



The Children's Project ACADEMY

Building a Residential Charter School for Foster Youth, Grades 7-12

General National Data

Each year, an estimated 20,000 young people "age out" of the U.S. foster care system. Many are only 18 years old and still need support and services. Several foster care alumni studies show that without a lifelong connection to a caring adult, these older youth are often left vulnerable to a host of adverse situations:

Outcomes	National Data
Earned a high school diploma	54%
Obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher	2%
Became a parent	84%
Were unemployed	51%
Had no health insurance	30%
Had been homeless	25%
Were receiving public assistance	30%

Casey Family Programs National Foster Care Month, *Facts About Children in Foster Care*, [http://www.fostercaremonth.org/AboutFosterCare/StatisticsAndData/Documents/FCM07_Fact_Sheet_\(national\).pdf](http://www.fostercaremonth.org/AboutFosterCare/StatisticsAndData/Documents/FCM07_Fact_Sheet_(national).pdf) (last visited Mar. 23, 2009).

General Santa Barbara County Data

The rate of children entering foster care in Santa Barbara County remained fairly steady at approximately 1.0 per 1,000 from 1998 to 2003, but increased to 2.5 in 2005 and 2.7 in 2006. The

statewide rate is 3.2 children per 1,000. The number of children in foster care in the Santa Barbara County has been increasing overall since 1998, but decreased slightly from 2005 to 2006, when 584 children were in foster care. Needell, B., et al. (2008). Child Welfare Services Reports for California. Retrieved 02/4/09, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research, <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/>, cited at http://www.kidsdata.org/topicstrends.jsp?csid=253&t=2&i=6&ra=3_2&link=&.

The Living Situations of Our Former Foster Youth

- In 2006, “[t]wo-thirds of respondents (66.7%) [of a sample of former foster youth aged 19-25] were working part- or full-time, which is much lower than those 20- to 24-year olds in the general population (91.2%).” Anne Havalchak, et al., *Casey Family Programs Young Adult Survey 2006: Examining Outcomes for Young Adults Served in Out-of-Home Care* (Casey Family Programs 2007).
- In 2006, “[m]ore than one in three (37.7%) [of a sample of former foster youth aged 19-25] were living below the household poverty line.” Anne Havalchak, et al., *Casey Family Programs Young Adult Survey 2006: Examining Outcomes for Young Adults Served in Out-of-Home Care* (Casey Family Programs 2007).
- 1/3 of former foster youth earn \$6,000 or less, substantially below the federal poverty level. *Improving the Family Foster Care: Findings From the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study*, Seattle WA (available at www.casey.org).
- Within 18 months of emancipation 40-50% of foster youth become homeless. The League of Women Voters of California Education Fund, *Juvenile Justice in California Part II: Dependency Systems* (July 1998) Chapter VI: Life After Foster Care.
- Emancipated foster youth earn significantly less than their peers, and progress more slowly into the labor market. George, Robert M., et al., *Employment Outcomes for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care Final Report*, University of Chicago Chaplin Center for Children, March 2002.
- 50% of former foster youth experience high rates of unemployment within 5 years of emancipation. Folse, Mandy, *Improving Independent Living Outcomes for Emancipated Foster Youth in San Francisco*, Goldman School of Public Policy, University of California, Berkeley (May 14, 2003).
- In 2006, 49.7% of a sample of former foster youth ages 19-25 were accepting some kind of public assistance (public cash, medical assistance, food stamps or WIC, etc.). Havalchak, et al., *Casey Family Programs Young Adult Survey 2006: Examining Outcomes for Young Adults Served in Out-of-Home Care* (Casey Family Programs 2007).
- 27% of the National homeless population spent time in foster care. *Homelessness: Programs and the People they Serve: Findings of the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients*, Martha R. Burt, Laudan Y. Aron, Toby Douglas, Jesse

Valente, Edgar Lee, and Britta Iwen (December 1999); *Report on the Survey of the Housing Needs of Emancipated Foster/Probation Youth Independent Living Program Policy Unit, Child and Youth Permanency Branch*, California Department of Social Services (2002).

Physical Health

- A recent study determined that one-third of foster care alumni reported some form of maltreatment **during** their foster care experience. Casey Family Programs, *Improving Family Foster Care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study* (January 2002).
- In 2006, “[n]early half (49.4%) of the young adults [in a sample of former foster youth aged 19-25] indicated having ‘alcohol problems’ according to a screener. In the general population, 15.1 percent of 18 to 25 year olds are defined as heavy drinkers.” Havalchak, et al., *Casey Family Programs Young Adult Survey 2006: Examining Outcomes for Young Adults Served in Out-of-Home Care* (Casey Family Programs 2007).
- In 2006, “[n]early two in five (38.6%) respondents [in a sample of former foster youth aged 19-25] [were smokers]...40.2 percent of 18 to 25 year olds in the general population smoke cigarettes.” Havalchak, et al., *Casey Family Programs Young Adult Survey 2006: Examining Outcomes for Young Adults Served in Out-of-Home Care 24-25* (Casey Family Programs 2007).

Pregnancy Rates (and the subsequent children) of Our Former Foster Youth

- “Seventy-one percent of the young women in the Midwest Study [of former foster youth] reported having been pregnant, and half had been pregnant since their most recent interview. Repeat pregnancies were more the rule than the exception. Among those who had ever been pregnant, 62 percent had been pregnant more than once....Half of the young men in the Midwest Study reported that they had ever gotten a female pregnant....In fact, 38 percent had gotten a female pregnant since their most recent interview. Only one-third of the females and one-fifth of the males had received either family planning services or information about birth control since their last interview.” Mark E. Courtney et al., *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 21* (Chapin Hall Center for Children 2007).
- “At age 21, more than half of the young women and nearly one-third of the young men in the Midwest Study [of former foster youth] had at least one child. Nearly all of these young women, but just over one-third of these young men, reported that one or more of their children were living with them....Nearly half of the young women who had a child not living with them reported that a child was in a foster or adoptive home (46%) or was living with relatives (42%) whereas nearly all of the young men who had a child not living with them reported that the child was living with its other parent (96%), and nearly one-third reported that a child was living with maternal relatives.” Mark E. Courtney et al., *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 21* (Chapin Hall Center for Children 2007).

- Parents with a history of foster care are almost twice as likely to see their own children placed in foster care than parents without this history. *Family Matters: A Guide to Developing Family Supportive Housing*, Minnesota Statewide Survey of Persons Without Permanent Shelter, Adults and Their Children, June 1998.

Typical Involvement of Our Former Foster Youth With the Criminal Justice System

- More than 25 percent of all prisoners in the United States were at some time in the foster care system. Charity Works, Retrieved February 8, 2005 from http://www.charityworksdc.org/partners_2001.html.
- 25% of former foster youth will be incarcerated within the first 2 years of emancipation. *Foster Youth Transitions to Adulthood: Outcomes 12 to 18 Months after Leaving Out-of-Home Care*, University of Wisconsin Courtney, Mark, Chapin, Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago (2004).
- In 2006, “[t]wo in five (41.2%) young adults [in a sample of former foster youth aged 19-25] had been arrested since leaving care and over one in three (35.7%) had spent a night in jail. Males experienced both a significantly higher arrest rate (57.0%) than females (26.6%) and a significantly higher rate of time spent in jail (53.6% for males versus 19.1% for females.... Over two-thirds (68.3%) of the 54 young adults who had been charged with a crime had used a public defender at least once, and more than one in four (26.3%) had been without legal representation at least once. Of the 40 young adults who had been convicted of a crime, about half (53.2%) had been convicted only once....” Havalchak, et al., *Casey Family Programs Young Adult Survey 2006: Examining Outcomes for Young Adults Served in Out-of-Home Care* (Casey Family Programs 2007).

Education of Our Foster Youth

- **“The most important barrier to educational attainment and high school graduation that is unique to foster youth is the frequent disruptions of their education by changes in school placement. Foster youth change schools about once every six months, and some research suggests that they lose an average of four to six months of educational attainment each time they change schools. Taken together these findings suggest that in general foster youth may make no educational progress while in care.”** Thomas R. Wolanin, *Higher Education Opportunities for Foster Youth: A Primer for Policymakers* (Institute for Higher Education Policy 2005).

- 83% of foster children are held back by the third grade. See <http://www.heysf.org/pdfs/HEYFosterYouthStatistics.pdf>, citing Fact Sheets of the California Youth Connections, 2006.
- Studies show that being retained even once between first and eighth grade makes a student four times more likely to drop out than a classmate who has never been held back, even after controlling for multiple factors. Rumberger, R.W., “Dropping out of middle school: A multilevel analysis of students and schools,” *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), p. 601 (1995).
- 75% of children and youth in foster care are behind grade level. See <http://www.heysf.org/pdfs/HEYFosterYouthStatistics.pdf>, citing Fact Sheets of the California Youth Connections, 2006.
- "In 2001, 57% of youth exiting foster care were reunified with one or both parents although about 1/3 of these youth return to foster care within three years." Wolanin, T.R., *Higher Education Opportunities for Foster Youth: A Primer for Policymakers* (Washington D.C., 2005).
- Children in foster care [are] on average 10 years old, and the largest group (30 percent) is between the ages of 11 through 15. Rumberger, R.W., *Dropping out of middle school: A multilevel analysis of students and schools*, *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), p. 601 (1995).
- “The rate at which foster youth complete high school (50 percent) is significantly below the rate at which their peers complete high school (70 percent) . . . If foster youth completed high school and attended postsecondary education at the same rate as their peers, nearly 100,000 additional foster youth in the 18 to 25-year-old age group would be attending higher education.” Wolanin, T.R., *Higher Education Opportunities for Foster Youth: A Primer for Policymakers* (Institute for Higher Education Policy 2005).
- Approximately 50% of foster youth don’t graduate high school. The Child Welfare League of America, “Hearing on Disconnected and Disadvantaged Youth: United States House of Representatives Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support” (June 19, 2007).
- The average foster youth changes schools 7 times while under foster care. Casey Family Programs, *Improving Family Foster Care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study* (January 2002).
- “The rates of college attendance and degree completion are dramatically lower for foster youth compared to their peers . . . ” Wolanin, T.R., *Higher Education Opportunities for Foster Youth: A Primer for Policymakers* (Institute for Higher Education Policy 2005).

- Foster youth generally do not have sustained relationships with caring adults who could provide them with the upbringing and mentoring that would convey to these youth the value of educational attainment and provide them with the skills to translate that value into reality. They often do not have adult models of educational success to guide them. Wolanin, T.R., *Higher Education Opportunities for Foster Youth: A Primer for Policymakers* (Institute for Higher Education Policy 2005).