

Legislative Liaison Blog

A new federal program called Fostering Youth for Independence aims to help young adults aging out of the foster care system each year and is seeing success. Nationally, about 20,000 young people ages 18-21 age out of the Foster Care system each year. Some statistics put that number even higher at 23,000, according to a 2017 National Foster Youth Institute. However, this new program through the federal Housing and Urban Development Department which is starting up with 250 clients was deemed so successful by the HUD Secretary Ben Carson in a [CBS Interview on Monday](#) that he is adding another half million dollars to expand the program.

FYI program also helps former foster children ages 18 to 24 to improve professional and life skills, along with housing assistance. That is a vital safety net for young people who would otherwise be homeless. According to a National Study of Longitudinal Adolescent Health, foster care youth are 10 times more likely to be homeless as adults than their peers, with 25 percent experiencing it in the first year of leaving foster care. Another 50 percent would be homeless within the first four years of leaving care. In contrast, only 4 percent of young adults ages 18 to 26 reported ever being homeless.

Homelessness is not the only challenge. Young people leaving foster care are at a higher risk to not attend, let alone graduate college; have employment issues; and get involved with drugs.

In 2017, Ohio joined the efforts to help aging out youth. The Ohio Legislature mandated the creation of [Bridges](#) program for former foster care ages 18-20 through Ohio Jobs and Family Services. Their website shows the program encourages self-sufficiency as an end goal with training to help young adults reach that goal. Bridges program, however, will also help with paying for rent, utilities, food, clothing and other personal incidentals; offers a number of educational opportunities from apprenticeship opportunities to 4-year college support; employment assistance; and health insurance assistance through Medicaid.

Helpful Websites:

Fostering Youth Independence: <https://www.fyifosteryouth.org/>

Bridges: <http://bridgestosuccess.ifs.ohio.gov/index.stm>

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