

# Journey To Success Campaign Quick Messaging Guide



## Overview

The *Journey to Success* campaign promotes federal policies that lead to what young people who have experienced foster care say they most need – **equity, healing, family** and **economic security**.

This guide provides communicators with examples of key messages and specific framing tips for each of the *Journey to Success* campaign's six policy goals. It helps communicators explain key issues in a way that moves policymakers to care, motivates them to act, and encourages them to become advocates themselves.

## Policy Goals and Framed Messages

Based on extensive research, analysis, and input from experts and individuals with lived experience in foster care, the *Journey to Success* campaign developed six broad policy goals with [accompanying recommendations](#). Below are framing tips and examples of key messages for communicating about each of these policy goals.

### 1) Prioritize health, healing and well-being.

**The Frame:** Use the [Steep Climb](#) metaphor to communicate how healing and well-being is achieved.

**Key Message:** Transition age foster youth face a rocky path to adulthood. We need programs that give them the supports and resources they need to heal from past trauma, build resilience, and equip them to thrive as they become adults.

**Tip:** Draw on the language of the *Steep Climb* metaphor to explain, not just present, health data for youth in communities.

### 2) Nurture family ties and family permanence.

**The Frame:** Use the [Roots metaphor](#) to talk about the role of relationships.

**Key Message:** Every young person's wellbeing is rooted in strong, supportive relationships. But transition age foster youth often lack these connections at a critical time in their lives. We need to create programs that prioritize strong relationships and connections to family if we want transition age foster youth to thrive.

**Tip:** Emphasize the role family relationships and connections with supportive adults play in every young person's development to emphasize why these are so important for transition age foster youth.

## Why Support Transition Age Foster Youth?

When we support transition age foster youth – young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are transitioning out of the foster care system– they can develop into healthier, happier, adults who can be more engaged in our communities.

## Youth Voice is Critical to Communications

Young people who have experienced foster care should always be included in communications efforts and equipped with the framing strategy as they contribute their own stories and experiences.

### 3) Retool foster care to better serve adolescents and young adults.

**The Frame:** Talk about the need for transition age foster youth to be [Plugged In](#) to resources.

**Key Message:** Young people leaving foster care may suddenly become unplugged from all networks of support, even though they still need them. We need to make sure young people stay plugged into resources they need—such as financial assistance, health care services, and relationships with supportive adults—and create a system that helps them do well as they become adults.

**Tip:** Include the voices of young people who can speak about how being disconnected from resources, and offer examples of *how* to plug young people into resources and supports.

### 4) Increase accountability, foster fairness, and focus on results.

**The Frame:** Make this about *Opportunity* so they know what's at stake, then name the causes of inequitable outcomes.

**Key Message:** Everyone should have the opportunity to do well in life, regardless of their start in life. However, because racism, poverty, and prejudice shape our child welfare system, those opportunities often aren't accessible for transition age foster youth. We need policies that address the inequities built into the system so transition age foster youth can access the opportunities to do well.

**Tip:** Use data to show the disparities that exist in state and local foster care systems or more generally in the U.S. but always explain *why* these disparities occur and persist. Define equity and inequities as often as possible.

### 5) Help youth thrive after foster care by helping them to be plugged in to supportive services.

**The Frame:** Use the [Plugged In metaphor](#) to talk about the need for a network of support for transition age foster youth as they transition to adulthood.

**Key Message:** When foster youth turn 18, access to previous supports decrease or disappear. This disconnects them from the resources and networks they need to do well—things like stable housing, educational resources, and supportive relationships. We need policies and programs that keep them plugged in to critical services and supports as they transition out of foster care.

**Tip:** Talk about how policies and programs need to plug in transition age foster youth, not how they should plug themselves in.

### 6) Promote economic security.

**The Frame:** Combine the [Steep Climb metaphor](#) with the value of *Community Connections*.

**Key Message:** We need to redesign the system to ensure transition age foster youth have the financial resources and guidance they need to find their footing. Economic security clears the path to stronger connections with their communities, connections that benefit everyone.

**Tip:** Include data like graduation rates, enrollment in post-secondary education, employment rates, and workforce training program enrollment to show the benefits of increased supports, but always link them to general wellbeing of young people and their communities.

*To learn more about the Journey to Success vision and policy recommendations, go to [journeytosuccess.org](http://journeytosuccess.org).*