

THE COLLABORATIVE

Improving Outcomes for Foster Youth in Rhode Island

BY

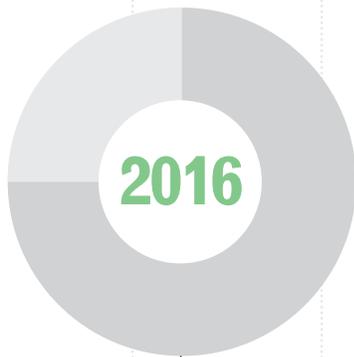
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SOCIAL SERVICES

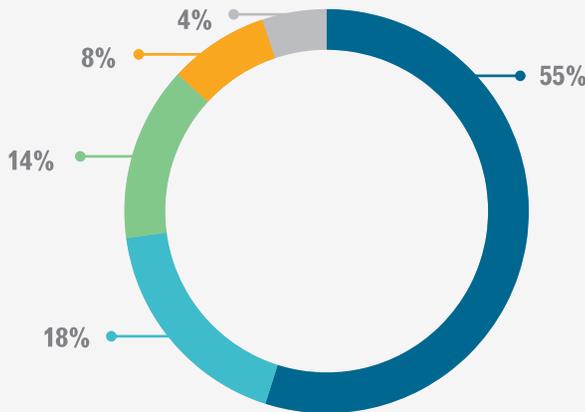
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How can Rhode Island improve the long-term outcomes of young people leaving the foster care system?

Youth who “age out” of the system are most at-risk.

In FY 2014, 152 young people “aged out” of the system, which means they were not adopted or reunified with their family by the time they reached age 18 and their eligibility for foster care ended. 71% of these young people had been in foster care since they were 12 or younger.



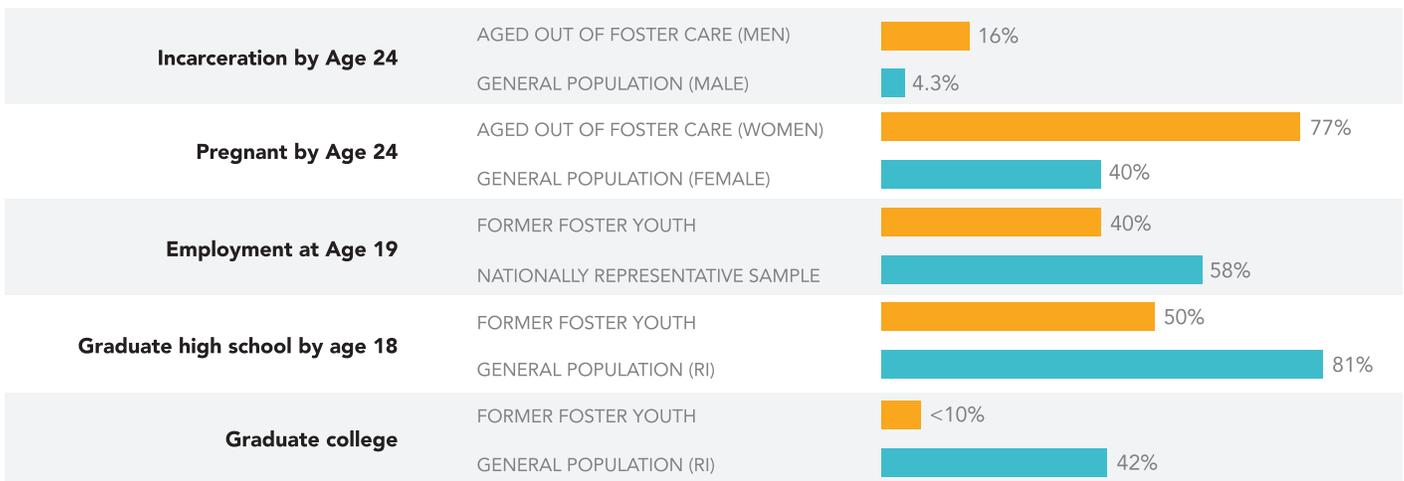
REASON FOR EXITING FOSTER CARE

- Reunified with Family of Origin
- Adopted
- Aged Out
- Placed in Care of a Relative or Legal Guardian
- Other Outcome

Foster youth face a number of challenges after they leave the system.

After leaving the foster care system, young people face significant barriers to completing their education, gaining meaningful employment, obtaining secure housing, and successfully transitioning into adulthood.

“AGE-OUTS” ON AVERAGE EARN 25% BELOW THE FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL



After aging out of foster care,



RESEARCH IN BRIEF

Full article, author bios, and endnotes can be found at collaborativeri.org/topic-areas

After leaving the foster care system, young people face many barriers to successfully transitioning into adulthood.

CHALLENGE

Foster youth are one of the most vulnerable populations of young people. After leaving foster care, they face enormous barriers to successfully transitioning into adulthood and employment, particularly if they “age out” of the foster care system. They are less likely to graduate high school, complete college, or be employed; are more likely to be incarcerated or homeless; and are more likely to become young mothers.

Finding stable housing is a particular challenge for many youth when they “age out” of foster care, because they do not have family to rely on in times of need. Housing instability and homelessness can prevent them from obtaining and holding onto permanent jobs and taking part in educational programs.

RESEARCH

This study explores the available research on the long-term outcomes for foster youth and examines four options for improving their prospects: increasing the age at which youth “age out” of the foster system, decreasing the use of group homes, promoting educational success, and increasing job training and employment opportunities. We review the academic literature on each of these topics and explore how states have attempted to improve outcomes by making policy changes in these areas.

FINDINGS

Two groups of foster youth are at particularly high risk for poor educational, employment, and social outcomes: those placed in group homes and those who “age out” of the system. Youth who are placed in home-based family care and who “age out” of care at 21 or later are better prepared for adulthood.

Research also suggests the importance of ensuring foster youth have access to education, job training, employment opportunities and stable housing after aging out of care.

INSIGHTS

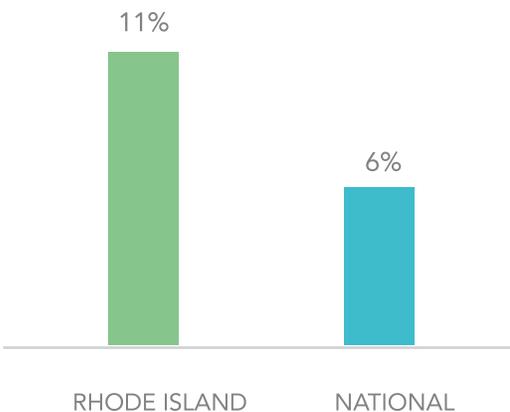
Going forward, Rhode Island may want to consider the following steps:

- Extend the age at which youth “age out” of the system from 18 to 21 or 23 in order to give youth more time to prepare to live on their own.
- Limit the use of group homes and make these placements short-term only when they are necessary.
- Keep foster youth in their current school when at all possible and minimize the academic disruption that occurs when foster youth have to transfer schools so that they do not fall behind in their education.
- Increase employment opportunities, training, housing, and transition services that prepare youth to support themselves financially after they leave foster care.

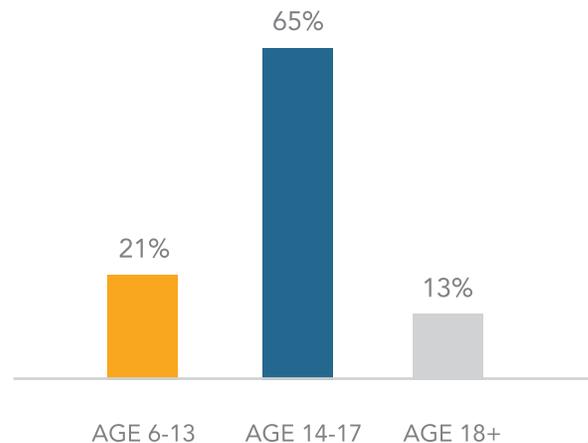
Experts recommend against placing foster youth in group homes.

Studies consistently find that foster youth in group homes have the worst educational, employment, and social outcomes of all youth in state care. Experts particularly recommend against the use of group homes for children under age 13.

Percent of Foster Care Children in Group Homes, 2014



Children in Group Homes in Rhode Island, 2014



1/3 of foster youth report changing schools

10+ times during their time in care

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The College & University Research Collaborative (The Collaborative) is a statewide public/private partnership of Rhode Island's 11 colleges and universities, connecting public policy and academic research.

The Collaborative's mission is to increase the use of non-partisan academic research in policy development and to provide an evidence-based foundation for government decision-making.

The Collaborative turns research into action by sharing research with policymakers, community leaders, partner organizations, and the citizens of Rhode Island.



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