



Ohio Fostering Connections

Supporting Ohio Foster Youth Through Age 21

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Report Validates Benefits of Extending Services to Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

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Summary Ohio Fostering Connections, a statewide collaborative of experts in the field of foster care, has released a report that outlines benefits and costs of expanding support for foster youth through age 21. The report also summarizes a proposed process for implementing the program in Ohio by mid-2016.

Details ***Sobering Statistics***
Each year, more than 1,000 Ohio youth "age out" of foster care at age 18. Research indicates that these young people are at high risk of homelessness, unemployment, insufficient education, dependence on public assistance, human trafficking and other obstacles to success.

The report reveals some sobering statistics about foster youth outcomes at age 19:

- 14 percent had a child
- 16 percent received financial assistance
- 24 percent worked part time; 12 percent worked full time
- 26 percent experienced homelessness within the last two years
- 36 percent were incarcerated
- 53 percent had not completed high school or received a GED

(Source: *National Youth in Transition Database, 2013 Ohio Data*)

Cost-benefit Analysis
Utilizing a conservative and evidence-driven approach, Ohio Fostering Connections' research revealed that:

- Over a 10-year-period, Ohio will benefit dollar-for-dollar by providing supportive services to young people who age out of foster care and to those who are adopted from foster care at age 16 or later.
- By year six of the program's statewide implementation, Ohio will benefit \$1.06 for every \$1 spent.
- By year 10, the benefit will increase to \$1.81 for every \$1 spent, surpassing net costs.

Additionally, a decrease in negative outcomes such as homelessness is expected, along with an increase in educational attainment and in lifetime earnings potential.

A Path Forward

Key recommendations on implementation:

- The report includes recommendations on how the program should be designed, implemented and integrated into Ohio's community child welfare and housing systems.
- The program should be centrally administered by ODJFS and sub-contracted to local agencies. Eligible local agencies should include ODJFS-certified private agencies and public children service agencies.
- Maintain the federal government's eligibility standards for young adults to enroll in the program.
- Promote a wide array of transitional housing programs for the young adults, including apartment programs, campus housing, and foster and host homes.

Legislation

Ohio Fostering Connections is advocating for state-level legislation to extend supportive services for foster youth through age 21.

- House Bill 50 was introduced on Feb. 10, 2015, by Rep. Dorothy Pelanda (R-Marysville) and joint co-sponsor Cheryl L. Grossman (R-Grove City).
- The legislation will include an innovative package of programs to help young people prepare for college or a career.
- In addition, the program is fully compatible with Gov. John Kasich's new approach for local social services, as outlined in his proposed operating budget.

National Precedent

This initiative is more than six years in the making and utilizes a proven approach.

- On Oct. 7, 2008, the Fostering Connection to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (H.R. 6893/P.L. 110-351) was signed into law. The law provides federal Title IV-E funds (federal money allotted to match state child welfare services) to states to support foster youth through age 21. Prior to enactment of this law, virtually all states cut off foster care services at age 18.
- Since 2008, 26 states and the District of Columbia have, or are in the process of, extending supports to foster youth through age 21.

Who Was Involved with the Report

- The cost-benefit research was conducted by Alvin S. Mares, PhD, MSW, LSW, Assistant Professor of Social Work at The Ohio State University. Dr. Mares is one of the nation's leading scholars on outcomes of young adults leaving foster care.
- The program recommendations are based on feedback received from five community events that were held around Ohio during the summer of 2014. Foster parents, foster youth alumni, child welfare professionals, elected officials and advocates were active participants.

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