



News Release

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New report highlights the challenges faced by Connecticut youth aging out of foster care

Youth leaving state care often unprepared for self-sufficiency, study finds

NEW HAVEN – A new report by Connecticut Voices for Children finds that youth leaving state care often struggle to become self-sufficient. Without a supportive family, youth aging out of foster care often lack the necessary resources to transition into adulthood. The total cessation of state support for these vulnerable young adults leaves them without a reliable safety net and program support.

Connecticut offers youth who stay in care multiple pathways to become self-sufficient. The Department of Children and Families (DCF), however, requires youth to fulfill some requirements to stay in care, and many youth struggle to meet these expectations. In 2016, 21% of all foster youth who aged out left without a high school diploma. 57% left without a job. At least 46% were living in unstable housing situations. 13% were already pregnant or parenting. Only 11% had achieved an associate's or bachelor's degree.

According to the report, youth who grow up in state care are ill-prepared to navigate adulthood alone at eighteen, as most are burdened by multiple traumas. Many of them continue to experience hardship throughout their lives. At least 18% required intensive developmental or mental health services upon leaving. Follow-up of an earlier cohort of youth who had aged out found that at least 50% were relying on public assistance for food, housing, or cash welfare payments at age 21.

The full report will be presented at the Capitol's Old Judiciary Room on December 15th from 9 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. on a public forum with the participation of foster youth, policy makers, state officials and legislators.

“Connecticut's child welfare system exists to ensure the safety and well-being of the most vulnerable children,” says Nicole Updegrave, Associate Policy Fellow at Connecticut Voices for Children and one of the study authors. “Although DCF has made great improvements keeping children in families or with relatives, youth who age out of the system without guardians or relatives to support them face significant challenges. The state needs to do more to prepare them to be self-sufficient.”

“Connecticut must take steps to help youth in state care better prepare for the future,” states Ellen Shemitz, Executive Director at Connecticut Voices for Children. “The state has a moral obligation to ensure that youth in care have the same opportunities that a supportive family would provide.”

The report recommends that DCF adopt innovative policies in case planning, better education for youth about post-secondary policies and improved support systems upon discharge. These include a guaranteed 90-day transition period, homelessness prevention, better data collection and supports for older youth connections with their biological and foster families.

About Connecticut Voices for Children:

Connecticut Voices for Children is a research-based policy think tank based in New Haven, Connecticut. Our Mission is to promote the well-being of all of Connecticut's young people and their families by advocating for strategic public investments and wise public policies. To achieve these objectives, Connecticut Voices for Children produces high quality research and analysis, promotes citizen education, advocates for policy change at the state and local level and works to develop the next generation of leaders.