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The latest data on youth in foster care is an ‘alarm bell’ for greater federal policy intervention – *Fostering Youth Transitions 2023* report shines a light on the urgent need for stronger supports and resources for youth in and transitioning out of foster care

May 8, 2023, Washington, D.C.—The journey from adolescence to adulthood is a pivotal time and sets the course for success in life. But for youth in foster care, this journey is too often a steep climb and one that too many young people are forced to make alone and without support.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s new report, “[Fostering Youth Transitions 2023](#)” lays bare the challenges and the opportunities for youth experiencing foster care across the country. The latest data shines a light on the fact that many of the systems and supports meant to equip youth in foster care on their climb to adulthood are underfunded, inaccessible, or fundamentally broken. These findings are an alarm bell that federal policymakers should heed as an urgent call to action.

Key findings from the report include:

- Despite tremendous need, the Chafee program—one of the primary federal programs dedicated to supporting successful transitions to adulthood for youth in foster care—**is serving fewer than half of all eligible youth.**
- Our nation’s foster care system is **failing to find permanent families for more than half of youth in foster care**, meaning that nearly 20,000 youth per year age out of foster care on their own. At this stage, the steep climb these youth have already been on becomes more arduous and too often results in youth falling off the path to success as they struggle in school and work and often experience homelessness.

At the same time, the report emphasizes what we have long known: There is enormous untapped potential to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of youth in foster care through targeted support and resources during their pivotal adolescent years.

The Journey to Success campaign was launched over a year ago with the mission of driving federal policy improvements to create better opportunities and outcomes for all youth and young adults who experience foster care. The campaign builds on the [legacy of youth-driven advocacy](#) and is grounded in an abundance of research and insight about what youth need to succeed in life: healing, family connections, and economic security.

“Fostering Youth Transitions 2023” reveals a clear picture about the unmet needs of youth in foster care and urges decision-makers to take immediate steps to better equip these young people to thrive as they become adults. In particular; we urge policymakers to take immediate action in three key areas:

- Prioritize family ties and permanent family connections to provide those lifelong relationships that youth need most to succeed.
- Invest in and redesign Chafee to ensure youth in foster care are plugged in to supportive relationships and services.
- Improve extended foster care so it can provide the supportive services youth and young adults most need in young adulthood.

We encourage federal policymakers to examine [the report’s state profiles](#) to understand how youth in foster care are faring in their home states. The Journey to Success campaign stands ready to partner with policymakers to develop and advance practical, grounded, youth-informed policies that improve outcomes for older youth in care.

Policymakers and advocates can find data-driven policy solutions on our website at journeytosuccess.org/fostering-youth-transitions-2023. This includes:

- **Journey to Success Community Conversation Guide**, an easy-to-use resource to help advocates organize data-driven community conversations using the Fostering Youth Transitions 2023 report. The guide was created in partnership with lived experience (LEx) leaders — youth and young adults who have experienced foster care.
- **Fostering Youth Transitions 2023 Policy Brief** for a full analysis of the report’s findings and our recommended policy actions to address the challenges and opportunities outlined in the report.
- **Fostering Youth Transitions 2023 Policy Tip Sheet** for an abbreviated summary of the recommendations contained in the policy brief mentioned above.
- **Policy Solution One-Pagers** featuring policy recommendations and supporting data that you can share in meetings with legislators, agency leaders, advocacy organizations, and others on:
 - [Prioritizing family ties and permanent family connections](#)
 - [Investing in and redesigning the Chafee program](#)
 - [Improving extended foster care to better serve youth and young adults](#)

Social media tools relating to these new resources will be available at:

- [instagram.com/journeycampaign/](https://www.instagram.com/journeycampaign/)
- twitter.com/journeycampaign
- [facebook.com/JourneyToSuccessOrg](https://www.facebook.com/JourneyToSuccessOrg)

We can and must create a better path for these young people by improving our child welfare systems—and the policies that support and govern them. Doing so will ensure that youth who experience foster care can achieve health and well-being, establish lifelong family connections, and attain economic security.

Many federal policymakers have been long-standing champions for youth in foster care and—galvanized by youth-driven advocacy—have made possible a series of legislative victories over the past 25 years. These latest findings about the lack of access to services and declining permanence rates are a clear signal that now is the time for policymakers to again step up for youth in foster care.

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Journey to Success is a policy advocacy campaign that seeks to improve opportunities and outcomes for all youth and young adults who experience foster care by promoting their healing, family connections, and economic security.

To advance its goals of guiding federal policy reform, the campaign brings together a diverse network of local, state, and national organizations to share research, analysis, and a full range of perspectives with policymakers.

State-based campaign partners are co-convened by the State Policy Advocacy and Reform Center, a project of the Partnership for America’s Children, and FosterClub, the national network for youth in care. The Youth Law Center, Think of Us and others are also working in partnership with the campaign.

The campaign prioritizes and reflects the input and involvement of individuals with lived experience in foster care.

Learn more and get involved at www.journeytosuccess.org.