

FOSTER YOUTH MENTORING ACT PARTNER & GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT



OVERALL MESSAGING

Main Message: While there are over 400,000 children currently in foster care in the United States, youth with experience in foster care face many challenges, including disruptions in education and a lack of stable and permanent housing that can make it difficult to maintain strong relationships. Yet mentoring at the time of emancipation from foster care can have a positive impact on transition-related outcomes such as employment, housing stability, and avoiding involvement in the criminal justice system. The Foster Youth Mentoring Act seeks to address the greater need for critical programs that support our country's most vulnerable young people.

Goal: To create a competitive federal grant program to provide foster youth with healthy volunteer and peer mentor relationships.

Priority Ask: We owe it to ourselves as a nation to support and protect foster youth by offering them quality mentor relationships and investing in them today. We can do that by supporting The Foster Youth Mentoring Act of 2021 in Congress.

Top Messages:

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that there are over 400,000 young people currently in foster care in the United States.
- Most youth are in the system for at least a year, with 38% for two years or longer.
- The most common placement setting for children in foster care is nonrelative foster family homes; about half of youth exit the system end up reunited with their caregivers, while another quarter are adopted.
- Unfortunately, as a result of the many challenges that can come with unstable and impermanent housing, disruptions in education, and a lack of strong relationships with adults, only 50% of youth in foster care complete high school by the time they are 18 years old, and only 20% enroll in higher education upon graduation.
- Studies have shown that mentoring services for foster youth are effective intervention strategies that have a positive impact on a wide range of factors.
- A 2017 research synthesis of over 30 research studies on mentoring youth in foster care concluded that mentoring services had a positive impact on mental health, educational functioning and attainment, peer relationships, placement outcomes, and life satisfaction.
- Additional research has demonstrated that mentoring at the time of emancipation can have a positive impact on several transition-related outcomes, such as employment, housing stability, and avoidance of involvement with a criminal justice system.
- A study funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) of a transition-age program found that these mentoring programs potentially provide a benefit of three times the public expenditure, for every day in jail that program participants avoid.

- We all have a role to play in supporting vulnerable young people to be the innovators, leaders and problem-solvers who shape our world.
- Mentoring programs that serve young people with ACEs (adverse childhood experiences) can cost up to twice as much per-youth, highlighting the need for additional funding for these types of programs.

THE FOSTER YOUTH MENTORING ACT OF 2021 SUMMARY

- The Foster Youth Mentoring Act of 2021 seeks to address the need for greater support of mentoring programs that support the country's most vulnerable young people. The bill provides funding to programs that aim to provide foster youth with healthy relationships with volunteer and peer mentors. Specifically, the bill:
 - Authorizes \$50 million funding to expand and enhance mentoring programs that serve foster youth. Grantees may use funding for critical mentor recruitment and screening to ensure long-term and quality mentor-mentee relationships.
 - Provides intensive training to volunteers who serve as mentors to foster youth to ensure that they have a strong understanding of child development, family dynamics, the child welfare system and other relevant considerations that affect foster youth.
 - Ensures that youth voice is included in program development, design, and implementation.
 - Provides funding to support peer-to-peer mentoring relationships for young people with experience in foster care.
 - Ensures that programs receiving a grant follow best practices for screening volunteers and matching mentors with mentees.
 - Increases coordination between mentoring programs and child welfare systems.

TOP STATISTICS

- A 2017 research synthesis of over 30 studies on mentoring youth in foster care concluded that mentoring relationships can have a positive impact on a range of factors, including mental health, educational functioning and attainment, peer relationships, placement outcomes, and life satisfaction.
- More recent research has demonstrated that mentoring at the time of emancipation can have a positive impact on several transition-related outcomes, such as employment and housing stability and avoidance of involvement with the criminal justice system.

- One study funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) of a transition-age program found that these mentoring programs potentially provide a benefit of three times the public expenditure, for every day in jail that program participants avoid.
- MENTOR's national program survey in 2017 estimated that mentoring services for youth in foster care are at least twice as expensive as those of a typical community-based program.
- With the average cost-per-youth served for a typical mentoring program estimated to be \$1,695, the cost-per-youth in a program that primarily serves foster youth can be over \$3,400.
- Multiple studies of the Fostering Healthy Futures program for middle school-aged youth placed into foster care in Denver, Colorado, found:
 - The program had a significant impact in reducing mental health symptoms, especially symptoms associated with trauma, anxiety, and depression as well as mental health service utilization 6-19 months after participation in the program.
 - Participating youth were 71% less likely to be placed in residential treatment.
 - For those living in nonrelative care when entering the program, they experienced 44% fewer placement changes, were 82% less likely to be placed in residential treatment, and were 5 times more likely to have attained permanency one year after participating in the program.
 - The program produced positive impacts on reunification and rates of adoption for participating youth.
 - A version of the program serving high school-age youth found that intervention youth had 7 times the odds of attaining permanency at long-term follow up.
- A study on the Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program suggests that youth paired with a CASA volunteer experience fewer placement changes, less time in care, greater likelihood of achieving permanency, greater access to services and resources, and more support through adult relationships.
- The Middle School Success intervention for girls in foster care found:
 - The program significantly reduced participant's substance misuse three years after first entering the program.
 - The program significantly reduced the number of placements for participants
- The My Life program, focused on transition-age youth in Portland, Oregon:
 - Produced significant improvements in permanency planning, educational completion and graduation, and participation in career development activities.
 - A 2018 study found that participating in the program reduced criminal justice involvement 2-3 years post-emancipation by half, with an even stronger impact for male participants.

- The Take Charge program, and off-shoot of My Life, found that working with a mentor increased independent living skills and planning, as well as use of transition services.

RESOURCES

[Mentoring and Foster Youth Research Summary](#), MENTOR.

[Foster Youth Mentoring Act of 2021](#), Congress.gov

[Resources for Youth in Transition](#), Child Welfare Information Gateway.

[Resources for Current & Former Foster Youth](#), Foster Coalition.

[Foster Care Statistics](#), Child Welfare Information Gateway.

SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLKIT

Facebook

- Youth with experience in foster care often face difficulties including disruptions in education and a lack of stable and permanent housing. But having a positive relationship with a trusting adult can help them navigate these obstacles. The Foster Youth Mentoring Act helps facilitate these relationships through mentoring programs. Visit mentoring.org/resource/advocacy-resources to learn more. #MentoringAmplifies #AdvocacyAugust
- The Foster Youth Mentoring Act establishes funding for mentoring programs that serve foster youth. We must invest in the future of opportunity youth in our country! Visit mentoring.org/resource/advocacy-resources to learn more. #MentoringAmplifies #AdvocacyAugust
- Foster youth represent some of the most vulnerable young people in the United States. There is no time to waste. Congress must invest in relationships and mentoring for foster youth NOW! Visit mentoring.org/resource/advocacy-resources to learn more. #MentoringAmplifies #AdvocacyAugust
- Did you know: There are over 400,000 children currently in foster care in the United States? The Foster Youth Mentoring Act would provide mentoring services to prepare foster youth for a better future. Visit mentoring.org/resource/advocacy-resources to learn more. #MentoringAmplifies #AdvocacyAugust

Twitter

- The #FosterYouthMentoringAct will protect and support foster youth by strengthening relationships and mentoring programs. Support the FYMA today! (@ tag Member of Congress) #MentoringAmplifies #AdvocacyAugust

- All youth deserve to have people in their life who will support them. The #FosterYouthMentoringAct helps make sure they do. (@ tag member of Congress), will you support it? #MentoringAmplifies #AdvocacyAugust
- EVERY young person deserves access to quality relationships. That's why we need The #FosterYouthMentoringAct! Help get it passed at: mentoring.org/advocacy-august #InvestinFosterYouth #MentoringAmplifies #AdvocacyAugust
- Our nation's mentoring services and programming must include quality training for mentors & volunteers to support foster youth. The #FosterYouthMentoringAct works to ensure they do! Take action today to get it passed at: mentoring.org/advocacy-august #MentoringAmplifies #AdvocacyAugust

Instagram

- American society faces significant challenges to ensure vulnerable youth are adequately prepared to enter higher education. Now there's a bill in Congress that would help address those gaps! Visit link in bio to tell your member of Congress: Support The Foster Youth Mentoring Act. #YouthAdvocacy #fosteryouth #InvestinKids #MentoringAmplifies #AdvocacyAugust
- It's critical that vulnerable young people have access to mentoring relationships that help them prepare for quality education that should be available to them. Visit link in bio to tell Congress: Support The Foster Youth Mentoring Act. #YouthAdvocacy #fosteryouthsupport #mentoringservices #GreatFutures #InvestinKids #MentoringAmplifies #AdvocacyAugust

LinkedIn

- The Foster Youth Mentoring Act invests in mentoring programs serving foster youth. Visit mentoring.org/advocacy-august to tell your Member of Congress: Invest in the future of the most vulnerable young people in our country! #MentoringAmplifies #AdvocacyAugust
- Foster youth often face challenges such as disruptions in education and a lack of stable and permanent housing. Mentoring services could help disrupt this narrative. So what are we waiting for? Visit mentoring.org/advocacy-august to learn how you can encourage your representative to support The Foster Youth Mentoring Act! #MentoringAmplifies #AdvocacyAugust
- Did you know there are over 400,000 children currently in foster care in the United States? The Foster Youth Mentoring Act would provide mentoring services to give youth the stable relationships they need to build a happy and healthy future. Learn more at: mentoring.org/resource/advocacy-resources #MentoringAmplifies #AdvocacyAugust

Graphics

[Download Graphic 1](#)

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