



IMPROVING SERVICES AND SUPPORTS FOR OLDER YOUTH EXITING CARE

BACKGROUND

Older youth in foster care, including those at risk of exiting care at 18, face extremely difficult challenges. Youth who exit foster care at 18 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 18.¹ 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.

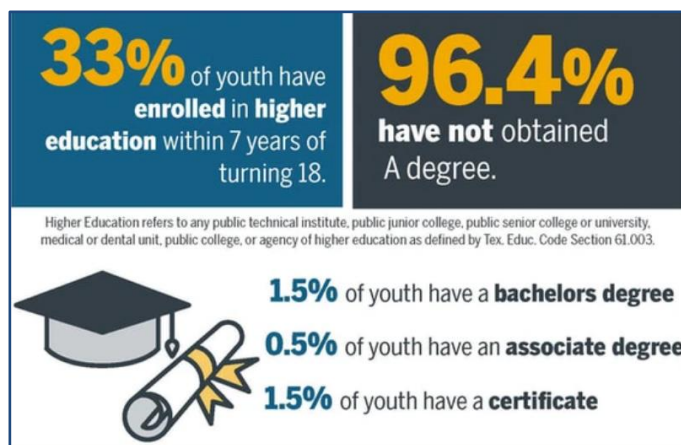
Investments Needed

In 2021, the Department of Family and Protective Services’ Transitional Living Services budget was cut, affecting crucial services for older youth in foster care. Although funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) temporarily supplemented this cut, the expiration of this funding left a gap. In FY 2023, about 18 percent of children in foster care are aged 14 or older.² Restoring funding for transitional living services will ensure that more youth receive the support they need to be successful in adulthood.

Texas also needs to ensure that young adults, ages 18-21, who choose to remain in extended foster care have a variety of safe and appropriate housing options, including supervised independent living programs. Although the legislature made historic investments in the rate structure for providers in the child welfare system during the 88th Legislative Session, supervised independent living provider rates were not increased and have not been increased in many years.³ As the cost of living increases, it is important for Texas to ensure that rates for all foster care placements are bolstered, not just for placements for children under the age of 18.

Post-Secondary Education Challenges

Too few young adults with experience in foster care ever gain access to higher education programs, let alone graduate from college.⁴ Nationally, about 7 percent to 13 percent of students from foster care enroll in higher education. Only about 2 percent obtain bachelor’s or advanced degrees, in contrast to



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

² Source: https://www.dfps.texas.gov/About_DFPS/Data_Book/Child_Protective_Services/Conservatorship/Activity_on_August_31.asp.

³ Source: https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Texas_Child_Centered_Care/rates.asp.

⁴ Source: <https://www.educationreachfortexans.com/resources>.



24 percent of adults in the general population.⁵



Youth in foster care often report that few people in their lives ever expected them to attend and succeed in college. These students seldom receive the kind of guidance and stable support needed to succeed in postsecondary education or training. College success can make a lifelong difference.

Texas is one of the few states that exempts or waives payment of tuition and fees at state supported colleges or universities for young adults currently or formerly in the conservatorship of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) and for those adopted from DFPS. However, this incredible benefit is underutilized because young people might not be aware of the benefit or because there are arbitrary age limits on the tuition and fee waiver in statute. Texas should do all it can to eliminate these barriers to help ensure positive outcomes for young adults who experienced foster care.

POLICY POSITION

Texas CASA supports funding and policies that improve services and supports for older youth in foster care and older youth exiting foster care.

Texas CASA Supports:

1. Increased funding for events, education and other programming for youth in foster care who are older and preparing to exit foster care
2. Increased funding for post-secondary education activities for youth in foster care, including transportation to college campus events across Texas
3. Increased rates for supervised independent living programs for young adults in extended foster care
4. Removal of the requirement to be age 25 to secure the tuition waiver for youth who exit foster care at 18, as recommended by the Department of Family and Protective Services and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
5. Removal of the requirement that a young person must have been adopted or in Permanent Managing Conservatorship on or after 2009 to access the tuition and fee waiver for youth who experienced foster care

If you have questions or concerns related to this or any other Texas CASA legislative priority, please email: publicpolicy@texascasa.org.

⁵ Source: <https://www.casey.org/supporting-success/>.

