

Housing Stability and Supports for Older Foster Youth

SSRC Selections are brief, curated lists of research, evaluation reports, and additional publications and resources that inform the field about key issues in, and effective practices for, fostering economic self-sufficiency. The goal of SSRC Selections is to bring together relevant, seminal work on a topic for a focused read on the state of the field. This set of selections focuses on housing stability and supports for older foster youth. While these selections include information on housing stability and supports for older foster youth, this is not an exhaustive list of resources in this area. To access over 7,000 reports, datasets, journal articles, conference papers, federal publications, and more, visit the [SSRC Library](#).

Courtney, M. E., Okpych, N. J., Park, K., Harty, J., Feng, H., Torres-Garcia, A., & Sayed, S. (2018). *Findings from the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (CalYOUTH): Conditions of youth at age 21*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/findings-california-youth-transitions-adulthood-study-cal-youth-conditions-youth-age-21>

The California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study examined the impact of extension of care in California from 2012-2018. Program data, information from young people, and data from child welfare workers provided the basis to examine outcomes for foster youth transitioning to adulthood. More than 600 youth were sampled at age 21, after they were no longer in care. Data on a wide range of outcomes were provided, including rates of housing instability. The researchers found that nearly 25 percent of youth surveyed reported experiencing homelessness since age 19, with more than one-fifth reporting five or more homelessness experiences. Further, nearly 20 percent of youth in care past age 18 reported experiencing homelessness while they were in extended care. The study provides further information on transitional housing and breaks down data by gender and race-ethnicity to further examine disparities in outcomes.

Curry, S. R. & Abrams, L. S. (2014). Housing and social support for youth aging out of foster care: State of the research literature and directions for future inquiry. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 32(2), 143-153. doi:10.1007/s10560-014-0346-4

<https://opressrc.org/content/housing-and-social-support-youth-aging-out-foster-care-state-research-literature-and>

The authors reviewed research regarding how young people who age out of the foster care system fare, outlining a range of poor outcomes associated with emancipation. Their discussion is contextualized within the increasing focus on the role of family support during the transition years from adolescence to adulthood. Within this framework, they review literature on formal and informal supports provided to youth who age out of care. Ultimately, the authors argue that further consideration should be given to the inherent tension between making self-sufficiency the goal of independent living services, and the importance of young people seeking and building supportive networks.

Dworsky, A., & Courtney, M. (2010). Assessing the impact of extending care beyond age 18 on homelessness: Emerging findings from the Midwest study.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/assessing-impact-extending-care-beyond-age-18-homelessness-emerging-findings-midwest-study>

The authors reported findings from the Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth, to identify the prevalence and timing of homelessness experienced by youth who exited care. In this study, young people in two states without extended care are compared to youth in a third state which has extended care to age 21. Their findings show that extending care provided some benefit in reducing the likeliness of experiencing homelessness or transitional housing before age 21, and particularly before age 19. However, the data do not indicate that extending care reduces the risk of experiencing homelessness by age 23 or 24. The authors raise the question of whether extension of care merely postpones homelessness, as there was no statistically significant difference by age 23 or 24; both those out of care and those in extended care had rates of approximately 30 percent. In light of this analysis, the authors consider whether housing supports should be provided past age 21.

Dworsky, A. & Dasgupta, D. (2018). *Housing for young adults in extended federally funded foster care: Best practices for states* (OPRE Report #2018-24). Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/housing-young-adults-extended-federally-funded-foster-care-best-practices-states>

In this report, Dworsky and Dasgupta examined state housing policies and practices in nine states with the largest number of young adults in federally funded extended care. The authors interviewed state public child welfare agency officials and held a convening with different housing stakeholders to outline types of housing options available to young people, eligibility criteria for these, funding approaches, and challenges in providing developmentally-appropriate placement settings. Other questions are posed on broader topics, such as to what extent states center youth preferences in decision-making, and what levels of support, structure, and supervision states prefer in continuing to care for young people past age 18. This report contributes to the conversation on recognizing the developmental needs of young adults in foster care as requiring different placement options and supports as they grow older.

Dworsky, A., Dillman, K., Dion, M. R., Coffee-Borden, B., & Rosenau, M. (2012). *Housing for youth aging out of foster care: A review of the literature and program typology*. Washington, DC: United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development & Research.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/housing-youth-aging-out-foster-care-review-literature-and-program-typology-0>

The authors reviewed the literature on homelessness experienced by young people who age out of foster care, identifying known risks for, and predictors of, homelessness, as well as systemic and individual obstacles this population often faces when seeking stable housing. Through an environmental scan of state and local housing programs that serve young people aging out of care, the authors developed a typology based on 58 programs, in 21 states, that matched the study criteria. The inventory includes patterns and variations in housing type, funding source, forms of housing assistance, delivery of supports, and on-site supervision. The authors noted the challenge of drawing conclusions from participation in these housing programs, because of the scarcity of rigorous evaluations demonstrating the effectiveness of these programs in reducing housing instability.

Fowler, P. J., Marcal, K. E., Zhang, J., Day, O., & Landsverk, J. (2017). Homelessness and aging out of foster care: A national comparison of child welfare-involved adolescents. *Children and Youth Services Review, 77, 27-33. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.03.017*

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/homelessness-and-aging-out-foster-care-national-comparison-child-welfare-involved>

Using data from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW II), a nationally representative sample of adolescents who were the subject of investigation by the child welfare system, the authors looked at housing instability and homelessness. In the analysis, several subgroups were created to examine the experiences of unstable housing: youth who aged out of care, youth who were reunified with family, and youth who were never removed from their homes. Whether foster care services were received was also examined, along with other characteristics. The authors found that youth who aged out of foster care were as likely to experience literal homelessness as those who were never placed in out-of-home care. Youth reunified with family experienced the lowest risk for homelessness; receipt of independent-living skills training and participation in extended care were not associated with a reduced risk for housing instability. The authors maintain that the effects of the extension of care to age 21 have been inconclusive, particularly as there has been insufficient time for researchers to fully investigate its effects. However, the authors state that evidence argues against reliance on skill-building for independent living as the sole mechanism to support the transition to adulthood. Promoting family support and reunification, particularly during the additional time provided through extension of care, are promising strategies, in light of data showing reunified youth fared better in housing stability.

Fryar, G., Jordan, E., & DeVooght, K. (2017). *Supporting young people transitioning from foster care: Findings from a national survey*. Bethesda, MD: Child Trends.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/supporting-young-people-transitioning-foster-care-findings-national-survey>

In 2016, the authors conducted a survey of Independent Living Coordinators in 47 states and territories, gathering information on state policy and utilization of extended care, as well as services provided in different service areas. The authors looked at inter-state variations, highlighting promising examples of service delivery, as well as use of research-informed strategies. Forty states reported that extended care was available, at least in part, up until age 21. However, in 36 states, the typical age at which young people aged out was lower than the maximum possible age by at least one year, and, in 32 states, by two years or more. Service availability dropped significantly at the age of majority, with housing the need most commonly identified by states for improvement. The authors provided further

detailed information on type of housing service provided, the number of states that provide each type of assistance, and what subgroups of youth were eligible. This inventory provides information intended to shift conversations from simply advocating for the availability of extended care, to examining the utilization of extended care, and the provision of evidence-based supports.

Pergamit, M. R., McDaniel, M., & Hawkins, A. (2012). *Housing assistance for youth who have aged out of foster care: The role of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/housing-assistance-youth-who-have-aged-out-foster-care-role-chafee-foster-care-independence>

The authors compiled an inventory of policies and practices from 20 states that spent the maximum allowable proportion of Chafee Foster Care Independence Program funds for room and board for youth, ages 18 to 21, who left care. They reviewed public documents and interviewed state officials and Independent Living Coordinators to summarize trends in how states assist youth pursuing stable housing. The authors identified eligibility criteria, time limits, and the most common uses of Chafee funds, as well as additional funding sources and housing assistance programs not receiving Chafee funding. The authors highlighted that many housing options are primarily for youth already progressing towards self-sufficiency through employment or school enrollment. However, fewer options are available to assist youth who are not enrolled in either, but who need support, particularly with long-term housing options. Finally, the authors conclude by noting that there is a need to evaluate states' housing practices. Though the information is not nationally representative, it does provide data on room and board provisions not otherwise systematically collected.