

# Aging Out of Foster Care: Challenges and Opportunities

LRC Omnibus on Foster Care & Dependency  
Study Commission  
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## Presentation Overview

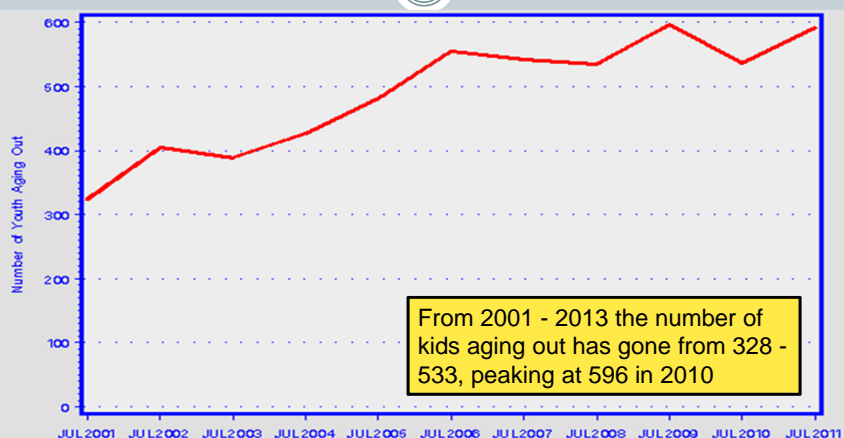
1. Data: What are the numbers telling us?
2. Outcomes: What is the research telling us?
3. Cost: What are the costs of these outcomes?
4. Response: What are we doing and how can we improve?
5. Conclusion: Making Older Youth a Priority



## A Youth Focused Framework

*“For most young people, the transition to adulthood is a gradual process and many receive support from their family well past age 18. This is in stark contrast to youth in foster care. Often unprepared to live as independent adults, youth who “age out” are expected to make it on their own long before the vast majority of their peers.”  
(Courtney, 2010)*

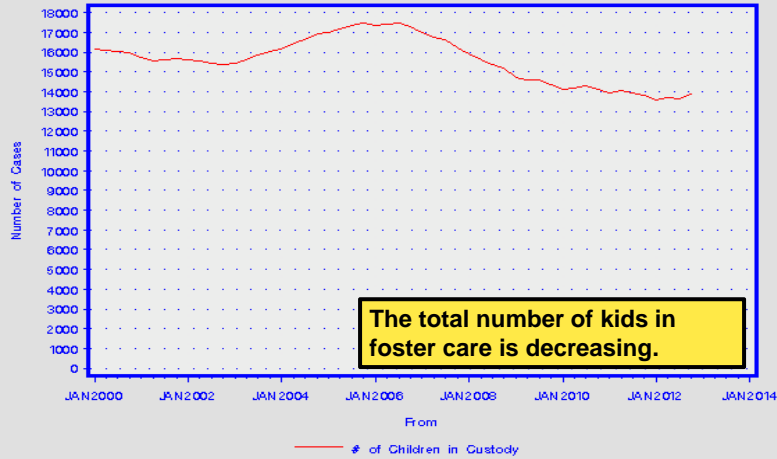
## Annual Number of Youth Aging Out



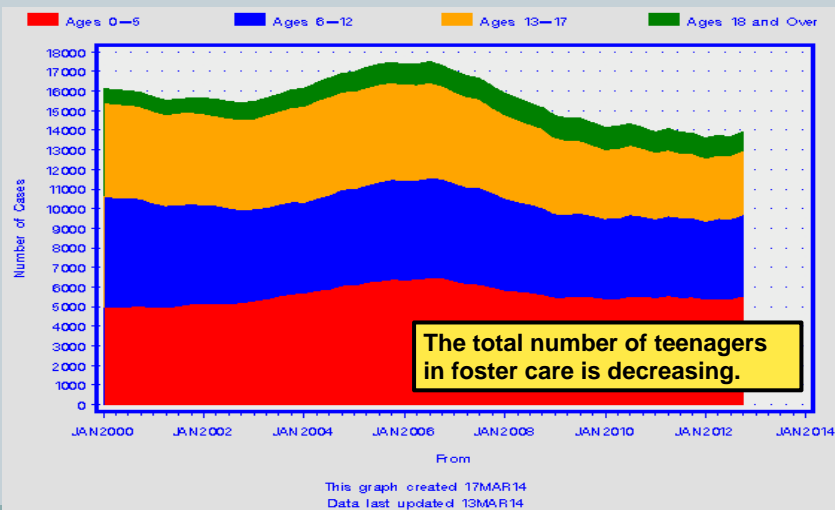
From 2001 - 2013 the number of kids aging out has gone from 328 - 533, peaking at 596 in 2010

This graph created 12MAR14  
Data last updated 1FEB14

## Annual Number of Children in Care



## Annual Number of Children in Custody by Age



## Why Are More Youth Aging Out?

- Youth are presenting more challenging issues
- Permanency and Mental Health services are not readily available or adequately designed to meet the needs of these youth
- Recent policy changes have changed the landscape for older youth
  - Adoption and Safe Families Act 1997 (APPLA)
  - Foster Care Independence Act 1999 (NC LINKS, CARS)
- ***Is this a good thing or a bad thing?***

## What are the Outcomes?

### **Midwest Evaluation of Former Foster Youth**

- 732 youth from Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin were followed from age 18 – 26
- Upon exit from care at age 18
  - 75% of youth felt unprepared for independence
- After exit from care by age 19
  - 57.8% had received a HS Diploma

Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth, Chapin Hall at The University of Chicago (Courtney, 2010)

## Outcomes by Age 23

Outcome	Foster Care	Peers
Employed at time of interview	48.0%	75.5%
Received government benefits	22.0%	6.0%
Experienced homelessness	36.5%	-
Women who have been pregnant	77.0%	40.0%
Men who have been arrested	81.0%	17.0%
Completed a 4 year degree	2.5%	19.5%

Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth, Chapin Hall at The University of Chicago (Courtney, 2010)

## The Cost of Aging Out

### THE PROJECTED COSTS OF DOING NOTHING



$$26,000 \text{ YOUNG PEOPLE AGING OUT} + \$300,000 \text{ PER PERSON} = \$7.8 \text{ billion}^2 \text{ IN TOTAL COSTS}$$

Cost Avoidance: The Business Case for Investing in Youth Aging Out of Foster Care. Jim Casey Youth, 2013

## The Cost of Aging Out

### SUMMARY OF ESTIMATED COSTS

One cohort year graduating at the rate of the general population would increase earnings over a working life . . . . .	\$1,867,000,000
and increase taxes paid by . . . . .	\$.430,000,000
One cohort year unplanned, too early childbearing . . . . .	\$.250,000,000
One cohort year criminal justice costs for a criminal career. . . . .	\$.5,236,000,000

**Total for academic failure, unplanned pregnancy and criminal involvement for each cohort year: . . . . . \$7, 783,000,000**

Cost Avoidance: The Business Case for Investing in Youth Aging Out of Foster Care. Jim Casey Youth, 2013

## Where Should We Focus?

- Education
- Housing
- Employment
- Physical and Mental Health
- Independent Living Skills
- **Social Capitol and Family Connections**



*“Too many youth leave care unconnected to committed adults in their lives who could buffer the challenges they face and serve as safe havens in times of need.” (Avery, 2010)*

## Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative



A FORMULA FOR  
**SUCCESS BEYOND 18**

When it comes to extending foster care, it's **quality – not quantity – that matters**. A national effort is underway to improve the lives of those aging out of foster care. The Success Beyond 18 campaign calls on states to do it right by:



Helping young people **achieve permanent and lasting relationships** by the time they age out of foster care.




Supporting young people in developing **relationships and networks that support their healthy development**.




Giving kids in foster care **the opportunity and responsibility to plan and direct their own futures**.

Cost Avoidance: The Business Case for Investing in Youth Aging Out of Foster Care. Jim Casey Youth, 2013


## Prevention: Permanency is Possible





**Current Services**

- Adoption Promotion Fund
- Wendy's Wonderful Kids
- Post Adoption Support Services
- Permanency Innovation Initiative



**Ideas**

- Support existing services and ensure statewide access
- Review the use of APPLA as a case goal
- Implement Fostering Connections Act kinship guardianship assistance programs

## Wendy's Wonderful Kids

- For children referred to WWK at age 8, the likelihood of adoption was **1.5 times higher**;
- For children referred at age 11, the likelihood was **2 times higher**;
- For children referred at age 15, the likelihood of adoption was **3 times higher**.

A national evaluation of Wendy's Wonderful Kids, Child Trends, 2011

## Transition: Quality vs Quantity

### Current Services

- NC LINKS
- Transitional Living Programs – Youth Villages
- Family Engagement and Permanency Services – CHS NC
- Independent Living Resources, Inc.

### Ideas

- Support existing services and ensure statewide access
- Implement Fostering Connections Act provision for extending foster care to 21
- Ensure youth can achieve Developmental Milestones

## Extending Foster Care to 21

### Minnesota: initial findings show positive results for foster youth remaining in care

	Youth in foster care	Youth discharged from foster care
Completed high school or received GED	82 percent	63 percent
Enrolled in/attending school	64 percent	39 percent
Received financial aid for education	30 percent	12 percent
Reported being homeless in prior two years	12 percent	41 percent

Minnesota Department of Health and Human Services, <http://mn.gov/dhs/media/news/news-detail.jsp?id=252-113781>


## Conclusion: Making Older Youth a Priority

**The problem is relatively small**


**The stakes are high**

**The costs are significant**

**Small gains can yield significant returns**



# Discussion & Questions



Children's Home Society  
OF NORTH CAROLINA