

Supporting Youth Aging Out of Foster Care in Texas

Report Brief

For decades, youth aging out of foster care have faced poorer outcomes than their peers, including high rates of homelessness, unemployment, mental health challenges, and justice system involvement. While federal and state programs were designed to support this transition, many young people continue to face systemic barriers, and in some cases, outcomes have worsened over time. As more older youth enter care with increasingly complex needs and nearly half exit through emancipation, limited supports and strained resources underscore the need for new approaches to stability, education, employment, and housing.

Through statewide convenings, young adults shared firsthand what they need to successfully transition to adulthood after foster care. Staff offered candid perspectives on systemic barriers, resource gaps, and challenges in meeting young people's needs. Informed by the experiences and insights of 205 young adults who aged out of foster care across Texas and more than 120 staff who support them; what follows are not prescriptive solutions, but opportunities for consideration and further development. These opportunities are intended to spark innovation and collaboration among Single Source Continuum Contractors, the Department of Family and Protective Services, providers, community partners, advocates, and policymakers.

Top 10 Areas of Opportunity

- 1 Redesign and Increase Participation in Extended Foster Care
- 2 Develop Life Skills for Independent Living
- 3 Ensure Youth Leave Care with Essential Documentation
- 4 Build Strong Relationships and Support Networks
- 5 Repair Broken Education Pathways
- 6 Remove Barriers to Employment
- 7 Stabilize Housing and Prevent Homelessness
- 8 Expand and Improve Mental Health Supports
- 9 Reframe Harmful System Narratives
- 10 Strengthen System Coordination and Sustainability

The voices in this report reinforce what decades of research have shown: individual resilience alone cannot overcome system gaps. With Texas nearing statewide implementation of Community-Based Care, this moment presents a critical opportunity to address longstanding gaps and reimagine how transition-age youth are supported across the state.

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