



Transition Age Youth in Allegheny County

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Transition Age Youth in Allegheny County

Focus On Adolescents

Studies on the functioning of former foster care youth underscored the need for longer-term services for youth leaving the child welfare system as they transitioned into adulthood.

Reinforced what we were seeing in Allegheny County



Transition Age Youth in Allegheny County

Nationally:

In 2005 24,407 Youth aged out of Foster Care:

84% become parents

51% were unemployed

30% were uninsured

25% were homeless

30% had mental health/substance abuse

25% experienced incarceration

2% obtain a Bachelors degree or higher

Courtney, M., Dworsky, A., Brown, A., Cary, C., Love, K., & Vorhies, V. (2011). Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 26. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago



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2011

Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative

1 in 5 are Homeless

58% High School Graduation rate vs. 87%

50% Unemployment Rate

3% earn Bachelors Degree vs 25%

25% Incarceration Rate

71% Pregnancy Rate vs. 33%

Cost in Services: 8 Billion/year

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Transition Age Youth in Allegheny County

In 2006, oversight of all transition programs was placed in the DHS Executive Office

- Emphasis is on youth involvement and engaging youth in services

Transition Programs now include:

- Independent Living Services provided by Auberle 412 Youth Zone
- The Independent Living Initiative
Focus is on education, workforce development and life skills

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- D Services for 14 and 15 year olds who are in foster care
- H Served by Educational Liaisons and if referred by OCYF YSP's
- S Focus is on Education and Group Activities
(services determined by focus groups)



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D Traditional services for 16 to 18 year olds who are in foster care

- Life skills assessments
- Individualized goal plans
- Job and career development
- Personal safety and health issues

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D 24 Enhanced services for youth aged 18-

- Career development and job skills
- Assistance with finances
- Assistance with employment, housing and household/items
- **Blended Funding-** (Chaffee & State Funds)
Eliminates waiting lists



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The Independent Living Initiative (ILI)

- Began in March of 2006
- Located within the DHS Executive Office
 - Ten Educational Liaisons
 - Youth Advocacy Specialist/Youth Outreach Supervisor
 - Transition Program Manager
 - Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Passport Coordinator
 - Intern

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The Independent Living Initiative (ILI)

- **Assists youth ages 14 to 24 years in transition planning**
 - ✓ Post secondary education
 - ✓ Employment and Vocational Training
 - ✓ Housing
 - ✓ Financial aid and scholarship searches
 - ✓ Mentoring
 - ✓ Parenting

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Parenting

- In 2008-2009, 109 (32%) of Independent Living Program participants aged 16-21 were either pregnant or parenting.
- In response, DHS sponsors parenting programs for all involved youth.
- Currently, 105 (11.4%) of Independent Living Program participants aged 16-24 are pregnant or parenting. *Teen birth rates are down nationwide almost 40% from 2006.*
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The Independent Living Initiative (ILI)

Collaboration with Kidsvoice

- Joint determination of individual need for students post 18 with Guardian Ad Litem (Kidsvoice)
- Co-sponsor of the annual college/career fair

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The Heinz Endowments - (2007-2009)

- A grant supported two Education Liaison positions to assist with:
 - educational planning
 - SAT/ACT prep
 - securing admissions to colleges, universities, trade schools
 - tutoring & remediation
 - completion of financial aid forms & scholarship applications
 - securing and evaluating transcripts
 - assistance with career choices

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The Educational Liaison project revealed serious educational deficiencies among many foster youth

- They work with students to identify academic needs/strengths, make referrals for tutoring, remediation or enhanced academic opportunities
- Currently 10 Liaisons are employed by DHS

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New Initiative:

JIM CASEY

YOUTH OPPORTUNITY PASSPORT

Financial literacy Program aimed to prepare Youth leaving foster care to become:

Financially Capable

Gain experience with the banking system

Financial Education



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New Initiative: Auberle 412 YOUTH ZONE

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New vision for IL services where Youth can go to a one stop drop in center at Wood Street Commons and receive all of the IL services they need as well as other supports.

Will also enable homeless youth who are not connected to any formal supports programs to access services.



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New Initiative: Health Shack

D Electronic means of helping transition age youth keep important documents, including health care records.

H A web portal called Steel City Safe, launched in early August, incorporates HealthShack, software that allows life records to be secured and accessed at will.

S HealthShack also allows youth to develop resumes, store photographs, important contacts and critical documents such as identification, permits, a birth certificate, Social Security card, and diploma.



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New Initiative

Summer Youth employment

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In 2015 Allegheny County and the ILI collaborated with 3 Rivers Workforce Investment Board and the City of Pittsburgh to provide meaningful employment for Youth from Allegheny County.

Out of 2000 openings 1906 Youth participated gaining invaluable employment skills and experience.

6 week program open to 14-21 year olds in 110 worksites throughout Allegheny County



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Important Findings

- Cultural/Attitude change is necessary
- Youth involvement is critical to planning services that will be culturally acceptable and of value
- Transitional services must be in place to fill the gap between child and adult serving systems
- Youth who leave the Child Welfare System and whose plans fail must have a way of accessing supports through the system

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Challenges

- Changing casework practice which encouraged youth to leave the system at age 18
- Engaging youth in services on a consistent basis
- Providing youth living independently with sound guidance, financial assistance, and moral support
- Finding funding for new and promising initiatives

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Challenges cont.

- In the summer of 2012 Allegheny County implemented a new policy allowing Youth who have left care after the age of 17 3/4 to return to care prior to their 21st birthday.
- However of the Youth returning very few have agreed to the terms of service, i.e. education, employment, course of treatment.



Transition Age Youth in Allegheny County

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