



## Recommended Federal Actions to Help Older Youth in and Aging Out of Foster Care in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis

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Older youth in the child welfare system and those who have recently aged out have significant needs that have grown and become more urgent in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis:

- ***As many as 10,000 former foster youth who previously lived in dorms are at risk of homelessness*** as colleges increasingly de-populate dorms and close campuses.
- ***In a recent COVID-19 survey conducted by FosterClub, young people reported numerous needs:*** 39% of respondents reported housing insecurity, 27% had been laid off, 40% had their hours at work severely cut, 33% had less than a week's worth of cash at hand, 28% were low on food, and 23% expressed the desire for emotional support.
- ***Nationwide, approximately 1400 youth in foster care "age out" on their own each month and face an uncertain future if discharged during this public health crisis.***

Congress should take action to ensure that states have the funding, capacity, and expertise to support these young people so they do not fall through the cracks during this time of national crisis and for at least 6 months following the end of national and state emergency declarations. **The following actions will help ensure that young people are protected and able to thrive following the crisis.**

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### **Policy 1: Increase Chafee Funding by 500 Million.**

**The need:** Young people in and from foster care have significant immediate needs for things such as housing, food, income. These needs are not being fully met by our current systems and by recent federal legislation to address the crisis.

**How it will help:** Funds from the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood can pay for the vital resources and services that young people need immediately and urgently, but has remained at \$140 million since its enactment in 1999 and only increased to \$143 million this year. Providing an increase in funding for Chafee will allow states to meaningfully meet the immediate needs of youth and young adults during this crisis and help support them as they plan for their future past the COVID-19 crisis.

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### **Policy 2: Extend the Age of Eligibility for Chafee Aftercare Services to Age 23 for All Youth.**

**The Need:** The significant needs of young people continue in their early 20s. They are at an important time in their lives where they are trying to gain a foothold in the world of work, family, and career. This crisis has left many without the support they need and they do not have a place to turn to for help.

**How it will help:** Flexible Chafee funds can be used to meet many of the immediate needs of young people who are still making the transition to adulthood. These funds can help with immediate needs for housing, food, and other service supports that are so vital at this time. Congress has acknowledged the wisdom of providing these services to youth until age 23. Youth in all states should have the benefit of this opportunity for support.

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### **Policy 3: Suspend Participation Requirements for Young People in Extended Foster Care.**

**The Need:** To remain in federally funded extended foster care, which provides housing, case management, and services for young people past age 18, youth must participate in activities like: school, training, employment, and participation in programs. These routine activities have been disrupted, canceled or eliminated due to the crisis. Many young people are at risk for losing eligibility for extended foster care due to circumstances beyond their control and efforts.

**How it will help:** Suspending the work, school, and program participation requirements for youth in extended foster care will allow youth to remain safe, healthy, and housed. Young people can continue to receive placement and support services through the COVID-19 crisis and stay on track to meet their goals. Without this action, many youth may be pushed out of the system to homelessness and unsafe situations where their health will be at great risk.

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### **Policy 4: Place a Moratorium on Discharges from the Foster Care System for Youth Ages 18-21.**

**The Need:** If youth are discharged from their housing and cut off from all services and support at this time of crisis it will be virtually impossible for them to secure safe and stable housing and be in position to make ends meet. Cutting them off from safety and stability during a pandemic will greatly risk their health and wellbeing.

**How it will help:** By providing young people the safety and security of maintaining their current living arrangements and services, they will be in the best position to stay healthy and continue working towards their goals for their future. This additional time and support will help young people and child welfare agencies be able to appropriately plan for a successful transition out of care and into adulthood.

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### **Policy 5: Allow States to Draw Down Title IV-E funds until a Young Person Reaches age 22.**

**The Need:** Currently Title IV-E funding ends when a young person turns age 21. Some states are doing the right thing for young people by placing a moratorium on youth aging out of care during the COVID-19 crisis, understanding the devastating impact of cutting youth off from housing and services at this time. States that take this important step will need to assume the full cost of care for these young people if they reach age 21 during the crisis.

**How it will help:** By allowing states to draw down IV-E funds after a young person reaches age 21, states will be encouraged to provide continued services for youth in his time of great need. This will help ensure that young people are not cut off from housing and services when they need it the most. It will also ensure that states have the capacity and funds to meet their needs.

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*The proposals in this document are endorsed by the following organizations: ACTION Ohio, Center for the Study of Social Policy, Children's Advocacy Institute, Children's Defense Fund, Child Welfare League of America, Children's Rights, First Focus Campaign for Children, FosterClub, Foster Care Alumni of America, Foster Youth in Action, John Burton Advocates for Youth, Juvenile Law Center, National Center for Child Welfare and Housing, Think of Us, Youth Law Center, and Youth Villages. For more information, please contact Jenny Pokempner at [jpokempner@jlc.org](mailto:jpokempner@jlc.org)*