

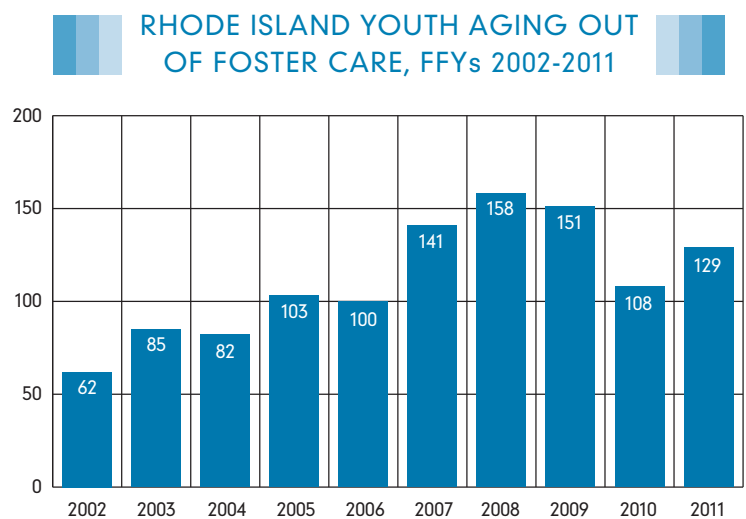
CHILD WELFARE FACTSHEET

October 2012

FOCUS ON YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE IN RHODE ISLAND

Youth who exit foster care to adulthood never having gained permanency through adoption, guardianship, or reunification are considered to have “aged out” of foster care. Without stable connections to parents, family members, or other caring adults, youth aging out of care are often left to negotiate the transition to adulthood with few supports.¹ As a group, youth who age out of foster care fair poorly across a wide spectrum of outcome measures, including employment, educational attainment, access to health care, housing stability, and criminal justice system involvement when compared to the general population.²

Nationally, growing numbers of young adults rely on their parents for material and emotional support well beyond their 18th birthday and many live with their parents while enrolled in school or working.^{3,4} Without permanent families to meet these needs, youth who have aged out of foster care may return to their birth families, many of whom are not prepared or able to provide this support. Research shows that youth who have tangible resources (e.g., money, household items, driver’s license, etc.) when they leave foster care have better employment and economic outcomes.⁵



Source: *Safety, permanency, and well-being in Rhode Island: Child welfare outcomes annual reports for FY 2002-2011*. (n.d.). New Haven, CT: Prepared by the Consultation Center, Yale University School of Medicine for the Data Analytic Center of the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families. Data are for Federal Fiscal Years (FFYs) 2002-2011.

- As of July 1, 2007, youth in Rhode Island age out of the foster care system at age 18, a change from age 21 in previous years. Youth with serious emotional disturbances, autism, or functional developmental disabilities continue to have their cases managed by the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) and remain legally entitled to services until age 21.⁶
- Between FFY 2007 and FFY 2011, there were 687 Rhode Island youth who aged out of foster care never having gained permanency. This was a 59% increase from the previous five year period, when 432 youth aged out of care.⁷
- Research suggests that allowing youth to remain in foster care until age 21 is associated with increased post-secondary educational attainment and higher lifetime earnings.⁸

SERVICES AND SUPPORTS FOR YOUTH AGING OUT IN RHODE ISLAND

	Case Management	Education and Employment Services	Housing	Financial	Health Insurance
Youth closed to DCYF and the Family Court upon reaching 18 years of age	None. Note: These youth could return to their families or some other permanent living arrangement. Some youth may no longer need or want the same level of services they had while in foster care and/or need aftercare services designed for youth aging out.	Eligible for DCYF Post-Secondary Education Tuition Assistance Program	None. Note: These youth could return to their families or some other permanent living arrangement. Some youth may no longer need or want the same level of services they had while in foster care and/or need aftercare services designed for youth aging out.	Eligible for ASPIRE Program, which provides youth with financial education classes and a matching savings account up to \$1,000 a year toward an asset purchase (eligibility for ASPIRE extends until age 24)	Eligible for RIte Care coverage until age 21 (Starting 1/1/14, youth aging out of foster care will be eligible for Medicaid until age 26, provided they turned 18 while in foster care.)
Youth closed to DCYF and the Family Court upon reaching 18 years of age who are enrolled in the Young Adults Establishing Self-Sufficiency (YESS) Program	Case management support up to 8 hours/month (decreases incrementally, over time, as youth progresses towards self-sufficiency)	Eligible for DCYF Post-Secondary Education Tuition Assistance Program	Up to \$600/month for living expenses reimbursement (decreases incrementally, over time, as youth progresses towards self-sufficiency)	Eligible for ASPIRE Program, which provides youth with financial education classes and a matching savings account up to \$1,000 a year toward an asset purchase (eligibility for ASPIRE extends until age 24)	Eligible for RIte Care coverage until age 21 (Starting 1/1/14, youth aging out of foster care will be eligible for Medicaid until age 26, provided they turned 18 while in foster care.)

Sources: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families; Rhode Island Foster Parents Association (RIFPA).

Note: The YESS and ASPIRE Programs are part of Consolidated Youth Services (CYS), which are led by RIFPA in collaboration with the Rhode Island Council of Resource Providers. CYC provides other supportive services to older youth in foster care and youth who have aged out of foster care that are not listed in the above chart.

Recommendations:

Reduce the numbers of youth who leave foster care without achieving permanency.

- Enhance efforts to find permanent families for youth in foster care by ensuring that all child welfare professionals, members of the judiciary, and foster/adoptive parents are provided initial and ongoing training to better understand and work towards timely permanency. This includes appropriately using concurrent planning methods to ensure that if reunification is not possible, children and youth can be more quickly placed in permanent families.

Enhance supports for youth who age out of foster care.

- Ensure that no youth ages out of DCYF care without the identification of permanent supportive adult relationships.
- Expand supports for youth who have aged out of care to promote their successful transition to adulthood by expanding access to case management services, financial and housing assistance, and post-secondary educational and training opportunities.

References:

^{1,4,5} Casey Family Programs. (2008). *Improving outcomes for older youth in foster care*. Retrieved September 24, 2012, from www.casey.org

² Courtney, M. E., Dworsky, A., Lee, J. & Rapp, M. (2010). *Executive summary: Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 23 and 24*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

³ Settersten, R. A. & Ray, B. (2010). What's going on with young people today? The long twisting path to adulthood. *The Future of Children*, 20(1), 19-41.

⁶ *Services to youth ages 18-21: Q and A*. (2007). Providence, RI: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families.

⁷ *Safety, permanency, and well-being in Rhode Island: Child welfare outcomes annual reports for FY 2002-2011*. (n.d.). New Haven, CT: Prepared by the Consultation Center, Yale University School of Medicine for the Data Analytic Center of the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families.

⁸ Peters, C. M., Dworsky, A., Courtney, M. E. & Pollack, H. (2009). *Extending foster care to age 21: Weighing the costs to government against the benefits to youth*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.



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