The stakeholder workgroup gathered information to inform recommendations to the legislature about how to improve services and supports for youth who are older and/or transitioning out of foster care.

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<sup>1</sup> White, O'Brien, Pecora, *et al*, (November 2012). *Texas Foster Care Alumni Study Technical Report: Outcomes at Ages 23 and 24*. Casey Family Programs.

<sup>2</sup> Walters, E. (2020, April 21). Life after foster care was already tough. Now these Texans are facing the coronavirus pandemic, too. *The Texas Tribune*. Retrieved from <https://www.texastribune.org/2020/04/21/coronavirus-texas-foster-youth/>.



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The information sources the group utilized included:

- ✂ Soliciting the input of youth in foster care and alumni through individual and group discussions;
- ✂ Conducting informal youth and alumni surveys;
- ✂ Researching independent living programs in others states; and
- ✂ Reviewing survey results provided by the Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS). This survey included feedback from some DFPS regional Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) staff, PAL and Extended Foster Care contractors, and others (such as Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children) serving youth and young adults in and formerly in foster care.<sup>3</sup>

Child welfare stakeholder groups continue to be committed to implementing the recommendations from the DFPS workgroup, many of which are outlined below. As the legal parent of these young people, the State of Texas can and should do more to ensure quality transitional living services are provided to youth and young adults as they exit state care.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✂ Ensure youth and young adults have the skills and resources to transition to independence successfully.
  - a. Help youth establish a rental history.
  - b. Ensure youth have all the documents they need:
    - i. Add proof of insurance to the list of critical documents caseworkers must provide to youth before they leave care,
    - ii. Create an email address where youth may receive encrypted copies of their personal documents and records,
    - iii. Ensure youth have a plan to keep these documents safe and accessible, and
    - iv. Require caseworkers to inform youth about all of the documents they are required to receive before leaving care.
  - c. Update Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) classes and curriculum:
    - i. Ensure PAL contractors make appropriate accommodations for youth with disabilities so they can fully participate in classes,
    - ii. Add information to the PAL curriculum to ensure youth know how to use the identification and other documents they are required to before they age out of foster care, and

<sup>3</sup> Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. (2018). *Plan to standardize the preparation for adult living (PAL) curriculum: Senate bill 1758*. Retrieved from [https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About\\_DFPS/Reports\\_and\\_Presentations/CPS/documents/2018/2018-12-01\\_SB1758\\_%20Plan\\_to\\_Standardize\\_PAL\\_Curriculum\\_Report.pdf](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Reports_and_Presentations/CPS/documents/2018/2018-12-01_SB1758_%20Plan_to_Standardize_PAL_Curriculum_Report.pdf).



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- d. Allow all 17-year-olds to administer their own medications under supervision, and when there are no safety concerns, so that they are better prepared to care for their mental and medical health when they exit foster care.
- ✂ Improve transition planning by starting sooner and improving communication with youth and young adults.
- ✂ Remove barriers that prevent youth from staying in extended care by waiving certain requirements that prevent youth from staying in their current placement and preventing youth from aging out of residential treatment centers.

