Supporting Young People Transitioning from Foster Care: Virginia Findings from a National Survey and Policy Scan

Prepared by Child Trends for the
Better Housing Coalition and Children's Home Society of Virginia

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Executive Summary

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a time full of excitement, growth, and change. Critical brain development occurs during adolescence and early adulthood, and can be supported by strong and stable connections with family, friends, and community. With these supportive connections, young people can learn and grow into healthy adults. Youth and young adults with foster care experience often miss out on necessary resources, making it harder to locate safe and stable housing, find steady and meaningful employment, and build strong and positive relationships.

This report, prepared by Child Trends for the Better Housing Coalition and Children's Home Society of Virginia, shares what we know about older youth transitioning from foster care ("transition-age youth") in Virginia; describes federal data on youth outcomes in Virginia and other states; and details findings from a recent policy scan and national survey on services targeted to these youth. We organize the findings into six key service areas: 1) post-secondary education; 2) employment and career development; 3) financial capability; 4) safe, stable, and affordable housing; 5) health and mental health care; and 6) permanent relationships with supportive adults.

In this report, we highlight Virginia's specific areas of strength in serving the transition-age youth population, as well as opportunities for growth.

Virginia's main areas of strength

- **There is a wide array of supports and services available in the state.** Virginia is one of two states that reported offering each of the supports and services asked about in our survey. Although the supports and services are not all available statewide, this type of broad service array shows that at least some parts of the state are investing in and implementing critical services and supports for transition-age youth in education, employment, financial capability, housing, health care, and permanency.[1]
- **Youth outcomes in several areas are comparable to or better than in other states.** Data from the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) show that in several areas, such as employment, high school graduation rates, and school attendance, transition-age youth in Virginia fare as well as or better than youth who have been in foster care nationally, though there is room for growth in other states as well. For example, the Midwest Study—the most widely recognized study of youth aging out of foster care over time—found that only 8 percent of young adults in the Midwest who have experienced foster care have a post-secondary degree at ages 25 and 26, compared to 46 percent of young adults in the general population.[2] Keeping in mind this universal need for improvement, it is encouraging that Virginia does not lag behind the rest of the country in these key outcome areas.
- **New supports beyond age 18 through Fostering Futures extend foster care.** In 2016, Virginia joined 23 other states with formalized extended foster care plans using federal Title IV-E funding. Virginia's "Fostering Futures" program will allow youth to remain in foster care to age 21.

[1] Permanency encompasses legal permanency (like adoption or reunification with birth parents) and relational permanency (those permanent relationships).

[2] Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 26. Chapin Hall, (2011). p. 20-21. Available at: https://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/Midwest%20Evaluation_Report_4_10_12.pdf

Virginia's main areas for growth

- **There are high rates of youth "aging out" of foster care.** According to federal fiscal year 2014 data from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), Virginia had one of the highest percentages of youth exiting foster care due to age—also known as "emancipation"—in the country. One fifth of Virginia's children and youth exiting foster care that year left due to emancipation, meaning they left care without a permanent, legal, familial relationship in place.
- **Although the service array is rich, it is not available to all transition-age youth across the state.** Nearly half of the services reported by Virginia are only available in certain areas of the state. This is particularly an issue for housing-related services asked about on our survey, none of which are available statewide.
- **Services may not be grounded in a strong research base.** Although the state reported using some promising programs that are based in research, generally the Virginia respondent was unaware of whether the services being provided had an evidence base or were research-informed. In addition to providing the most effective services possible for this vulnerable population, it is important to invest finite public funds in what we know works.
- **Fostering Futures should be carefully monitored and supported.** Fostering Futures, Virginia's extended foster care program, was made available through an Appropriations Act (item 346 #3c) and included by the General Assembly in its final budget package (effective July 2016). State leaders and advocates will need to monitor implementation of the program to ensure that it receives adequate funding and reaches the target population in the state.

Recommendations

Based on these areas of strength and growth, we offer three overarching recommendations:

- **Continue to monitor data and use it to inform decision-making.** As the state works to implement Fostering Futures, it is critical that state leaders and stakeholders understand which young people are (and are not) choosing to remain in care, and how, or if, their outcomes improve when they remain. By closely monitoring data, stakeholders can monitor implementation, address any barriers or challenges to program participation, and design policy and practice strategies that address those challenges.
- **Build and strengthen relationships across the state.** Virginia's county-administered child welfare system may present challenges for disseminating best practices and employing successful strategies in other areas of the state. However, building and reinforcing cross-county partnerships can broaden the service array, expand effective programs, and encourage areas of the state that have invested less in this population to invest more.
- **Network and foster relationships with similarly situated states.** As Fostering Futures is implemented, Virginia is poised to greatly expand the number of youth served as well as the services offered to the transition-age population. Peer learning can be instrumental in adding services or expanding services statewide, and in understanding how to unify a county-wide system. Connecting with states that have implemented Title IV-E extended foster care and states coordinating across a county-administered system may help Virginia leaders as they grow and shape the program.

Introduction

Young adults from every background face a variety of challenges as they move from adolescence to healthy, productive, and happy adulthood. Critical brain development occurs during this time, which can be bolstered by strong and stable connections with family, friends, and community.[3] With such supports, young people can grow into healthy adults.

Youth and young adults who are or have been in foster care are at heightened risk for hardship during this time of developmental growth. Youth in foster care may lack a close relationship with an adult due to placement in a group home or strained relationships with their foster or birth families. Young adults who have recently left foster care may struggle with the additional stresses of unstable housing, lost connections with a foster family or caseworker, and challenges paying for school or finding steady and meaningful employment.

Exiting the child welfare system because of age (also known as "aging out" of or "emancipation" from foster care), rather than to a legal, permanent family through adoption, reunification with parents, or guardianship, can present a host of additional challenges for young people. Research shows that youth who age out of foster care experience worse outcomes, on average, than their peers.

Table 1: Outcomes of young people with foster care experience, compared to the general population4,5

Life outcomes	Youth involved with foster care	General population[6]
Graduate high school by age 19.	58 percent	87 percent
Earn a college degree by age 25.	<3 percent	28 percent
Employed at age 26.	46 percent	80 percent
Eligible for employer-provided health insurance (pre-ACA and of those employed at age 26).	51 percent	79 percent
26-year-olds who earned any income from employment during the previous year.	70 percent	94 percent
Have their own residence at age 26.	9 percent	30 percent
Experience at least one economic hardship, such as not enough money to pay rent, utility bills, or phone bills.	45 percent	18 percent
Women who reported that they had ever been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection (STI) by age 26.	44 percent	23 percent
Men who reported that they had ever been diagnosed with a STI by age 26.	18 percent	11 percent
Females who had been arrested since age 18 by age 26.	42 percent	5 percent
Males who had been arrested since age 18 by age 26.	68 percent	22 percent

[3] The Adolescent Brain: New Research and its Implications for Young People from Foster Care. Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, (2011). Available at: http://www.aecf.org/resources/the-adolescent-brain-foster-care

[4] Cost Avoidance: The Business Case for Investing In Youth Aging Out of Foster Care. Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, (2013). Available at: http://www.aecf.org/resources/cost-avoidance-the-business-case-for-investing-in-youth-aging-out-of-foster/

[5] Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 26. Chapin Hall, (2011). Available at: https://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/Midwest%20Evaluation_Report_4_10_12.pdf

[6] General population figures come from the same sources the youth involved with foster care figures come from, and are based off the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health).

Life outcomes	Youth involved with foster care	General population[6]
Females who had been convicted of a crime since age 18 by age 26.	22 percent	3 percent
Males who had been convicted of a crime since age 18 by age 26.	48 percent	11 percent
Females who had been incarcerated for a crime since age 18 by age 26.	33 percent	3 percent
Males who had been incarcerated for a crime since age 18 by age 26.	64 percent	9 percent
Average earnings of employed 26-year-olds.	$13,989	$32,312

Additionally, among youth who have been involved in foster care:

- More than 1 in 5 become homeless after age 18.
- Nearly three quarters (71 percent) of young women experience pregnancy by 21.
- One quarter will be involved in the criminal justice system within two years of leaving the foster care system.[7]

In addition to the personal turmoil associated with these negative outcomes, there are also societal costs, such as increased costs for social programs including welfare and Medicaid.[8]

Although this is a challenging time of life for youth in foster care, policies and programs at both the state and federal level can provide these young people with tools, experiences, and connections to facilitate a strong and supported path into adulthood.

[7] Cost Avoidance: The Business Case for Investing In Youth Aging Out of Foster Care. Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, (2013). Available at: http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/JCYOI-CostAvoidance-2013.pdf

[8] Ibid.

What is in this report?

This report was developed by Child Trends to assist the Better Housing Coalition and Children's Home Society of Virginia as they provide services and advocate for better policies for older youth in or transitioning out of foster care.

Specifically, this report **describes recent research findings** about the landscape of programs, policies, and practices across the country supporting youth aging out of foster care. Through a national survey (with 47 participating states, including Washington, DC and Puerto Rico) and a scan of policies, we identified innovative and promising practices and policies designed to support this vulnerable population. Specific information on Virginia's policy landscape and service array are highlighted throughout.

It also **contextualizes findings** with data from the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). These data shed light on areas of strength and need in Virginia and how young people in the state are faring.

In 2015, Child Trends partnered with the Better Housing Coalition (BHC) and the Children's Home Society (CHS) of Virginia to conduct research on state programs and policies to support older youth transitioning from foster care, in order to support the development of **The Possibilities Project**—an initiative recently launched by BHC and CHS.

We conducted (1) a scan of states' existing policies, regulations, and/or legislation most relevant to Virginia's efforts with transitioning youth, and (2) a national survey of state Independent Living Coordinators to identify the array of services and supports provided to the transition-age youth population, and to identify strategies and approaches being used in other states that may be helpful to Virginia as they develop their program and policy agenda. Of the 50 states, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico invited to participate, 47 responded to the *Survey on Services and Supports for Young People Transitioning from Foster Care*.

Each section of this report provides information specific to Virginia, as well as national comparisons and highlights of work in other states where appropriate and available. From the national survey, we could glean examples of innovation in states: we asked states for examples of evidence-based, evidence-informed, or promising programs for addressing challenges young people face when transitioning from foster care. The final section provides recommendations for better serving and supporting this vulnerable population.

The report includes:

- **Section 1 - Transition-age youth in Virginia.** Describes the population of transition-age youth and their outcomes, in comparison to the national population of transition-age youth.
- **Section 2 - Extended foster care**. Describes federal and state efforts to extend foster care to youth over age 18, including recent progress in Virginia and strategies for successful implementation of extended foster care.
- **Section 3 - Supports for critical domains** (including post-secondary education; employment and career development; financial capability; securing safe, stable, and affordable housing; accessing and managing health and mental health care; and establishing permanent relationships with supportive adults). Includes an overview of existing research on the importance of these critical domains for young people, the practice and/or policy landscapes supporting achievement in these areas, specifics about these supports in Virginia, and areas of strength and growth for the state.
- **Section 4 - Youth engagement.** Provides national examples and assesses Virginia's status in supporting

young people through youth engagement, with a focus on transition plans and youth participation in developing materials, services, and policies.

- **Section 5 - Key takeaways for Virginia.** Summarizes overarching areas for growth identified for Virginia in its support of transition-age youth.

Section 1: Transition-age youth in Virginia

In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2014, 16 percent of children in foster care in the United States were between the ages of 16 and 20.[9] That year, 9 percent of children exiting foster care nationally did so because they emancipated. Approximately 12 percent of children (more than 28,000) exited care overall due to "non-permanency" reasons (emancipation, runaway, transfer to another agency, or death of the child).[10,11] Below we illustrate several key statistics about the transition-age youth population in different states, and highlight Virginia's data.

Youth in foster care ages 16 to 20

In FFY 2014, within the population of children and youth in foster care, the proportion of older youth (ages 16 to 20) was larger in Virginia than it was for the nation as a whole (21 percent compared with 16 percent).[12,13] Figure 1 illustrates this statistic across the United States.

[9] Children in foster care by age group. Kids Count, (2016). Available at: http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/6244-children-in-foster-care-by-age-group?loc=1&loct=2#detailed/2/2-52/true/869/2619/12989

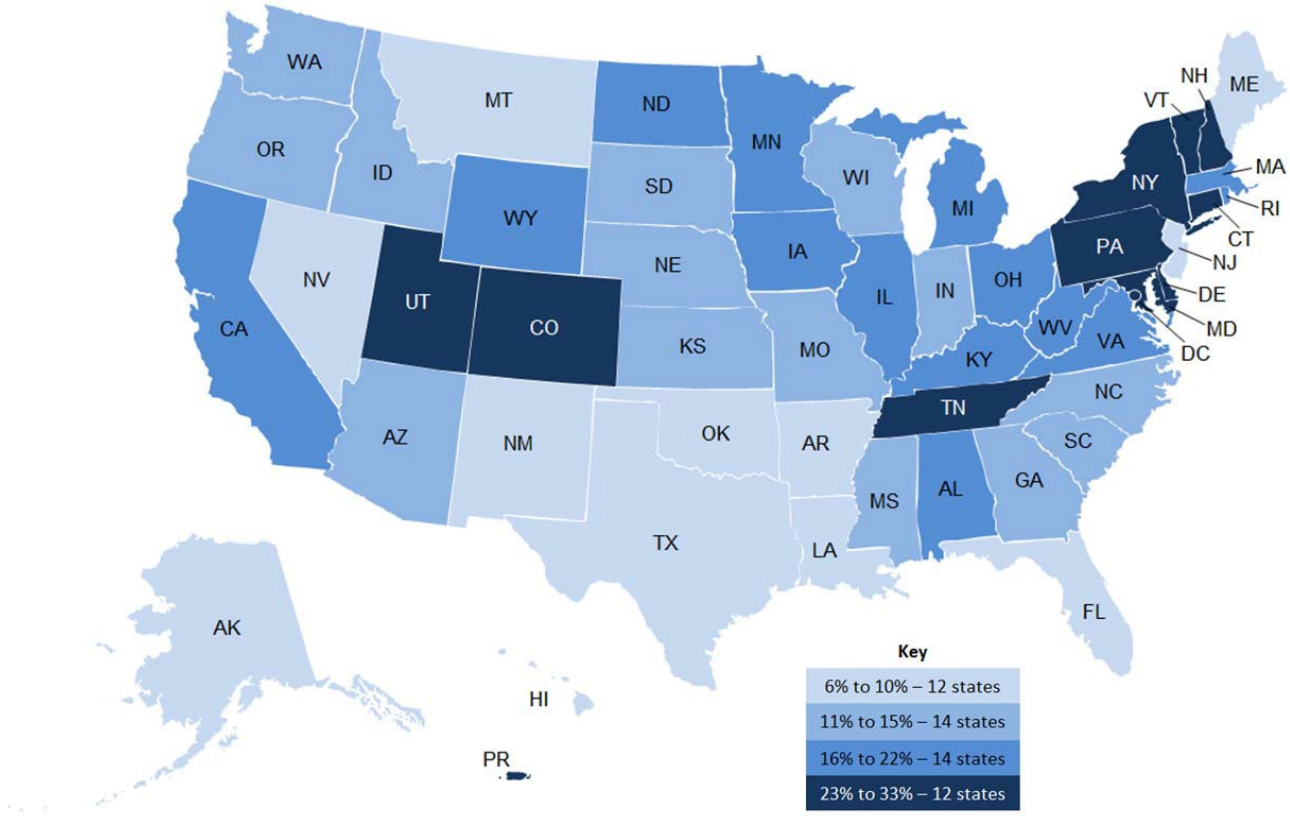
[10] With "permanency" exits being defined as exits due to reunification with family or living with other relatives, adoption, or guardianship.

[11] Children exiting foster care by exit reason. Kids Count, (2016). Available at: http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/6277-children-exiting-foster-care-by-exit-reason?loc=1&loct=2#detailed/2/2-52/true/869/2631,2636,2632,2633,2630,2629,2635,2634/13050,13051

[12] Differences described in this report are statistically significant at a 95 percent confidence level, unless otherwise noted.

[13] Children in foster care by age group. Kids Count, (2016). Available at: http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/6244-children-in-foster-care-by-age-group?loc=1&loct=2#detailed/2/2-52/true/869/2619/12989

Figure 1. Among youth in foster care in 2014, percentage who were 16- to 20-year-olds, by state[14]



Multiple factors may explain variation across states in the share of older children and youth in care. For example, some states extend foster care beyond the 18th birthday and some do not. States without extended foster care would likely have lower overall populations of youth in care in this age range. State variation in foster care entries and exits by age could also affect the age distributions of states' foster care populations. For example, if a state has policies and practices that promote diversion of older youth from the foster care system into permanency options like adoption or guardianship, they may have a lower number of those youth in foster care. Nationally, fewer people ages 16 to 20 enter foster care than the younger age groups,[15] and older youth only account for 10 percent of entries (26,605 in 2014).[16] In Virginia, people ages 16 to 20 account for a slightly higher proportion of entries, at 15 percent, but remain one of the smallest groups (tied with children less than one year old at 15 percent with 420 and 437, respectively). Six states[17] have young people ages 16 to 20 that account for a larger percentage of their overall foster care entries.[18]

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[14] Ibid.

[15] These five age groups are less than one year old, one to five years old, six to ten years old, 11 to 15 years old, and 16 to 20 years old.

[16] Similarly, in the majority of states (49, including DC and Puerto Rico), young people ages 16 to 20 are either the smallest, second smallest, or tied for smallest percent of the age groups, with less than one year old typically being the other smallest category. In New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee children less than one year old are the smallest age group to enter foster care, followed by children ages six to ten, and third with young people ages 16 to 20.

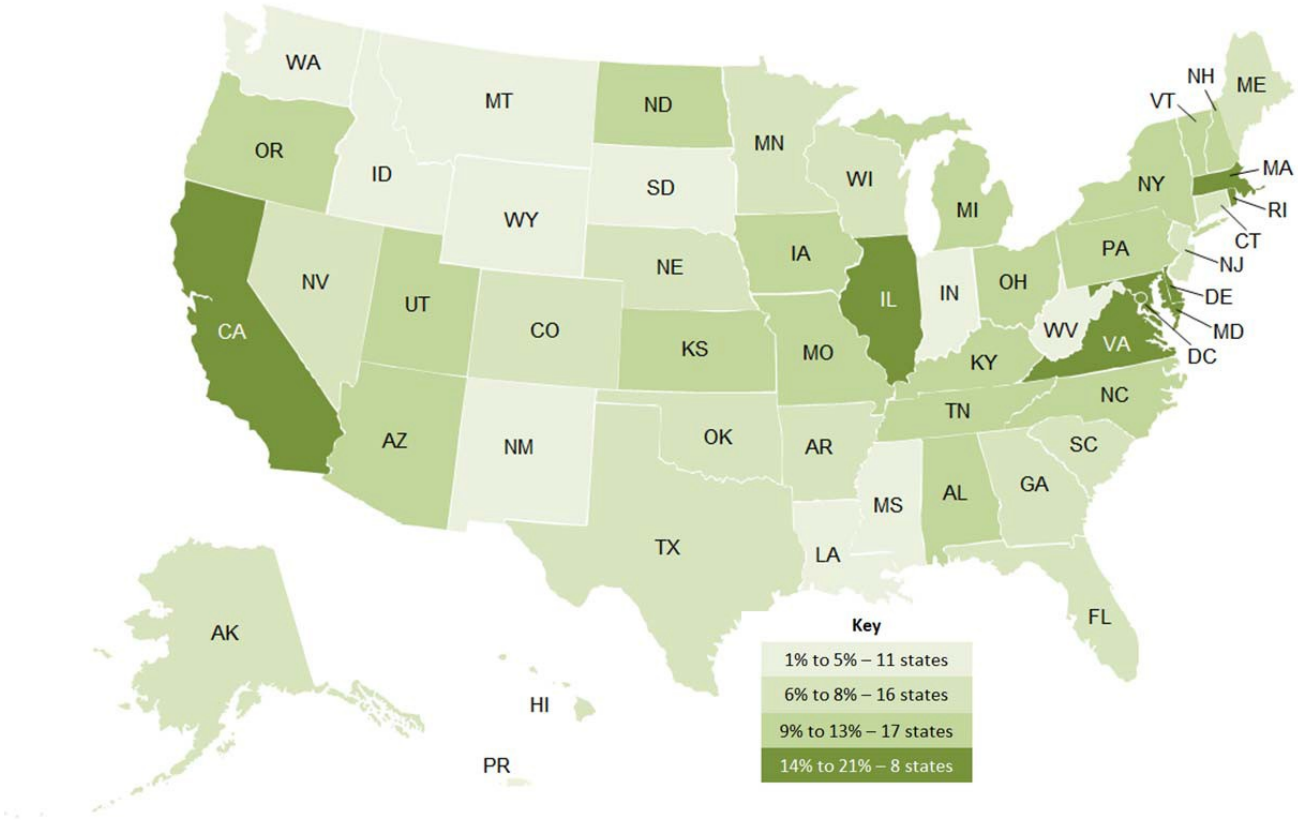
[17] These six states are Colorado (17 percent), Puerto Rico (17 percent), Rhode Island (18 percent), New Hampshire (19 percent), Pennsylvania (20 percent), and Tennessee (22 percent). West Virginia is tied with Virginia at 15 percent.

[18] Children Entering Foster Care by Age Group. Kids Count, (2016). Available at: http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/6270-children-entering-foster-care-by-age-group?loc=1&loct=1#detailed/2/2-52/true/573/1889,2616,2617,2618,2619,122/13037,13038

Exits to emancipation

Virginia had one of the highest percentages of exits due to emancipation in the country in FFY 2014: 20 percent of children and youth exiting foster care that year emancipated, compared with 9 percent nationally.[19] See Figure 2 for details on each state's share of exits to emancipation.

Figure 2. Percentage of youth exiting care through emancipation in 2014, by state[20]



[19] Children exiting foster care by exit reason. Kids Count, (2016). Available at: http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/6277-children-exiting-foster-care-by-exit-reason?loc=1&loct=2#detailed/2/2-52/true/869/2632/13051

[20] Ibid.

As with the number of youth in foster care, many factors are at play in understanding the variation in the percent of youth who leave foster care due to emancipation, or "aging out." For example, some states may have targeted efforts around permanency for older youth through reunification, adoption, guardianship, or living with other relatives.

Exits to permanency

Across all states, children and youth most commonly exit foster care to permanency (reunification, adoption, guardianship, and living with other relatives). **The majority of Virginia children (78 percent) exited foster care to permanency. However, this was the lowest percentage out of all 52 states.** Nationally, 88 percent of exits from care were to permanency. The table below breaks out both permanency and non-permanency exits from foster care across all ages in Virginia and the United States in 2014.[21]

Table 2: Foster care exit reasons, Virginia and national

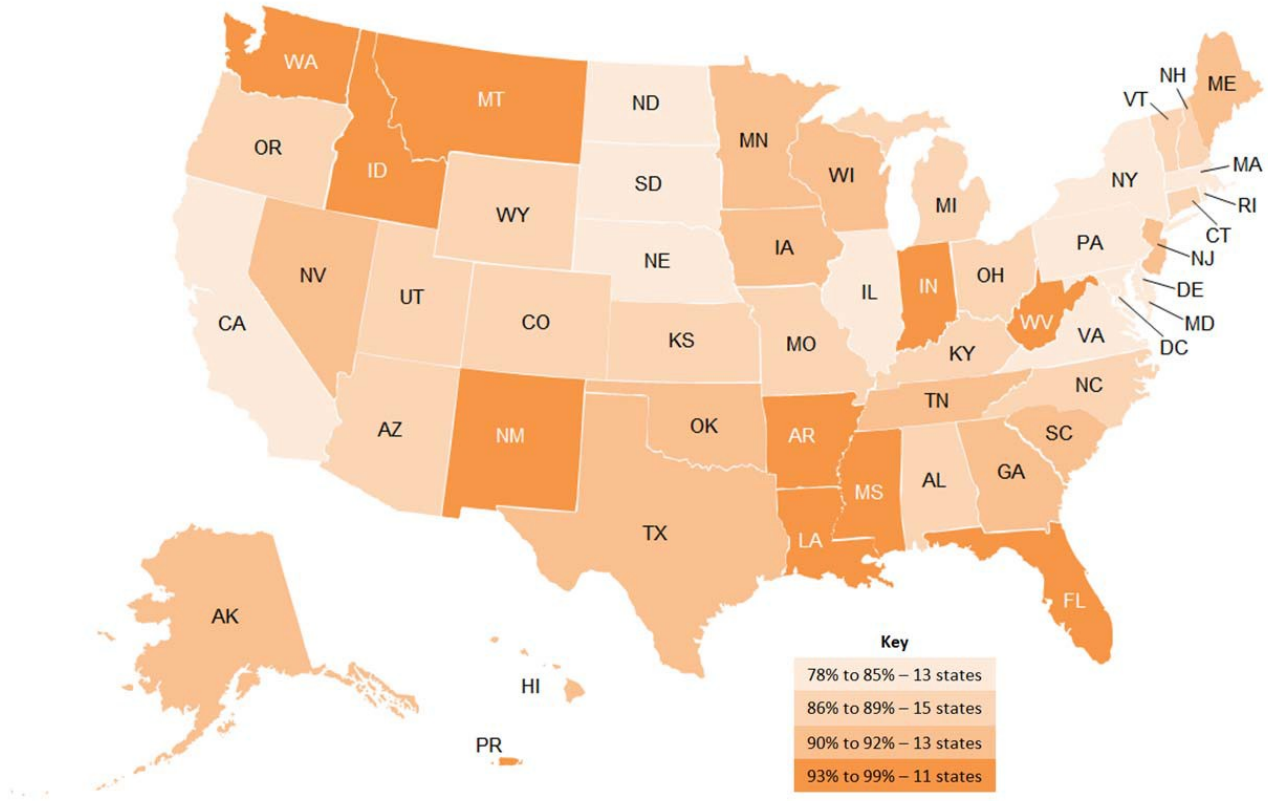
	Exit Reason	Virginia		United States	
		%	#	%	#
Permanency	Reunified with parent or primary caretaker	30%	780	51%	121,241
	Adoption	26%	700	21%	49,693
	Guardianship[22]	0%	0	9%	21,055
	Living with other relatives	22%	581	7%	15,774
	Permanency total	**78%**	**2,061**	**88%**	**207,763**
Non-Permanency	Emancipation	20%	518	9%	22,392
	Transfer to another agency	2%	60	2%	4,173
	Runaway	<0.5%	1	<0.5%	1,138
	Death of child	<0.5%	3	<0.5%	326
	Non-permanency total	**22%**	**582**	**12%**	**28,029**
Total Exits		**100%**	**2,643**	**100%**	**235,792**

[21] Children exiting foster care by exit reason. Kids Count, (2016). Available at: http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/6277-children- exiting-foster-care-by-exit-reason?loc=1&loct=2#detailed/2/48/true/869/2631,2636,2632,2633,2630,2629,2635,2634/13050,13051

[22] Virginia did not report any discharges to guardianship in 2014.

The map below (Figure 3) shows the variation in rates of exits to permanency across states.

Figure 3. Percentage of children exiting care to permanency in 2014, by state[23]



Several factors may explain the variation in reasons for foster care exits. For example, Virginia has a low rate of entries into foster care, compared with other states. Nationally, four out of every 1,000 children ages zero to 17 enter foster care[24]. Virginia's entry rate is half of that, only two out of every 1,000 children enter foster care, which is among the lowest rate in the country.[25] If this is a function of the threshold for entry into care being higher in Virginia than in other states, permanency may be more challenging to achieve for those children who do ultimately enter foster care than it is in other states, as their situations may be more complex or difficult to resolve.

Other outcomes for transition-age youth

Previous research, such as the Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth, sheds light on the needs and challenges facing young people with foster care experience across a variety of outcomes, as described in the introduction.[26] Recent data from the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) show Virginia's

[23] Children exiting foster care by exit reason. Kids Count, (2016). Available at: http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/6277-children- exiting-foster-care-by-exit-reason?loc=1&loct=2#detailed/2/48/true/869/2631,2636,2632,2633,2630,2629,2635,2634/13050,13051

[24] Children 0-17 entering foster care. Kids Count, (2016). Available at: http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/6268-children-0-to-17-entering-foster-care?loc=1&loct=1#ranking/2/any/true/869/any/15620

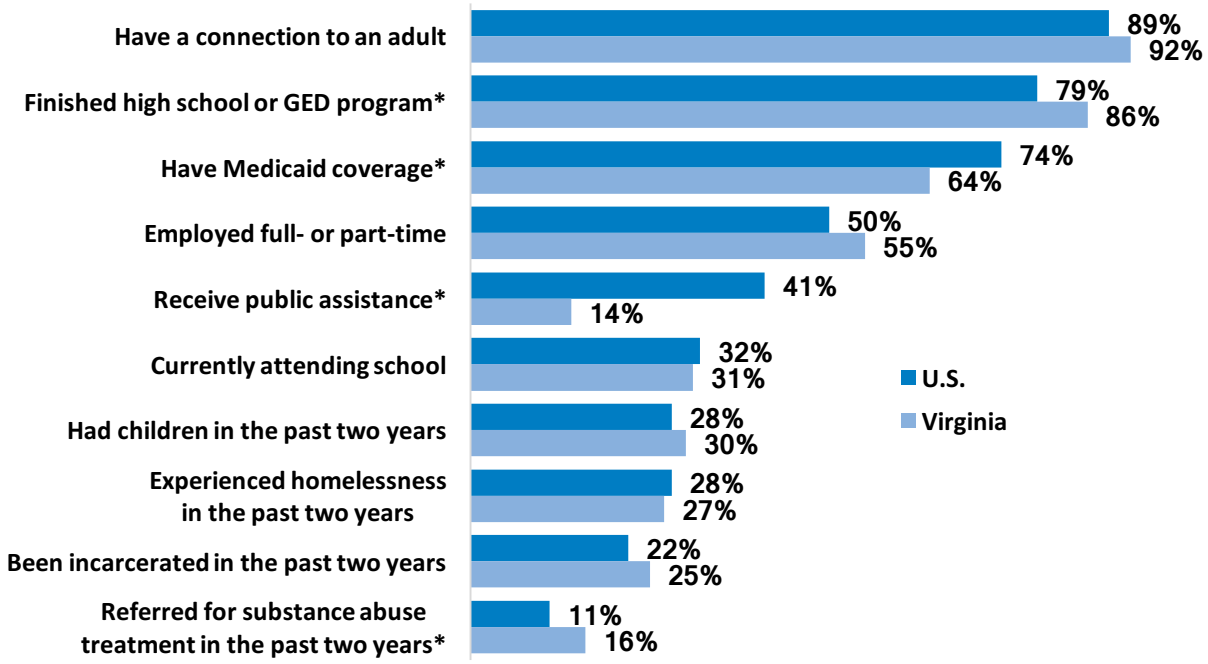
[25] The other eight states that tie with Virginia are Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, and Texas. The highest rate is 10 children per 1,000 in West Virginia.

[26] Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth. Chapin Hall. Available at: http://www.chapinhall.org/research/report/midwest-evaluation-adult-functioning-former-foster-youth

transitioning youth facing similar challenges as they enter adulthood. Please note that readers should interpret findings from NYTD cautiously. The data are intended to represent youth who were in foster care at some time within the 45 days following their 17th birthday (and who turned 17 in FFY 2011). States experienced challenges in collecting data from youth, resulting in response rates that were less than ideal in some states and very low in others.[27] In addition to the varying response rates across states, some states attempted to survey a random sample of transition-age youth, rather than all transition-age youth. Although we have weighted our estimates to account for varying state response rates, findings from NYTD may not accurately reflect the experience of the entire population of interest. Nevertheless, as the only national source of data on this vulnerable population, NYTD represents a great advance in that it is the first data collection effort ever intended to be representative both of state and national populations of transition-age youth.

Figure 4 below shows how Virginia youth compared to the national population of 21-year-olds who completed the NYTD survey in FFY 2015.[28]

Figure 4. Outcomes for transition-age youth at age 21, in Virginia and nationally[29]



[27] In Virginia, 81.3 percent of the baseline population of 552 responded at age 17. However, 97 of these respondents were not counted as part of the FY 2011 cohort for various reasons, including that they were not in foster care at the time of the survey. (Such exclusions were systematically made across states.) As a result, 64 percent of the baseline population responded at age 17 and was considered part of the 2011 cohort. For follow-up waves, data collection was only attempted with those youth who responded in wave 1 and who were considered part of the 2011 cohort. In total, 207 responded at age 19 and 262 responded at age 21 (37.5 percent and 47 percent of the baseline population respectively, or 58.8 percent and 74.4 percent of the 352 members of the FY 2011 cohort at ages 19 and 21, respectively).

[28] Tabulations of NYTD data by Child Trends. We created weights to correct for state levels of non-response. This was important in generating national estimates, since state response rates varied. However, non-response bias persists if response rates are related to factors that are also related to outcome data collected in the NYTD. For "Finished high school or GED program," we categorized youth who reported their highest level of education as vocational licenses and certificates as having a high school diploma or GED.

[29] Data source: National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Outcomes File Cohort 1 (Age 17 in FY2011) Waves 1, 2, & 3, NDACAN Dataset #202, Revised October, 2016, tabulations by Child Trends.

*Difference is statistically significant at a 95 percent confidence level.

As Figure 4 shows, compared with transition-age youth nationwide surveyed through NYTD at 21, the proportion of youth in Virginia who have been referred for substance abuse treatment in the past two years as well as the segment of youth who have finished high school or a GED program were higher than the national share, and the proportion who have Medicaid coverage or are receiving public assistance were lower than the national share.

Summary

Although every state faces challenges supporting young people in foster care, federal data (as illustrated above) show that in FFY 2014 Virginia's population of children in foster care had a larger proportion of older youth (ages 16 to 20) than did the nation as a whole, and the share of children (regardless of age) in foster care exiting to emancipation was also markedly larger than the national share. Furthermore, when looking at overall exits to permanency, Virginia had the lowest percent of exits to permanency in the nation. These numbers show that Virginia has a sizable transition-age youth population, and that children and youth exit care without permanency at a comparatively high rate. Further, recently-released NYTD data show that a greater percentage of Virginia's 21-year-olds had been referred to substance abuse treatment in the past two years than in the nation overall, and a smaller share had Medicaid coverage at 21 than nationally. **In sum, both the size of Virginia's population of transitioning young people and the scope of their needs suggest challenges and provide opportunities for the state to better support these youth.**

Section 2: Extended Foster Care

Why it matters

Recent research on adolescent brain development shows that a person's brain has not finished developing by age 18. In fact, adolescence and young adulthood are periods of significant brain development that continues through age 25.[30] Adolescence also provides an opportunity to address and heal the trauma experienced by many in foster care.[31] Accessing consistent emotional and practical support can be difficult for young people who "age out" or leave foster care without a permanent, stable placement. On their own, these young people often lack the supports needed for healthy development during these critical years. One way that states can support youth in foster care is by extending foster care to young people *beyond* age 18, which Virginia is doing as of July 1, 2016 through the **Fostering Futures** program. Virginia introduced this program through an Appropriations Act (item 346 #3c) and it was included by the General Assembly in the final budget package, went into effect July 2016. The program is modeled after the federal extension of foster care. Unlike some states, the "Fostering Futures" program is not codified into Virginia state law.

Young people commonly rely on their parents and families past age 18; in fact, they often continue to receive

[30] The Adolescent Brain: New Research and its Implications for Young People from Foster Care. Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, (2011). Available at: http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-theAdolescentBrain-2011.pdf

[31] Trauma-Informed Practice with Young People in Foster Care. Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, (2012). Available at: http://www.jimcaseyyouth.org/trauma-informed-practice-young-people-foster-care

financial and emotional support well into their twenties.[32, 33] Extending foster care past age 18 can provide similar stability and support for young people who are in foster care. Research shows that young people who remain in care up to age 21 are less likely to experience homelessness or become pregnant before age 21, and are more likely to be employed and attend college compared with those who leave care at age 18.[34, 35, 36]

The federal **Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008** ("Fostering Connections Act") helps support states that choose to provide extended care up to age 21 by continuing federal support with Title IV-E funds. It should be noted that in many states, services associated with extended foster care are increasingly provided by non-profit organizations that contract with the state/county. Under the Fostering Connections Act, states may continue providing Title IV-E reimbursable foster care, adoption, or guardianship assistance payments to youth up to the age of 19, 20, or 21 if the youth is: (1) completing secondary education or a program leading to an equivalent credential, (2) enrolled in an institution that provides post-secondary or vocational education, (3) participating in a program or activity designed to promote, or remove barriers to, employment, (4) employed for at least 80 hours per month, or (5) incapable of doing 1-4.[37] As of October 2016, 23 states have opted to extend foster care through Title IV-E. Four other states more recently enacted policies to extend the age at which youth can remain in foster care beyond the age of 18.[38] Many other states provide extended care through state funds. Our survey asked states about such programs.

The map below illustrates the age at which a young person can no longer remain under the care and supervision of the state child welfare agency under some conditions. States vary on who is eligible for extended care and in many states not every youth in those states has the option to remain in care.

[32] Some Millennials — And Their Parents — Are Slow To Cut The Cord. NPR, (2014). Available at: http://www.npr.org/2014/10/21/356951640/some-millennials-and-their-parents-are-slow-to-cut-the-cord

[33] In U.S., 14 percent of Those Aged 24 to 34 Are Living With Parents. Gallup, (2014). Available at: http://www.gallup.com/poll/167426/aged-living-parents.aspx

[34] Courtney, M.E., Dworsky, A., Cusick, G.R., Havlicek, J. Perez, A., Keller, T. Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 21. Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, (2007). Available at: http://www-news.uchicago.edu/releases/07/pdf/071212.foster.study.pdf

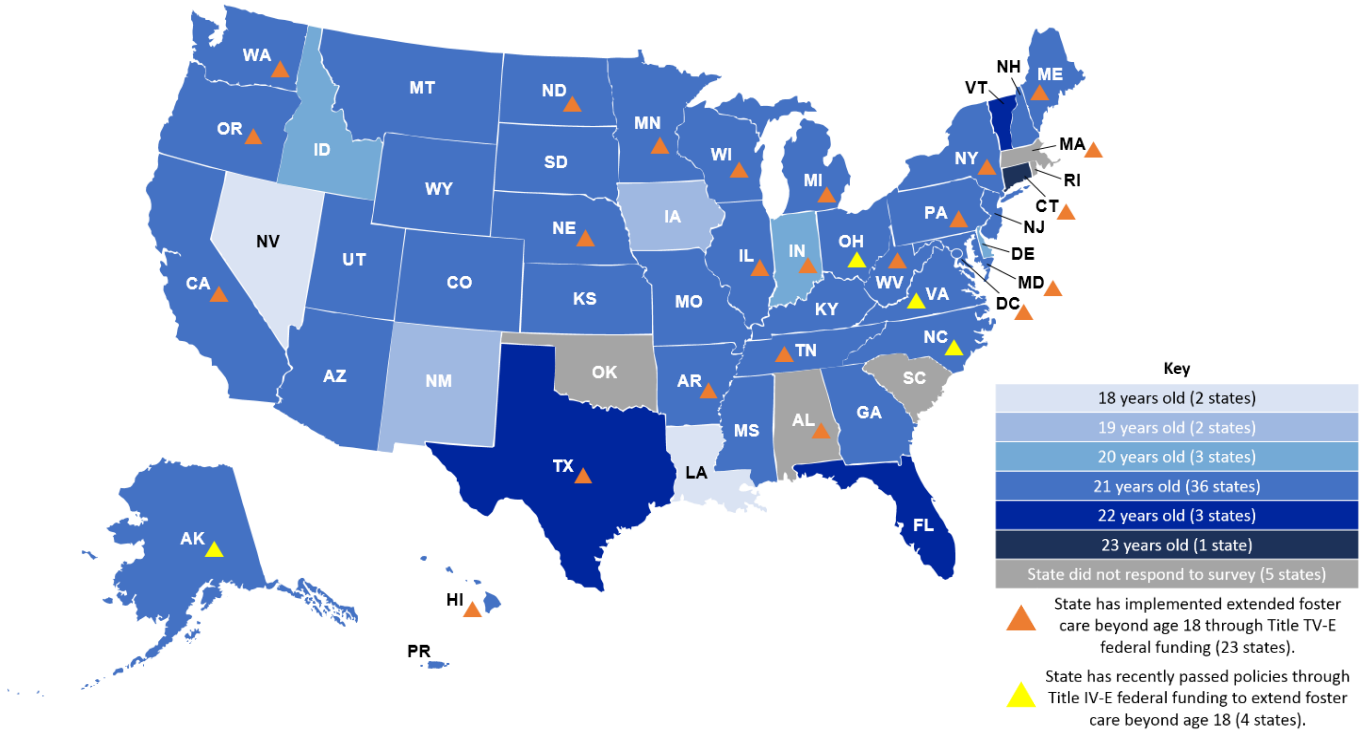
[35] Dworsky, A., & Courtney, M.E. Assessing the Impact of Extending Care beyond Age 18 on Homelessness: Emerging Findings from the Midwest Study. Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, (2010). Available at: http://www.chapinhall.org/research/brief/assessing-impact-extending-care-beyond-age-18-homelessness-emerging-findings-midwest

[36] Dworsky, A. & Courtney, M. E. Does Extending Foster Care beyond Age 18 Promote Post-secondary Educational Attainment? Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, (2010). Available at: http://www.chapinhall.org/research/brief/does-extending-foster-care-beyond-age-18-promote-postsecondary-educational-attainment

[37] Extending Foster Care Policy Toolkit. National Conference of State Legislatures, (2015). Available at: http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/extending-foster-care-policy-toolkit.aspx

[38] Youth Transitioning from Foster Care: Background and Federal Programs. Congressional Research Service, (2016). Available at: http://greenbook.waysandmeans.house.gov/sites/greenbook.waysandmeans.house.gov/files/RL34499%20-%20Youth%20Transitioning%20from%20Foster%20Care%20-%20Background%20and%20Federal%20Programs.pdf

Figure 5. Age at which a young person can no longer remain under the care and supervision of the state's child welfare agency[39]



Notes: Child Trends made attempts to confirm with each participating state their maximum age for foster care, given some indications that the question wording on the survey may have been confusing (e.g., asking for the maximum age a young person can be in, and still remain under, the care and supervision of the child welfare agency, as opposed to the emancipation/"aging out" age). However, not all states responded to our follow up efforts. Florida and Idaho did not respond to our inquiry to confirm the age they reported. The responses from Arizona, Louisiana, and Mississippi were changed to reflect information the states provided to our follow-up inquiry. Information about the states' IV-E status (orange and yellow triangles) is based off a November 2016 report from the Congressional Research Service. The four states with yellow triangles (Alaska, North Carolina, Ohio, and Virginia) had their blue background color updated to reflect their states' updated responses; however, their responses throughout the survey have not been changed to reflect their new policies.

We also asked states to report the age that young people typically leave care in their state—in other words, when young people emancipate in the absence of special or exceptional circumstances that might allow youth to remain in care longer (e.g., a disability, completing high school). Notably, **most states (77 percent of those responding, or 36 states) reported the typical "aging out" age in the state was less than the maximum aging out age by at least one year—with the majority of those states (32) reporting a difference of two years or more.** For example, 24 states reported that while young people *can* age out at 21 years old, it is typical for them to leave care at 18 years old. It should be noted that there are also differences within states, such as between urban areas that usually offer more services and rural areas which usually offer fewer options.

[39] Data were pulled from the national survey Child Trends sent to Independent Living Coordinators in the winter of 2015.

Fostering Futures implementation in Virginia

In **Virginia,** the Fostering Futures program was recently introduced to extend foster care under Title IV-E. Beginning July 1, 2016 foster care services and adoption assistance were extended to age 21 through an Appropriations Act (item 346 #3c) that was included in the final budget package for the year by the General Assembly. Youth who turn 18 on or after July 1, 2016 will be able to participate in the program, and youth must be enrolled in school (high school, equivalency (e.g., GED), college, or post-secondary vocational program), participating in a program or activity designed to promote or remove barriers to employment, working at least 80 hours per month, or are medically incapable of engaging in those activities.[40, 41]

Strategies to support Fostering Futures implementation in Virginia

The challenges and strategies described below are intended to support stakeholders in Virginia as they fully implement extended foster care.

Monitor who opts to participate in extended foster care. As discussed above, although most states have either state-funded or Title IV-E extended foster care, our findings show many young people still regularly leave foster care before the maximum exit age in the state. To ensure extended foster care is accessible for as many young people as possible, stakeholders should monitor the number and percentage of eligible young people who enroll in Fostering Futures to understand participation rates. In addition to how many youth participate, stakeholders must examine *who* is participating. Are youth in some localities more likely to participate (which may be particularly important given Virginia's county-administered child welfare system contributing to variations by county)? Is one race or ethnicity over or under represented? Are males more or less likely to enroll than females? Are those still enrolled in school more likely to participate? Such information can help staff understand how to engage eligible youth and lift up best practices in youth engagement, as well as ensure that the service array for youth who opt in to extended foster care is appropriate and meets their needs.

Identify barriers for youth to remain in extended care. Talk to young people regularly about why they do or do not participate in Fostering Futures, and examine local variables that could be influencing participation rates. Such information can help the state make policy and practice adjustments to support transition-age youth. For example, Virginia's policy requires young people to voluntarily "sign themselves into" extended foster care. Some states have used different strategies to encourage participation in extended foster care—such as automatic enrollment or a requirement to proactively "opt out". Young people can provide a critical voice about how such policies may impact their utilization of the program.

Use available data to track outcomes of young people who remain in extended foster care, as well as those who do not remain in foster care. State administrative data and NYTD data can help stakeholders in Virginia understand if

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[40] Update regarding Fostering Futures. Virginia Department of Social Services, (2016). Available at: https://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/licensing/lcpa/intro_page/current_providers/notices/broadcast_9675.pdf

[41] Child and Family Services Manual Virginia Department of Social Services, (2016). Available at: http://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/dfs/fc/intro_page/guidance_manuals/fc/07_2016/Section_14B_Fostering_Futures.pdf

extended foster care is actually helping young people, and in what specific outcome areas. For example, if data show improved outcomes in education and housing for young people who remain in care past 18, but that these young people are still struggling with employment, stakeholders can discuss strategies for helping youth achieve employment success. Resources can be targeted to the identified areas of greatest need.

Network with other states. Many states are in the process of implementing Title IV-E extended care, or in the process of evaluating how their programs are working. Virginia should consider contacting neighboring states, or states with similar demographics or child welfare characteristics, to discuss strategies and learn about what is working for them. For example, Virginia is one of nine county-administered states, including California, Colorado, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.[42] Exploring strategies in these states around youth engagement and available services may help Virginia stakeholders during this period of implementation.

For example, neighboring county-administered state Pennsylvania, a state with Title IV-E extended care, reported in the survey that it utilizes the experiences and expertise of former foster youth by hiring them as youth ambassadors who participate in various state-level meetings and trainings to educate caseworkers, foster parents, and other stakeholders on related policy and practices. North Carolina, another county-administered neighbor, uses federal John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program funds to help establish and maintain permanent relationships with supportive adults such as mentors, coaches, and family members who are involved in youths' transitions by supporting activities that bring the groups together. Virginia's neighbor Maryland is one of three hybrid states,[43] where the child welfare agency is partially administered by the state and partially by the counties. With Title IV-E extended care, Maryland offers life skills classes for employment and career/workforce development, and every youth in foster care in the state has an annual free credit report and credit consultation – including a discussion about the purpose of the credit report and assistance with removal of any derogatory remarks. Virginia's state-administered neighbor Tennessee provides trainings for transition-age youth on how to access and manage their physical and mental health care. They also have a successful, independently studied transitional youth program called YVLifeset which provides intensive, individualized, and clinically- focused case management, support, and counseling to transition aged youth, and participated in a random assignment evaluation that found positive effects for youth. Additionally, throughout this report, we highlight many other states with noteworthy strategies or successes.[44]

While Virginia is in an area of the United States where there are multiple county-administered or hybrid states, the majority of states have state-administered agencies.

In 2001, the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being study found several differences between state- and county-administered child welfare systems. For example, state-administered child welfare systems were more

[42] State vs. County Administration of Child Welfare Services. Child Welfare Information Gateway, (2012). Available at: http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/services.cfm

[43] The other two hybrid states are Nevada and Wisconsin.

[44] These examples were pulled from the national survey Child Trends sent to Independent Living Coordinators.

likely than county-administered agencies to:

- Have a more structured approach to risk assessments, licensing of kinship homes, and trainings for child welfare workers and caregivers.
- Require that structured risk assessments be used during cases, and to require licensing for all foster care placements.
- Provide foster care payments to relatives.
- Have concerns about representation of minority children, and provide special trainings to address the over- or under-representation of minority children.
- Have higher adoption rates, possibly in part due to the significantly greater likelihood of additional adoption resources in state-administered agencies.
- Innovate differently. State-administered agencies were able to use counties to develop specialized services and open satellite offices around the state.

County-administered states, however, were more likely than state-administered states to provide more specialized foster care homes, higher foster care payments, and provide more training and supervision for their child welfare workers.[45]

Keeping these structural differences in mind could help Virginia identify what areas may be lagging due to factors such as differences in the allocation of funds and communication across the state. Other county-administered states may have developed specific strategies that best fit this structure.

Table 3: Additional resources on extended foster care

Resource	Available at:
Foster Care to 21: Doing it Right	http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/JCYOI-FosterCareto21DoingitRight-2011.pdf
Providing Foster Care for Young Adults: Early Implementation of California's Fostering Connections Act	http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/Providing percent20Foster percent20Care percent20For percent20Young percent20Adults_2_13.pdf.
National Council of State Legislatures Policy Toolkit	http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/extending-foster-care-policy-toolkit.aspx.
Extending Out-of-Home Care for Youth Past Age 18: Child Welfare Information Gateway Resources Page	https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/outofhome/independent/outofhomecare/
Extending Foster Care to Age 21: Weighing the Costs to Government against the Benefits to Youth	http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/publications/Issue_Brief%2006_23_09.pdf
Youth Transitioning from Foster Care: Background and Federal Programs	http://greenbook.waysandmeans.house.gov/sites/greenbook.waysandmeans.house.gov/files/RL34499%20-%20Youth%20Transitioning%20from%20Foster%20Care%20-%20Background%20and%20Federal%20Programs.pdf
State vs. County Administration of Child Welfare Services	https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/services/
National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW) – Local Child Welfare Agency Survey:	https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/wellbeing_local.pdf

[45] National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW) – Local Child Welfare Agency Survey: Report. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (2001). Available at: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/wellbeing_local.pdf

Section 3: Supports for Critical Domains

Our survey asked states to report what services and supports they provided to transition-age youth (defined for the survey as young people ages 18 and older transitioning from foster care to adulthood) in six major areas:

1. Post-secondary education
2. Employment and career development
3. Financial capability
4. Securing safe, stable, and affordable housing
5. Accessing and managing health and mental health care
6. Establishing permanent relationships with supportive adults

These six areas were selected based on conversations with child welfare stakeholders and a review of the research on this population. These areas reflect both the needs of young people involved with foster care and the strategies states have employed to help them achieve success.[46, 47, 48, 49, 50] States were asked whether they provided each of a list of specific services under each domain (e.g., tuition/fee waivers at in-state public colleges or universities), to whom (youth in foster care and/or youth no longer in foster care), and whether the service was available statewide or only in certain areas. Furthermore, states reported whether they were currently using/implementing any evidence-based, evidence-informed, promising or emerging programs or practices to promote positive outcomes in each area.

For each of the six major topic areas, we describe why it matters for transition-age youth, describe the available data around the topic area, present findings from the survey (and policy scan, when possible) regarding states' provision of services, identify areas of strength and growth for Virginia, highlight notable strategies and approaches used by states, and provide links to additional resources.

1. Post-secondary education

Why it matters

Education plays a critical role in establishing and maintaining a career and building a strong social network.

[46] Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth. Chapin Hall, (2011). Available at: http://www.chapinhall.org/research/report/midwest-evaluation-adult-functioning-former-foster-youth

[47] Connected by 25: A Plan for Investing in the Social, Emotional and Physical Well-Being of Older Youth in Foster Care. Youth Transition Funders Group, (2013). Available at: http://www.ytfg.org/2013/01/connected-by-25-a-plan-for-investing-in-the-social-emotional-and-physical-well-being-of-older-youth-in-foster-care/

[48] Striving for Independence: Two-Year Impact Findings from the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation. MDRC, (2016). Available at: http://www.mdrc.org/project/youth-villages-transitional-living-program-evaluation#overview

[49] The Adolescent Brain: New Research and its Implications for Young People Transitioning from Foster Care. Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, (2011). Available at: http://www.aecf.org/resources/the-adolescent-brain-foster-care/

[50] Creating Access to Opportunities for Youth in Transition from Foster Care. American Youth Policy Forum, (2014). Available at: http://www.aypf.org/resources/creating-access-to-opportunities-for-youth-in-transition-from-foster-care-2/

Research shows young people who have experienced foster care have, on average, poorer educational outcomes than their non-foster care peers. For example, at ages 25 to 26, only 8 percent of young adults with foster care experience have a post-secondary degree, compared to 46 percent of young adults in the general population.[51]

Educational outcomes of Virginia's transition-age youth

According to NYTD data, **65 percent of Virginia's 19-year-olds surveyed were enrolled in and attending an educational program, compared with 56 percent nationally.** By age 21, we see declines both in Virginia and in the nation as a whole, with 31 percent of 21-year-olds in Virginia (and a similar share nationally) enrolled in and attending an educational program. With regards to degree attainment, 86 percent of the 21-year-old NYTD respondents in Virginia had received a high school diploma or GED, compared with 79 percent nationally.[52]

Table 4: NYTD responses around education[53]

	Virginia	United States
Enrolled in and attending an educational program at age 19*	65 percent	56 percent
Enrolled in and attending an educational program at age 21†	31 percent	32 percent
Received a high school diploma or GED by age 19^	66 percent	60 percent
Received a high school diploma or GED by age 21*†	86 percent	79 percent

*** results have statistically significant difference between Virginia and national rates for that age**
† results have statistically significant difference between 19-year-olds and 21-year olds for the same variable
^results have *no* statistically significant difference

Services and supports for post-secondary educational attainment

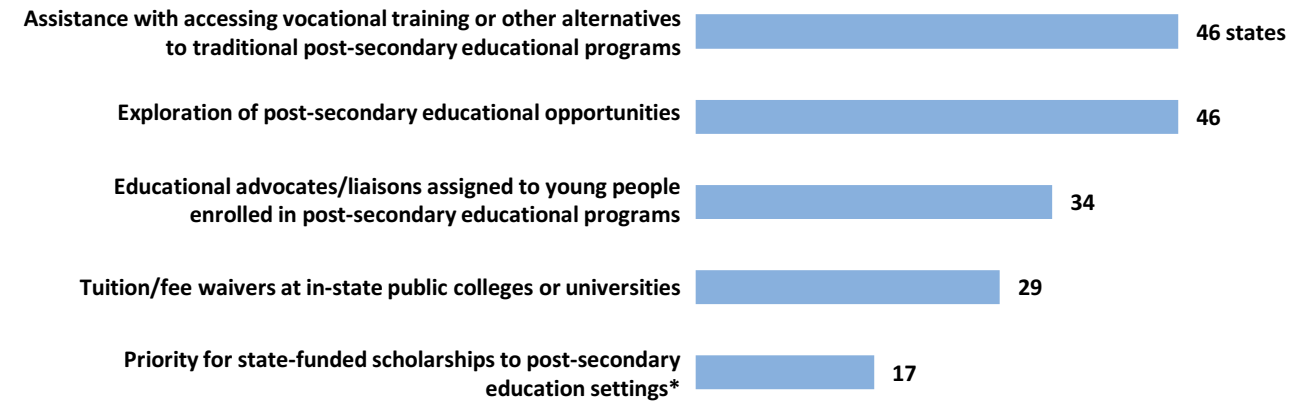
Nearly all states offer exploration of post-secondary educational opportunities (e.g., college immersion programs, college workshops, campus tours) and assistance accessing vocational training or other alternatives to traditional post-secondary educational programs to at least some transition-age youth. The educational service *least* frequently offered is priority for state-funded scholarships to post-secondary education settings, with only 17 states reporting they provide this assistance. For more about the number of states providing each service, please see Appendix A.

[51] Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 26. Chapin Hall, (2011). p. 20-21. Available at: https://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/Midwest%20Evaluation_Report_4_10_12.pdf

[52] Data source: National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Outcomes File Cohort 1 (Age 17 in FY2011) Waves 1, 2, & 3, NDACAN Dataset #202, Revised October, 2016, tabulations by Child Trends. We categorized youth who reported their highest level of education as vocational licenses and certificates as having a high school diploma or GED.

[53] Ibid.

Figure 6. Post-secondary educational services and supports



**Arizona did not respond to this part of the question.*

Virginia reported that it provides all of the post-secondary educational services and supports listed in Figure 6 to 18- to 21-year-olds no longer in foster care and to youth 21 and over with foster care experience.[54] However, not all services are provided in all areas of the state. Three of the supports (tuition fees/waivers, exploration of post-secondary educational opportunities, and assistance with vocational trainings and alternatives to traditional post-secondary education) are provided statewide. For additional information on Virginia's survey responses, please see Appendix B.

Virginia's areas of strength

NYTD data show that a higher percentage of 19-year-olds in Virginia were enrolled in and attending an educational program than the national share. By age 21, the shares of Virginia and national youth in an educational program were similar. Additionally, the share of 21-year olds in Virginia who had received a high school diploma or GED was higher than the national share. The state reports a promising service array to support post-secondary educational attainment. The state's Independent Living Coordinator reported each of the five services asked about on the survey is available in at least a part of the state. Virginia also has an innovative program to support post-secondary educational success, Great Expectations, which helps foster youth earn post-secondary credentials, and is available at 18 out of 23 Virginia Community Colleges. It supports foster youth as they complete high school, gain access to a community college education, and transition successfully from the foster care system to living independently. Additionally, one of the stated goals of Virginia's new Fostering Futures extended foster care program is to "support these youth in the critical period between 18 and 21 to make gains in the areas of education and employment, so that they are better able to be self-sufficient when they exit foster care."[55] Finally, Virginia also described a Tuition Grant program that covers tuition and fees at community colleges.

[54] The survey was completed by Virginia before implementation of Fostering Futures, so does not describe which services may now be available to youth ages 18 to 21 who remain in foster care.
[55] Update regarding Fostering Futures. Virginia Department of Social Services, (2016). Available at: https://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/licensing/lcpa/intro_page/current_providers/notices/broadcast_9675.pdf

Virginia's areas for growth

Although the proportion of 19-year-olds in Virginia in an educational program is higher than the national share, according to NYTD, we see that by age 21 the share of young people in Virginia, and nationwide, who were enrolled in and attending school declines (and remains below their peers who have not experienced foster care).[56] **Stakeholders in Virginia should work with local Department of Social Services (DSS) agencies and youth to understand why this is happening.** Are youth receiving their high school diplomas or GEDs around age 19 and choosing not to pursue post-secondary education (and if so, are they gainfully employed)? Or are youth starting a post-secondary educational track but later dropping out due to external pressures or financial issues? Additional insight may be gained by using the NYTD Plus Full Version survey (NYTD Plus),[57] which includes over 80 in-depth questions that go into greater detail than the basic, mandatory 22-question NYTD. It should be noted that data from NYTD Plus is not submitted to the national child welfare agency like the mandatory questions are and is therefore not included in national reporting. A clearer understanding of the reasons behind the decline between 19- and 21- year-olds attending school will help leaders in Virginia establish services that can best meet the needs of the state's transitional youth, to ensure that those who seek post-secondary education have the opportunities and resources to do so.

Although Virginia reported that all post-secondary services asked about on our survey are available in the state, it's important to examine what populations receive the services and where the services are available. Two of the services (priority of state-funded scholarships to post-secondary education settings and educational advocates) are only available in parts of the state. **Stakeholders may benefit from understanding if those programs are successful in the communities where they do exist, and by working to expand them statewide.**
As noted above, the survey was completed *before* the state implemented extended foster care through Fostering Futures. **It will be important for stakeholders to monitor what post-secondary educational services are available to youth in extended foster care as well as those who choose to leave foster care at age 18 (or prior to age 21).** Are the services available to both groups? How many youth in each group receive these services? Are there differences in how local agencies are implementing Fostering Futures and, if so, how are the post-secondary educational outcomes of transition-age youth affected by these differences?

Specific strategies used by other states

Many states shared innovations and successes in their post-secondary education strategies which may be helpful to Virginia. Most of these strategies fall into three main areas, described below with examples from select states.

Table 5: Post-secondary education: Highlighting state strategies and approaches

Recruitment and retention supports specifically created for transition-age youth

[56] Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 26. Chapin Hall, (2011). p. 20-21. Available at: https://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/Midwest%20Evaluation_Report_4_10_12.pdf
[57] Dworsky, A., & Crayton, C. National Youth in Transition Database: Instructional Guidebook and Architectural Blueprint. American Public Human Services Association, (2009). Available at: https://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/NYTD_Guidebook_032010.pdf

Table 5: Post-secondary education: Highlighting state strategies and approaches

▪ **Arizona's** Bridging Success is an on-campus recruitment and retention program for foster care alumni, in a partnership with ASU and the Maricopa Community Colleges. ▪ **Michigan** has 13 institutions of higher education providing on campus supports to foster youth and alumni. ▪ **California** has an extensive network of supports for transition-age youth. For example, each community college has a support person tasked with supporting their college success.
Supporting youth in planning for post-secondary success ▪ **Connecticut** social workers assist youth in creating a post-secondary education plan starting in the 8th grade. These plans are monitored throughout the youth's educational career and reviewed every 6 months. ▪ **Washington's** Supplemental Educational Transition Planning (SETuP) Program provides foster youth ages 14-18 with educational planning, information, and connections to other services/programs. It provides coordination between high school counselors and foster youth to ensure they have an educational transition plan.
Funding or scholarship supports ▪ In **Delaware**, the state has an arrangement with Delaware State University where two students per year can attend with year-round housing and financial supports that should equate to minimal costs for their college completion. This program also includes university supports to assist youth in their acclimation to college life. ▪ **Nevada** offers a scholarship to in-state colleges or universities for youth who aged out of foster care and maintain a 2.0 GPA.

Policies to support post-secondary educational success

Both the federal government and states have created policies that support the post-secondary educational outcomes for transition-age youth. For example, the federal **John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program** aims to support youth who are likely to remain in foster care until age 18, youth ages 18 to 21 who have aged out of foster care, and youth who were in foster care after age 16 and left due to adoption or guardianship. Through Chafee, the Educational and Training Vouchers Program (ETV) provides up to $5,000 a year to qualifying youth for post-secondary education and training.[58] **Virginia** operates an ETV program, whose purpose is to fund goods and services designed to assist eligible youth in successfully completing a "post-secondary" educational or vocational training program by covering up to a maximum of $5,000 or the total cost of attendance (whichever is less) per state fiscal year.[59]

In addition to implementing the ETV program, states have used policies to embed some of the services and supports discussed above. For example:

- **Illinois** House Bill 4652 (2014), requires the child welfare agency select at least 53 students each year who are in foster care, who aged out of care at age 18 or older, were formerly under foster care but were adopted, or who have been placed in private guardianship, to receive scholarships and fee waivers to

[58] John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. Children's Bureau, (2012). Available at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/chafee-foster-care-program

[59] Virginia Department of Social Services Child and Family Services Manual, Chapter 13: Achieving Permanency for Older Youth, § 13.13 (July, 2015). Available at: http://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/dfs/fc/intro_page/guidance_manuals/fc/07_2015/Section_13_Achieving_Permanency_for_Older_Youth.pdf

assist them in attending and completing their post-secondary education at a community college, college, or university.

- **Missouri** Senate Bill 205 (2013) requires that all foster children 15 years old or older visit a state university, state community or technical college, or an armed services recruiter before the child ages out of care.

Table 6: Additional resources on post-secondary education for transition-age youth

Resource	Available at
Supporting Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care, Issue Brief 1: Education Programs	http://cjjr.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/EducationalNeedsofChildrenandYouth_May2010.pdf
Addressing the Unmet Educational Needs of Children and Youth in the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Systems	http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/portals/0/dmx/2012/08/file_20120829_140902_sAMYaA_0.pdf
Education is the Lifeline for Youth in Foster Care	http://www.jimcaseyyouth.org/sites/default/files/documents/nationalWorkingGroup_ResearchHighlights_2.pdf.
Does Extending Foster Care beyond Age 18 Promote Post-secondary Educational Attainment? (Issue Brief)	http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/publications/Midwest_IB1_Educational_Attainment.pdf
U.S. Department of Education, Students in Foster Care	http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/foster-care/index.html
Tuition Waivers by State – Interactive Map	http://www.tipwaynestate.org/interactive-tuition-waiver-map.html

2. Employment and career development

Why it matters

Steady and meaningful employment is a key aspect of a healthy and productive adulthood, providing financial security as well as a sense of purpose. Finding and keeping a job is often a challenge for transition-age youth with foster care experience. One study found that by age 24, at a single point in time, only half of youth formerly in foster care are employed.[60] Of those not employed, the majority are looking for work.[61] Even those who are employed face challenges making ends meet: researchers estimate that nearly a quarter of employed young people who experienced foster care lack the earning power to rise out of poverty.[62] Beyond simply securing employment, engaging in a career that is meaningful is an important aspect of adult well-being.

Employment-related outcomes for transition-age youth in Virginia

In Virginia, NYTD data show that 39 percent of 19-year-olds and 55 percent of 21-year-olds are employed either full- or part-time. In other words, almost half of 21-year-olds who responded to the survey are not employed. Virginia's statistics are similar to the national numbers.[63]

Table 7: NYTD responses around employment[64]

	Virginia	United States
Employed full- or part-time at age 19^	39 percent	33 percent

[60] Employment of Former Foster Youth as Young Adults: Evidence from the Midwest Study. Chapin Hall, (2010). p. 3. Available at: http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/publications/Midwest_IB3_Employment.pdf

[61] Employment of Former Foster Youth as Young Adults: Evidence from the Midwest Study. Chapin Hall, (2010). p. 9. Available at: http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/publications/Midwest_IB3_Employment.pdf

[62] Ibid.

[63] Data source: National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Outcomes File Cohort 1 (Age 17 in FY2011) Waves 1, 2, & 3, NDACAN Dataset #202, Revised October, 2016, tabulations by Child Trends.

[64] Ibid.

Employed full- or part-time at age 21†	55 percent	50 percent

*** results have statistically significant difference between Virginia and national rates for that age**
† results have statistically significant difference between 19-year-olds and 21-year olds for the same variable
^results have *no* statistical significant difference

Services and supports for employment and career development.

As shown in Figure 7, nearly every state provides information about career opportunities and job readiness training to at least some transition-age youth. The service *least* frequently provided is mentorship from professionals (with roughly one third of responding states reporting they do not provide this service). For more about the number of states providing each service, please see Appendix A.

Figure 7. Employment and career development services and supports

**Arizona did not respond to this part of the question.*

Virginia reported that it provides all of the services and supports listed in Figure 7 to 18- to 21-year-olds no longer in foster care and to young adults 21 and over with foster care experience, though not all services are provided in all areas of the state.[65] Three services are provided statewide (information about career options and opportunities, career counseling/coaching, and job readiness training). For more information on Virginia's survey responses, please see Appendix B.

Virginia's areas of strength

For both 19- and 21-year-olds, NYTD data show that Virginia's youth are faring similarly to the national population with regard to employment status. Furthermore, the share of 21-year-olds in Virginia who are employed (55 percent) is greater than the share of 19-year-olds (39 percent) who are employed. Virginia also shows a promising service array around employment and career development for transition-age youth, with the Independent Living Coordinator reporting each service is available in at least a part of the state. Further, as noted above, one of the stated goals of Virginia's new Fostering Futures program, is to "support these youth in the critical period between 18 and 21 to make gains in the areas of education and employment, so that

[65] The survey was completed before implementation of Fostering Futures, so does not describe which services may now be available to youth 18-21 who remain in foster care.

they are better able to be self-sufficient when they exit foster care."[66] Finally, the survey also described collaborations in Virginia between local DSS with community agencies around employment service delivery.

Virginia's areas for growth

Although the share of young people employed in Virginia at age 21, according to NYTD, is greater than the share at age 19, it still reflects a large percentage of Virginia's 21-year-olds who are not working. **Virginia should learn about the circumstances for unemployed youth with foster care experience—are they currently attending school? Are they seeking employment?** Knowing more about the characteristics of young people who are without jobs at age 21 will help the state tailor services that remove barriers to employment, and can help identify those youth who may be at risk for financial difficulties. This could be achieved by using findings from the more detailed questions in the NYTD Plus.[67]

Also, although Virginia reported that all employment and career development services asked about on the survey are provided in the state, as with the other service domains it is important to look more closely at what populations can receive the services and where they are available. Two of the services (job placement assistance and mentorship) are only available in parts of the state. **Stakeholders may benefit from understanding if those programs are successful in the communities where they do exist, and working with agencies and policymakers to expand them statewide.**

As noted above, the survey was completed *before* the state implemented Fostering Futures and extended foster care. **Thus, it will be important for stakeholders to monitor what employment and career development services are available to youth in extended foster care as well as those who choose to leave foster care at age 18.** Are the services available to both groups? How many youth in each group receive these services? What is the service array across the state and how does it differ across local agencies? Are the employment and career development outcomes of transition-age youth affected by any differences in localities?

Specific strategies used by other states

Many states shared innovations and successes in their employment and career development strategies which may be helpful to Virginia. Most of these strategies fall into three main areas, described below with examples from select states.

Table 8: Employment and career development: Highlighting state strategies and approaches

Creating and continuing partnerships and collaborations with employment assistance agencies
• **Sixteen states** described partnerships with WIOA (Workforce Innovations and Opportunity Act) agencies or other employment and career development agencies. In **Ohio**, the Office for Families and Children partnered with the Office of Workforce Development to launch the "Connecting the Dots – from foster care to employment and independent living" initiative that provides educational supports, career training, job placement, and mentoring (http://jfs.ohio.gov/owd/Initiatives/ConnectingTheDots.stm).

[66] Broadcast 9675. Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), (2016). Available at: https://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/licensing/lcpa/intro_page/current_providers/notices/broadcast_9675.pdf

[67] Dworsky, A., & Crayton, C. National Youth in Transition Database: Instructional Guidebook and Architectural Blueprint. American Public Human Services Association, (2009). Accessed at: https://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/NYTD_Guidebook_032010.pdf

Table 8: Employment and career development: Highlighting state strategies and approaches

Providing internships and job mentoring opportunities
• **Arizona** Friends of Foster Care administers a job development program providing internships, job shadowing, and job mentoring. • In **Maryland**, life skills classes focus on employment search, successful interviewing, resume development, and understanding the skills needed to maintain employment. Youth have the option of utilizing one-on-one career/workforce development planning and consultations with their Independent Living Coordinator or caseworker.
Facilitating summer employment
• The **Maine** Youth Transition Collaborative provides supported summer employment for youth in or formerly in foster care. • In **Washington State**, independent living providers offer employment services all year, with an additional emphasis on hiring during school breaks near the end of the school year, in the summer, and over holidays.

Policies to support employment and career development

One important way states can support employment for transition-age youth involves the provision of key documents to these youth (e.g., birth certificate, state-issued identification card). Recent federal legislation, the **Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act** (2014), requires that children and youth in foster care all have key documents such as a birth certificate, Social Security card, health insurance information, medical records, and a driver's license or equivalent state-issued identification card before they exit care due to reaching age 18 (or the applicable age in the state).[68]

Although many states may have policies to ensure young people receive such documents, only ten states have added this requirement to their state laws.[69] Examples include:

- **Minnesota** requires that young people leaving foster care receive their Social Security card; birth certificate; a state identification card or driver's license, green card, or school visa; school, medical, and dental records; a contact list of the youth's medical, dental, and mental health providers; and contact information for the child's siblings, if the siblings are in foster care (Minn. Stat. Ann. § 260C.203).
- **Arkansas** requires that young people leaving foster care receive their Social Security card; certified birth certificate or verification of birth record; family photos in the possession of the department; health records for the time the youth was in foster care and other medical records that were available; educational records for the time the youth was in foster care and any other educational records that were available or should have been available to the department (Ark. Code § 9-27-363).

We anticipate that additional states will write this into their state laws as they move further into implementation of the federal legislation.

[68] Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014, P.L. 113-183/H.R. 4980. Available at: https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/4980/text

[69] Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014. National Conference of State Legislatures. Available at: http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/preventing-sex-trafficking-and-strengthening-families-act-of-2014.aspx

Virginia has not required such documentation in its state laws, although it is included in its agency policy. Virginia's Department of Social Services Child and Family Services Manual references the need to provide youth transitioning out of foster care with: "access to essential documents, such as assistance in obtaining a birth certificate or social security card, and other appropriate services… consistent with the needs assessment."[70]

Table 9: Additional resources on employment and career development for transition-age youth

Resource	Available at
Supporting Youth Transitioning out of Foster Care, Issue Brief #3: Employment Programs	http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/2000128-Supporting-Youth-Transitioning-out-of-Foster-Care-2000128-Supporting-Youth-Transitioning-out-of-Foster-Care-Employment-Programs.pdf
Employment and Training Services for Youth: Child Welfare Information Gateway Resources Page	https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/service-array/employment/employment-and-training-services-for-youth/
Employment of Former Foster Youth as Young Adults: Evidence from the Midwest Study	http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/publications/Midwest_IB3_Employment.pdf

3. Financial capability

Why it matters

Financial capability refers to a person's ability to manage his or her budget and achieve his or her financial goals. Young people who have experienced foster care often lack exposure to financial experiences such as banking and budgeting habits, and may have less adult support in learning budgeting or money management skills than their peers. They may also face issues related to their credit, with one study suggesting that five to 10 percent of youth in foster care are dealing with credit issues caused by creditor error in billing amounts (e.g., from hospitals wrongly billing the youth), mixed identity (e.g., confusion between Sr. and Jr.), incorrect use of a young person's name or Social Security Number on delinquent account, or identity theft and fraud.[71]

Financial capability needs of transition-age youth in Virginia

Although the NYTD survey does not include an outcome directly measuring financial capability in young people (as defined above), we are able to identify a subgroup at great risk for financial challenges (and who thus may particularly need financial capability supports)—those who are "disconnected," that is, who are neither enrolled in school nor employed. NYTD data show that a somewhat smaller share of 19-year-olds with foster care experience were disconnected in Virginia than in the nation overall (23 percent, compared with 29 percent).[72] At age 21, the share of youth who were disconnected had increased,[73] with comparable percentages in Virginia and the United States as a whole.[74] Specifically, around a third of the 21-year-olds in Virginia and across the nation were disconnected from school and work.

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[70] Virginia Department of Social Services Child and Family Services Manual, Chapter 13: Achieving Permanency for Older Youth, §13.10 (July, 2015). Available at: http://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/dfs/fc/intro_page/guidance_manuals/fc/07_2015/Section_13_Achieving_Permanency_for_Older_Youth.pdf

[71] Accessing Credit Reports for Foster Youth A Reference Guide for Child Welfare Agencies. Credit Builders Alliance, (2013). Available at: http://www.aecf.org/m/blogdoc/aecf-AccessingCreditReportsforFosterYouth-2013.pdf

[72] This difference is statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level.

[73] Significant at the 90 percent confidence level.

[74] Data source: National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Outcomes File Cohort 1 (Age 17 in FY2011) Waves 1, 2, & 3, NDACAN Dataset #202, Revised October, 2016, tabulations by Child Trends.

Table 10: NYTD responses around disconnection[75]

	Virginia	United States
Disconnected at age 19*	23 percent	29 percent
Disconnected at age 21†	33 percent	34 percent

*** results have statistically significant difference between Virginia and national rates for that age**
† results have statistically significant difference between 19-year-olds and 21-year olds for the same variable
^results have *no* statistical significant difference

Services and supports for financial capability

As shown below, nearly all states reported training young people around money management/financial literacy and providing budget counseling, closely followed by credit reports/identity theft protection and assistance opening bank accounts. The service *least* commonly provided is matched savings for asset purchases (through Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) or other means), with 21 states reporting this service is not available. For more about the number of states providing each service, please see Appendix A.

Figure 8. Financial capability services and supports

Virginia reported it provides all of the financial capability services and supports listed in Figure 8 to both 18- to 21-year-olds not in foster care and to youth 21 and over with foster care experience, however only one (credit reports) is available statewide.[76] For additional information on Virginia's survey responses, please see Appendix B.

Virginia's areas of strength

NYTD data show that the share of transitioning youth who are "disconnected" (neither in school nor employed) at age 19 is somewhat smaller in Virginia than in the nation overall, and is similar to the national share for this population at age 21. In terms of the service array for transition-age youth, Virginia reported that each financial capability service asked about on the survey is provided in at least part of the state. Virginia also works with Project LIFE, a private contractor to the Department of Social Services to provide some trainings to

[75] Data source: National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Outcomes File Cohort 1 (Age 17 in FY2011) Waves 1, 2, & 3, NDACAN Dataset #202, Revised October, 2016, tabulations by Child Trends.
[76] The survey was completed before implementation of Fostering Futures, so does not describe which services may now be available to youth 18-21 who remain in foster care.

youth around financial capability.

Virginia's areas for growth

The share of young people who are disconnected at 21 in Virginia is somewhat higher than the share disconnected at 19, with around one-third of the 21-year-olds neither in school nor working. These young people may be at significant risk for financial difficulties, and the data suggest that a substantial number of youth transitioning from foster care in Virginia could benefit from targeted financial capability assistance. **Virginia should explore how and why a larger share of youth are disconnected at age 21 than at age 19, and what factors are contributing to these young people lacking both employment and participation in an educational program.**

In terms of available services in the state, Virginia reported that all specified financial capability services from the survey are provided. However, four of the five services (money management/financial literacy training, budget counseling, assistance opening bank accounts, and matched savings for asset purchases) are only available in parts of the state. **Stakeholders may benefit from understanding if existing programs are successful, and working with the agency and policymakers to expand them statewide.**

Virginia should also track financial capability outcomes for its youth transitioning from foster care so state leaders can understand how young people are faring financially. These data can identify whether youth have a bank account, are able to meet their monthly expenses, or owe money—all important information in developing a service array that supports the financial needs of youth in the state. Because the NYTD survey doesn't directly assess financial capability in the sense of a person's ability to manage his or her budget and achieve financial goals, these data would need to be tracked outside of the standard NYTD survey, such as with the NYTD Plus.[77] In addition to documenting what is provided and to whom, to understand the scope and reach of the service array, **Virginia should monitor whether these services and programs are having their intended effect** and improving the financial capability of the young people being served.

As noted above, the survey was completed before the state implemented the Fostering Futures program to extend foster care past age 18. **It will be important for stakeholders to monitor what financial capability services are available to youth in extended foster care as well as those who choose to leave foster care at age 18.** Are the services available to both groups? How many youth in each group receive these services? What is the service array across the state and how does it differ across local agencies? Are the financial capability outcomes of transition-age youth affected by any differences in localities?

Specific strategies used by other states

Many states shared areas of innovation and success in their approaches to supporting financial capability. Below we provide examples in three overarching categories:

[77] Dworsky, A., & Crayton, C. National Youth in Transition Database: Instructional Guidebook and Architectural Blueprint. American Public Human Services Association, (2009). Accessed at: https://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/NYTD_Guidebook_032010.pdf

Table 11: Financial capability: Highlighting state strategies and approaches

Trainings to support financial literacy • In **Colorado**, budgeting and financial literacy education is required for all youth age 14 and older while in foster care. Additional programs in the state provide supplemental financial literacy groups and individualized budgeting support, financial management practice, and assistance accessing financial products. • In **Illinois**, the agency contracts with the Economic Awareness Council (EAC) for technical assistance, training, and a financial literacy curriculum. It provides "Get Real: Financial Decisions in the Real World," a nine-module curriculum delivered to all youth prior to exiting care at 21 who want their emancipation funds. (http://www.econcouncil.org/).
Supporting credit building and repair • **Delaware** collaborates with a state program called $tand By Me, which obtains youths' credit reports and assists in rectifying inaccuracies. It also provides credit counseling and financial literacy training to youth, in addition to the training available on the MoneySkills.org website. • In **Maryland**, every youth in foster care has an annual free credit report and credit consultation, including a discussion about the purpose of the credit report, as well as assistance with removal of any derogatory remarks.
Implementation of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative • **Ten states** (**AZ, DE, HI, IN, ME, MI, MS, NE, NC, and TN**) reported partnering with the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative to provide financial education (usually through their Opportunities Passport™ program) and access to matched savings.[78] (For more information, please see: http://www.aecf.org/work/child-welfare/jim-casey-youth-opportunities-initiative)

Table 12: Additional resources on supporting financial capability of transition-age youth

Resource	Available at
Supporting Youth Transitioning out of Foster Care, Issue Brief #2: Financial Literacy and Asset Building Programs	http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/2000129-Supporting-Youth-Transitioning-out-of-Foster-Care-Financial-Literacy-and-Asset-Building-Programs.pdf
Building Financial Capability for Youth Transitioning from Foster Care	http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/JCYOI-BuildingFinancialCapability-2014.pdf
The Financial Empowerment Toolkit for Youth and Young Adults in Foster Care	http://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/financial-empowerment-toolkit

4. Securing safe, stable, and affordable housing

Why it matters

Housing instability and homelessness are significant challenges faced by former foster youth. Studies report between 11 and 36 percent of young people who age out of foster care become homeless, and up to 50 percent have faced unstable or precarious housing situations. Without stable housing, young people may face enormous challenges staying in school, gaining employment, accessing physical and mental health services, and reaching self-sufficiency.[79] The issue is especially critical for young adults who age out of foster care, who often lack family or other permanent connections to return to if their current housing is lost.

[78] The Jim Casey Initiative may be available in other areas of the country as well, but was not reported by the individual completing the survey.
[79] Housing for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care. Mathematica Policy Research, (2015). Available at: www.mathematica-mpr.com/~/media/publications/pdfs/family_support/youthaging_fostercare_ifbrief.pdf

Housing outcomes for transition-age youth in Virginia

On the NYTD survey, **13 percent of 19-year-olds in Virginia with experience with foster care reported that they had been homeless in the past two years** (compared with 20 percent nationally)**. By age 21, we see increases to similar levels in both Virginia and the nation as a whole, with 28 percent of youth nationally reporting homelessness within the last two years.**[80]

Table 13: NYTD responses around housing[81]

	Virginia	United States
Reported that they had been homeless in the past two years at age 19*	13 percent	20 percent
Reported that they had been homeless in the past two years at age 21†	27 percent	28 percent

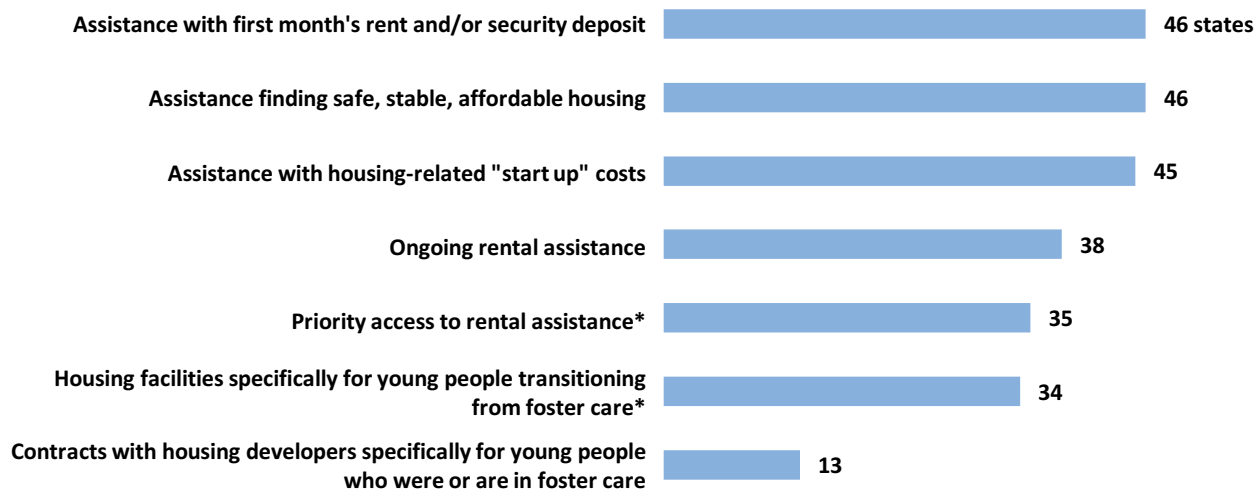
*** results have statistically significant difference between Virginia and national rates for that age**
† results have statistically significant difference between 19-year-olds and 21-year-olds for the same variable
^results have *no* statistical significant difference

Services and supports for safe, stable, and affordable housing

As shown in Figure 9, nearly all states provide at least general housing assistance, first month's rent and/or security deposit, and housing-related start-up costs to at least some groups of transition-age youth. The *least* commonly provided supports are contracts with housing developers to guarantee a certain percentage of clients are young people who are or were in foster care, with only 13 states reporting this service. For more about the number of states providing each service, please see Appendix A.

Figure 9. Services and supports for securing safe, stable, and affordable housing

[80] Data source: National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Outcomes File Cohort 1 (Age 17 in FY2011) Waves 1, 2, & 3, NDACAN Dataset #202, Revised October, 2016, tabulations by Child Trends.
[81] Ibid.



**Louisiana and West Virginia each did not respond to one of the questions above.*

Virginia reported that it provides all of the housing services and supports listed in Figure 9 to 18- to 21-year-olds no longer in foster care and to youth 21 and over with foster care experience, however **all of the supports are only available in certain areas of the state.**[82] For additional information on Virginia's survey responses, please see Appendix B.

Virginia's areas of strength

NYTD data show that the share of 19-year-olds with foster care experience in Virginia reporting homelessness in the past two years is lower than the national share (13 percent versus 20 percent). Virginia's survey also shows a promising service array to support safe, stable, and affordable housing for transition-age youth, with each specific service available in at least a part of the state. The survey also described an *Interagency Partnership to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness* that aims to support this population and their housing outcomes. There are a variety of additional ways the state may be supporting the housing needs of this population, including:

- Through Virginia's **Independent Living Services (ILS),** young people may receive services and skills development around housing, in addition to a variety of other topics. Young people may receive ILS until age 21 if they meet eligibility criteria and may reapply to receive ILS, even if they previously left the program.[83]
- **Great Expectations** (http://greatexpectations.vccs.edu/life/find-a-home/), an initiative of the Virginia Foundation for Community College Education, includes a section on how to find housing.
- **Project Life** (https://www.vaprojectlife.org/for-young-adults/housing/), a web-based information clearinghouse for foster youth, is funded by the Virginia Department of Social Services in partnership with the United Methodist Family Services of Virginia (UMFS). It provides details about types of

[82] The survey was completed before implementation of Fostering Futures, so does not describe which services may now be available to youth 18-21 who remain in foster care.

[83] Virginia Department of Social Services Child and Family Services Manual, Chapter 13: Achieving Permanency for Older Youth, § 13.4.2 (July, 2015). Available at: http://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/dfs/fc/intro_page/guidance_manuals/fc/07_2015/Section_13_Achieving_Permanency_for_Older_Youth.pdf

housing, how to locate and make decisions about where to live, and where to go for help.

Virginia's areas for growth

Although the share of 19-year-olds in Virginia reporting homelessness in the previous two years is lower than the national share, the proportion had increased by age 21 to 27 percent, comparable to the national share for 21-year-olds. **Virginia should seek to understand the increase in homelessness between ages 19 and 21, and what factors might contribute to this.** Are housing-related support services in the state more accessible to, or being utilized at a greater rate by, the younger population (e.g., 19-year-olds) than the older youth? If so, why? Are fewer young people at age 21 than at age 19 connected to supportive adults who could provide assistance in times of housing-related needs?

Virginia reported that all the housing-related services specified on the survey are available; however, none of the housing services were reported as being available statewide. **Stakeholders may benefit from understanding if those services are successful in helping young people secure safe, stable, and affordable housing in the communities where they do exist, and working to expand them statewide if so.**

As noted above, the survey was completed before the state implemented Fostering Futures extended foster care. **Stakeholders should monitor what housing-related services are available to youth in extended foster care as well as those who choose to leave foster care at age 18.** Are the services available to both groups? How many youth in each group receive these services? What is the service array across the state and how does it differ across local agencies? Are the housing outcomes of transition-age youth affected by differences in localities?

Specific strategies used by other states

Many states shared examples of innovation and success in their housing strategies. Below we provide examples in three areas:

Table 14: Securing safe, stable, and affordable housing: Highlighting state strategies and approaches

Financial assistance for housing

- **New Mexico** provides a monthly Independent Living maintenance check of approximately $630 a month to youth who aged out of foster care. Youth have to work or attend school, refrain from illegal activity, and meet with their Youth Transition Specialist monthly. This is available until a youth turns 21. The state also works with community partners to furnish youth residences, including a free new mattress and bed frame and kitchen furnishings.
- **Several states** also mentioned coordinating with their state or local housing agency to secure Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers for young people transitioning from foster care.[84]

[84] FUP provides Housing Choice Vouchers to: 1) "Families for whom the lack of adequate housing is a primary factor in either the imminent placement of the family's child or children in out-of-home care [or] the delay in the discharge of the child or children to the family from out-of-home care. 2) Youth at least 18 years old and not more than 24 years old who: left foster care at age 16 or older or will leave foster care within 90 days, in accordance with a transition plan described in section 475(5)(H) of the Social Security Act; and are homeless; or are at risk of homelessness." Housing Choice Voucher Program Family Unification Program Fact Sheet. Available at: https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=fup_fact_sheet.pdf

Housing designed to support current or former foster youth

- In **California,** the state legislature passed Assembly Bill 12 in 2010, creating an extended foster care (EFC) program called the After 18 program. This law creates two types of placements: Transitional Housing Placement Plus Foster Care (THP+FC) and Supervised Independent Living Placements (SILPs). THP+FC includes three housing models allowing youth to live with a host family or in an apartment or other type of housing owned or leased by the provider either in a complex with other foster youth or in a "remote site." In a SILP, youth who are assessed as ready for this level of independence can live on their own and receive their foster care payment directly (http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/PG2902.htm).
- **Kansas** has two housing programs designed to serve this population: Spero House which provides housing and other supports to youth ages 18-22 who have recently left foster care (http://www.youthrive.org/spero-house/) and Hope House which provides housing for young women ages 18-27 who have aged out of foster care and/or are homeless (http://www.hopehouseks.org/).

Housing for pregnant and parenting youth

- Several states provide specialized housing programs specifically for pregnant and/or parenting youth in foster care, including Connecticut, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Ohio.

Policies to support access to safe, stable, and affordable housing

A recent report from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on housing issues for this population describes several federal policies and programs that assist, or have the potential to assist, young people with finding and keeping safe housing, including the Fostering Connections Act, the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, the Transitional Living Program, the Education and Training Voucher Program, public housing and the Housing Choice Voucher (HVC) program, Continuum of Care, and the Family Unification Program.[85] (See the report, linked below in the resources table, for details on these policies and programs).

In addition, some states have made efforts to write laws that support the housing needs for young people transitioning from foster care and after they have left care. These include:

- **Texas** bill (2013 House Bill 2111) supports the partnership between the agency and a community-based organization to provide transitional living services for foster youth.
- **California** bill (Senate Bill 774) allows counties to extend transitional housing to former foster youth who are under age 25, when a youth is completing secondary or post-secondary education.

These examples are found in state statute, but there are likely many other supports or policies across states that have not been codified. For example, the review noted above[86] lists innovative housing programs for former foster youth. These programs are likely not listed or described in law, but still support the housing needs of young people who have aged out of foster care.

[85] Housing for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care A Review of the Literature and Program Typology. US Department of Housing and Urban Development, (2012). Available at: http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/HousingFosterCare_LiteratureReview_0412_v2.pdf

[86] Housing for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care A Review of the Literature and Program Typology. US Department of Housing and Urban Development, (2012). Available at: http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/HousingFosterCare_LiteratureReview_0412_v2.pdf

Table 15: Additional resources around housing for transition-age youth

Resource	Available at
Housing for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care: A Review of the Literature and Program Typology	http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/HousingFosterCare_LiteratureReview_0412_v2.pdf
Becoming Adults: One-Year Impact Findings from the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation	http://www.mdrc.org/publication/becoming-adults
Housing Assistance for Youth Who Have Aged Out of Foster Care: The Role of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program	http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/12/chafeefostercare/rpt.shtml
Connected by 25: Financing Housing Supports for Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care	http://ytfg.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/FinancingHousing.pdf

5. Accessing and managing physical and mental health care

Why it matters

Youth in foster care and young people with foster care experience face higher rates of mental and physical health challenges than their peers who do not experience foster care. For example, one study found that between 35 and 60 percent of youth entering foster care have at least one chronic or acute health condition that needs treatment, and 50 to 75 percent of foster youth exhibit behavioral or social competency issues that may require treatment.[87] Youth in foster care and those who have aged out need access to appropriate and continuous health care (that will support both physical and mental well-being) during their transition to adulthood.

Access to physical and mental health care for transition-age youth in Virginia

Although the NYTD survey does not include a direct measure of health or mental health status or an overall emotional or physical well-being measure, it does ask young people about their health insurance coverage—a critical component of access to and utilization of both health and mental health services. Lack of insurance can be a major barrier for young people to achieving positive physical and mental health. Youth who age out of foster care are eligible for Medicaid up to age 26 through the Affordable Care Act,[88] but depending on the state may need to reenroll every year.[89] According to NYTD, **80 percent of 19-year-olds in Virginia had Medicaid coverage. However, Medicaid coverage declines considerably by age 21 to 64 percent (compared with 74 percent nationally).** Similar shares of young people in Virginia report other types of health insurance coverage at ages 19 and 21, and these percentages are comparable to the national percentage (17 percent) at both ages.[90]

Table 16: NYTD responses around health insurance[91]

	Virginia	United States
Medicaid coverage at age 19^	80 percent	78 percent
Medicaid coverage at age 21*†	64 percent	74 percent
Other type of health insurance at age 19^	14 percent	17 percent

[87] The Affordable Care Act and Youth Aging Out of Foster Care: New Opportunities and Strategies for Action. State Policy Advocacy and Reform Center (SPARC), (2014). Available at: http://childwelfaresparc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/3-The-Affordable-Care-Act-and-Youth-Aging-Out-of-Foster-Care.pdf

[88] The Affordable Care Act and Youth Aging Out of Foster Care: New Opportunities and Strategies for Action. State Policy Advocacy and Reform Center (SPARC), (2014). Available at: http://childwelfaresparc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/3-The-Affordable-Care-Act-and-Youth-Aging-Out-of-Foster-Care.pdf

[89] Covered Til 26: FAQ's for Professionals and Child Advocates. Juvenile Law Center. Available at: http://jlc.org/node/7088

[90] Data source: National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Outcomes File Cohort 1 (Age 17 in FY2011) Waves 1, 2, & 3, NDACAN Dataset #202, Revised October, 2016, tabulations by Child Trends.

[91] Ibid.

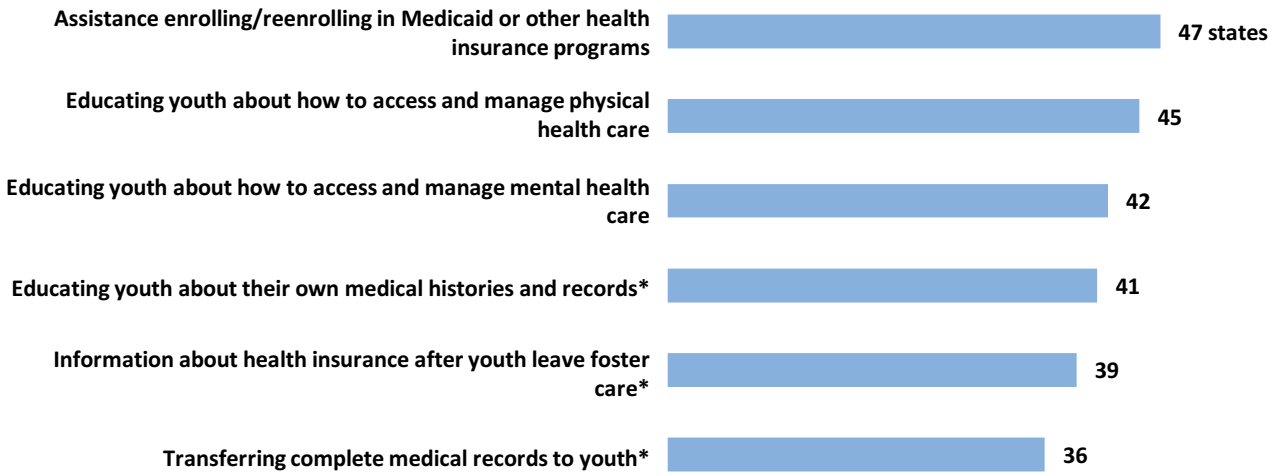
Other type of health insurance at age 21^	16 percent	17 percent

*** results have statistically significant difference between Virginia and national rates for that age**
† results have statistically significant difference between 19-year-olds and 21-year olds for the same variable
^results have *no* statistical significant difference

Services and supports for physical and mental health care

As shown in Figure 10, all surveyed states provide assistance to some transition-age youth with enrolling or reenrolling in Medicaid or other health insurance programs. Most states reported they educate youth about accessing and managing both physical and mental health services, as well as their own medical histories and records. Fewer states assist with the transfer of medical records to youth (with 10 states reporting they do not). For more about the number of states providing each service, please see Appendix A.

Figure 10. Services and supports for accessing and managing physical and mental health care



**California, Kentucky, and West Virginia each did not respond to at least one of the asterisked questions above.*

Virginia provides all the services and supports listed in Figure 10 to both 18- to 21-year-olds no longer in foster care and to youth 21 and over with foster care experience.[92] Nearly all the supports, with the exception of transferring the complete medical records, are available statewide. For additional information on Virginia's survey responses, please see Appendix B.

Virginia's areas of strength

According to NYTD, eight out of ten surveyed 19-year-olds in Virginia are covered by Medicaid, as is the case nationwide. Virginia also shows a promising service array to support access to and management of health and mental health care for transition-age youth, with each service asked about on our survey available in at least a part of the state, and most available statewide. Virginia's current healthcare policy also specifically allows for the extension of Medicaid to age 26 for youth from *any* state, allowing continuing eligibility for youth who experienced foster care in other states and later moved to Virginia.

[92] The survey was completed before implementation of Fostering Futures, so does not describe which services may now be available to youth 18-21 who remain in foster care.

Virginia's areas for growth

It is concerning to see the considerable drop between the share of Virginia youth with Medicaid coverage at ages 19 and 21, from 80 to 64 percent. As the Affordable Care Act[93] extends eligibility for Medicaid until age 26 for young people who age out of foster care, the reasons behind the declining share of covered youth should be explored. **Stakeholders are encouraged to speak with local DSS offices and youth to learn of any barriers to Medicaid coverage, or whether young people are acquiring other health coverage. Further, local DSS offices should collaborate with the Medicaid office to ensure eligibility workers know the requirements for extending Medicaid for these youth, that the young person knows how to reenroll when needed, and to address any worker-related barriers that may exist. Additionally, either administrative or legislative policy could be put into place that allows young people to be reenrolled in Medicaid automatically like other states have done.**

Although Virginia reported that all the specified services related to health and mental health care are available in the state, it's important to look more closely at what populations can receive the services and where they are available. The only service not available statewide is transferring medical records to youth. Interestingly, this seems to be required in Virginia's policy manual (§ 13.16). **Stakeholders should explore why this policy is not being fully implemented across the state.**

Further, **Virginia should track health and mental health outcomes for its youth transitioning from foster care**. Because the NYTD survey doesn't directly measure health or mental health status, as noted above, this would need to be tracked outside of the standard NYTD survey. In addition to documenting what is provided and to whom, to understand the scope and reach of the service array, Virginia should monitor whether these services and programs are having their intended effect and improving ensuring access to and management of health and mental health services (and, ultimately, physical and mental well-being), which could be achieved by using the NYTD Plus.[94]

As noted above, the survey was completed before the state implemented Fostering Futures extended foster care. **It will be important for stakeholders to monitor what health and mental health care services are available to youth in extended foster care as well as those who choose to leave foster care at age 18. Are the services available to both groups? How many youth in each group receive these services?** Are the health and mental health outcomes of transition-age youth affected by differences in localities?

Specific strategies used by other states

Many states shared examples of innovation and success in their physical and mental health care strategies. They primarily fell into the following three categories, described below with examples from select states:

Table 17: Accessing and managing health and mental health care: Highlighting state strategies and approaches

Providing services for transition-age youth
• **California** passed the Mental Health Services Act in 2004, which provides additional funding for mental health services in the state, including services geared toward transition-age youth. Counties are also

[93] At the time of publication, talks of repealing and/or replacing the Affordable Care Act were under debate in the United States Congress.
[94] Dworsky, A., & Crayton, C. National Youth in Transition Database: Instructional Guidebook and Architectural Blueprint. American Public Human Services Association, (2009). Accessed at: https://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/NYTD_Guidebook_032010.pdf

working to access Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) funds to deliver more intensive mental health services to youth in extended foster care. One example is a partnership between Transitional Housing Placement Plus Foster Care (THP+FC) provider, First Place for Youth, and Seneca Family of Agencies, an organization which utilizes county EPSDT funds to offer intensive mental health services to the youth placed with First Place for Youth.

Supporting access to mental and physical health care

- Young adults in **Arizona** who aged out of foster care at age 18 and are under age 26 may qualify for a special health insurance program called Young Adult Transitional Insurance (YATI). YATI health insurance is provided through Arizona's Medicaid program. This insurance gives young people access to low or no-cost medical checkups, prescription medicines, medical specialists, and doctors' visits. In an effort to help community providers and outreach workers ensure young adults who have aged out of foster care in Arizona become aware of the health care benefits available to them, Children's Action Alliance has developed a Health Care Toolkit. See more at: http://azchildren.org/help-for-youth-aging-out-of-foster-care#sthash.WQarB05n.dpuf.

Preparing youth to access physical and mental health care upon exit from foster care

- **Hawaii's** Youth Advisory Council implemented a statewide campaign to inform young people and other child welfare stakeholders about the need to transfer and provide access to medical records.
- **Tennessee** provides trainings for transition-age youth on how to access and manage physical and mental health care.

Policies to support access to and management of health and mental health care

The federal **Affordable Care Act** provides a unique strategy to support smooth and continuous care for young people as they transition out of foster care. Specifically, it allows the extension of Medicaid to age 26 for those who age out of foster care, paralleling the provision that allows young people to stay on their parents' health insurance until age 26. **Virginia's** policy manual (section 13.16) allows extension of Medicaid up to age 26 for young people who were in foster care in *any* state. Virginia policy also encourages the continuation of health services after a young person ages out of foster care. Specifically, it requires that "prior to leaving care, the [local] DSS shall also provide the youth with his health and education records at no cost to the youth if the youth is leaving care due to having reached the age of majority (18)."[95]

States have other policy strategies to support the healthy growth and development of young people in foster care. For example, **California** created a Foster Youth Mental Health Bill of Rights, available at http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/provgovpart/Documents/PharmacyBenefits/QIPFosterCare/YouthFamEd/YFE_Mental_Health_BOR.pdf. Other states have developed working groups to discuss and address the many health issues of young people in foster care. For example, **Rhode Island** created a working group to address health care issues such as ensuring consistent access to needed treatments and services. For more details, see the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities website (http://www.jimcaseyyouth.org/comprehensive-health-care).

Table 18: Additional resources around health and mental health care for transition-age youth

Resource	Available at
Child Welfare: Health Care Needs of Children in Foster	http://greenbook.waysandmeans.house.gov/sites/greenboo

[95] Virginia Department of Social Services Child and Family Services Manual, Chapter 13: Achieving Permanency for Older Youth, § 13.16 (July, 2015). Available at: http://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/dfs/fc/intro_page/guidance_manuals/fc/07_2015/Section_13_Achieving_Permanency_for_Older_Youth.pdf

Resource	Available at
Care and Related Federal Issues	k.waysandmeans.house.gov/files/2012/R42378_gb.pdf.
The Affordable Care Act and Youth Aging Out of Foster Care: New Opportunities and Strategies for Action	http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/The-Affordable-Care-Act-and-Youth-Aging-Out-of-Foster-Care.pdf
Medicaid to 26 for Youth in Foster Care: Key Steps for Advocates	http://childwelfaresparc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Medicaid-to-26-for-Youth-in-Foster-Care.pdf
National FAQ for Young Adults: Medicaid to 26 for Former Foster Youth	http://jlc.org/sites/default/files/publication_pdfs/Coveredtil26%20-%20YOUTH%20FAQ.pdf

6. Establishing permanent relationships with supportive adults

Why it matters

There are three types of permanency that affect young people aging out of foster care: legal (a permanent, legal connection to a family, such as reunification or legal guardianship), physical (a home or place to live), and relational (a relationship or connection with a caring adult). Researchers have found that most young people in foster care believe that **relational permanence** is the most important type. When they have relational permanence, there are adults who provide lifelong support that can help young people transition to adulthood, and may become a legal permanent option.[96]

Permanent relationships of transition-age youth in Virginia

In FFY 2014**, 582 children left foster care in Virginia without legal permanency, representing 22 percent of exits from foster care that year.** However, when youth who had been in foster care at age 17 were asked about connections to supportive adults on the NYTD survey, **94 percent of those in Virginia reported having such a connection at age 19.** This percentage remained similar **at age 21 and did not differ from the U.S. percentages at ages 19 or 21.**[97]

Table 19: NYTD responses around connections to supportive adults

	Virginia	United States
Connection to supportive adults at age 19^	94 percent	91 percent
Connection to supportive adults at age 21°	92 percent	89 percent

*** results have statistically significant difference between Virginia and national rates for that age**
† results have statistically significant difference between 19-year-olds and 21-year olds for the same variable
° results have statistically significant difference between 19-year-olds and 21-year-olds *only* for the same variable and *only* for the nation (not statistically significantly different for Virginia)
^results have *no* statistical difference

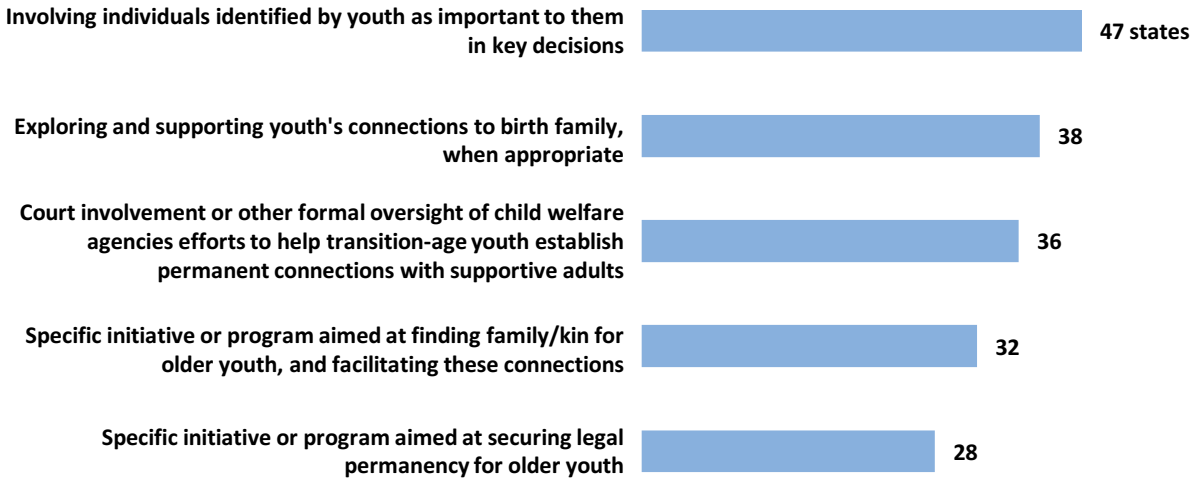
Services and supports for establishing permanent relationships with supportive adults

As shown in Figure 11, the most commonly reported permanency support for transition-age youth through our survey is involving adults important to the youth in key decisions. Least common are specific initiatives or programs aimed at securing legal permanency—with almost one third of states reporting they do not provide

[96] Enhancing Permanency for Youth in Out-of-Home-Care. Children's Bureau, Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013. Available at: https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/focus/enhancing/
[97] Data source: National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Outcomes File Cohort 1 (Age 17 in FY2011) Waves 1, 2, & 3, NDACAN Dataset #202, Revised October, 2016, tabulations by Child Trends.

these services to this population. Understandably, **states are most likely to provide permanency programs and supports to young people still in foster care, with fewer states offering services for youth ages 18 to 21 who are not in care, and even fewer states offering services for those 21 and older who experienced foster care**. Most states reported they provide the services statewide. For more about the number of states providing each service, please see Appendix A.

Figure 11. Services to support establishing permanent relationships with supportive adults*



**Arizona and West Virginia did not reply to multiple questions. Idaho had a conflicting response to one question, which was not included in the count.*

Virginia provides all the services and supports listed in Figure 11 to 18- to 21-year-olds not in foster care and to youth 21 and over with foster care experience.[98] **All of the services are provided statewide.** For additional information on Virginia's survey responses, please see Appendix B.

Virginia's areas of strength

More than nine out of ten 17-year-olds with a foster care history in Virginia surveyed through NYTD report positive connections to adults at ages 19 and 21. Additionally, Virginia's survey shows a promising service array: the Independent Living Coordinator reported that each service or support in Figure 11 is available statewide. Virginia also has a variety of practices and policies that support permanency, such as preference for placement with siblings and kin, as well as concurrent planning, family finding, permanency roundtables, and including youth in permanency planning. This may be a contributing factor in why a high percentage of NYTD respondents in Virginia have positive connections to adults at ages 19 and 21.

Virginia's areas for growth

Although the majority of youth in foster care in Virginia exit to permanency, such exits are relatively low compared with other states. This elevated emancipation rate suggests that there may

[98] The survey was completed before implementation of Fostering Futures, so does not describe which services may now be available to youth 18-21 who remain in foster care.

be a disconnect between the rich service array reported by the state around establishing permanent relationships for transition-age youth and youth achieving legal permanency. **Stakeholders should explore this disparity to understand why Virginia's permanency rates are not higher.** Are families and youth electing not to participate in the services, perhaps due to the majority of youth's views that they have a positive connection to an adult (as reported in NYTD)? Are the services being fully implemented? Is there sufficient funding to provide them as needed?

Virginia should seek information directly from youth themselves, as well as individuals working closely with youth on permanency efforts (e.g., caseworkers, court appointed special advocates (CASAs) or guardians *ad litem* (GALs), adoption and guardianship workers) to better understand the barriers to permanency for older youth. Are attitudes and beliefs across the state supportive of older youth (including those beyond 18) achieving permanency? Are young people feeling incentivized (whether intentional or not) to age out of care rather than pursue permanent, legal relationships?

Additionally, **Virginia could connect with states whose exits to permanency have improved over time** (identified through historical AFCARS data, available through the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count data center: http://datacenter.kidscount.org/), to learn about what has been successful in increasing permanency exits in those states (and what has not).

Specific strategies used by other states

Many states shared examples of innovation and success around relationship-building for transition-age youth. Most of the strategies fall into three main categories, described below with examples from select states:

Table 20: Establishing permanent relationships with supportive adults: Highlighting state strategies and approaches

Empowering youth during transition planning
• In **Hawai'i,** the Makua Ana Youth Circle Program gives current and former foster youth the opportunity to celebrate their emancipation from foster care and to assist them in planning for their independence by bringing together family and community supports.[99]
• **Colorado** provides Youth-Centered Permanency Round Tables throughout the state with young people who are in care, including young people who remain in care after age 18. The state is also testing a new Community Round Table process for youth receiving services through Runaway and Homeless Youth Providers in five communities as part of the state's Youth At Risk of Homelessness grant (Pathways to Success) to help connect youth to permanent adults and communities.
Reaching out to extended family and ensuring families are part of the planning process through initiatives like Family Finding and Permanency Round Tables
• In **New Hampshire,** the child welfare agency uses the Casey Family Services Best tool[100] to determine the solidity of a young person's connection to a caring adult. They also use the Foster Club Permanency Pact[101] to identify the level of commitment that the members of a youth's support network are willing to provide after the transition from care.

[99] Makua Ana Youth Circle Program. Epic O'hana. Available at: http://www.epicohana.info/youthcircle.aspx
[100] Belonging and Emotional Security Tool (BEST). Annie E. Casey Foundation, (2009). Available at: http://calswec.berkeley.edu/files/uploads/pdf/CalSWEC/08h_PP_Casey_Best_v2.1.pdf
[101] Permanency Pact. FosterClub. Available at: https://www.fosterclub.com/_transition/article/permanency-pact

Mentoring programs

- Several states described mentoring programs, including **Michigan, Missouri, and New Mexico.**
- **North Carolina** uses Chafee funds to help establish and maintain permanent relationships with supportive adults such as mentors, coaches, and family members who are involved in the youth's transition by using funds to support activities between the youth and the supportive adults.

Policies to support permanent relationships with supportive adults

Both state and federal policies support relationship building in various ways. Three common strategies have emerged, each with federal support driving them at the state level.

1. **Preference for placement with kin**: Kin and fictive kin (close friends with a family-like relationship) can be valuable placement resources. Generally, states use both formal and informal processes to place youth with kin—sometimes while in the custody of the child welfare agency, and other times using a kinship placement to keep the youth from entering foster care. When kinship placements are safe and appropriate, youth who are placed with kin can more easily maintain strong family connections and reduce or eliminate the trauma of entry into foster care.[102] Generally, policies that state a preference for placement with kin provide a list of placement preferences when a youth must be removed from the home. States may also provide definitions of "kin" or "relative" in their policies and any required criteria for placement.

   Most states (49), **including Virginia,** have laws or policies that give a stated preference for placement with kin when safe and appropriate. In addition, **Virginia** does offer some financial assistance and/or supports for kin placements; however, the level varies, based upon whether arrangements are formal or informal. Information is available here: http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/fc/index.cgi.

2. **Guardianship assistance programs**: Guardianship assistance programs (GAP), also known as subsidized guardianship, can facilitate permanency for youth with grandparents, other relatives, and in some states close family friends (known as fictive kin). In 2008, the **Fostering Connections Act** gave all states the option to use federal funds to help finance guardianship assistance programs. To qualify for federal GAP, an eligible youth must have been in foster care with a relative providing the care for at least 6 months, and reunification with both their parents and adoption need to have been ruled out as permanency options.

   State policies may explain the purpose of the guardianship assistance program, as well as outline participation criteria, funding amounts, specific orders that a court must enter to finalize the guardianship, and options for later modification of the guardianship. Thirty-one states currently use federal money to support GAP, as allowed through the Fostering Connections Act. **Virginia** is **not** one of those states. A web search showed that **Virginia** is not currently offering any subsidy to guardians post-permanency using state funds and has not passed any legislation implementing GAP.

[102] Children in Kinship Care Experience Improved Placement Stability, Higher Levels of Permanency, and Decreased Behavioral Problems: Findings from the Literature. Child Focus. Available at: http://grandfamilies.org/Portals/0/Kinship percent20Outcomes percent20Review percent20v4.pdf

3. **Preference for placement with siblings**: Sibling relationships can be very important to children and youth who are in foster care. Being placed with siblings and/or having regular visits with siblings can help children and youth remain connected to their families and communities, and be a source of stability during the trauma of removal from their homes. The **Fostering Connections Act** requires child welfare agencies to make reasonable efforts to maintain sibling connections when possible and safe. Twenty-six states, **including Virginia**, have state laws creating a preference for placing a child with his or her siblings when removal from the home is necessary.

Table 21: Additional resources around establishing permanent relationships with supportive adults

Resource	Available at
Enhancing Permanency for Youth in Out of Home Care	https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/enhancing.pdf
Kinship care overview and resources	https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/outofhome/kinship/
Grandfamilies' online database of laws related to kinship care and issues and corresponding analysis	http://www.grandfamilies.org/
Making it Work: Using the Guardianship Assistance Program to Close the Permanency Gap for Children in Foster Care	http://grandfamilies.org/Portals/0/Making%20it%20Work%20-%20GAP%20report%202012.pdf.
Five Key Questions to Assess the Fiscal Impact of the Guardianship Assistance Program	http://grandfamilies.org/Portals/0/documents/Resources/Subsidized%20Guardianship%20Resources/five-key-questions-to-assess-the-fiscal-impact-of-the-guardianship-assistance-program.pdf.
Going Beyond Recruitment for Older Youth: Increasing Your System's Capacity to Respond to Prospective Parents and Prepare Older Youth for Adoption	http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCDR-org/going-beyond-recruitment-for-older-youth.pdf

Section 4: Youth Engagement

The previous section described specific services and supports around several critical outcome areas for transition-age youth. Below, we discuss information gleaned from our research about youth engagement strategies used by states to help young people transition successfully from foster care to adulthood, with a focus on transition plans, youth input and approval for materials, and youth participation in planning and developing the service array.

Why it matters

Youth engagement is a key element to a successful practice or policy for young people.[103] The input that young people provide to a program, service, or their own goals and plans allows them to more clearly invest in their future and the future of other youth. By engaging youth in the design and development of practices and policies, states can tailor supports to fit the needs of their young people. On our survey, states reported several different ways that they engage transition-age youth, both in program and policy development and in planning for their own futures.

Transition plans

One way to engage transition-age youth is through **transition plans.** A transition plan is created to facilitate a conversation about, and document, what will happen once a young person ages out of foster care, and what plans are in place to prepare the young person for that transition. For example, it may outline steps that a young person needs to take to secure housing, maintain schooling, or find a job. Incorporating young people into creating their own plans is a very important way to make sure the plan aligns with their own interests and goals. Additionally, it can help build their capacity to plan for their own futures, and ensure that young people understand what steps need to be taken to support various goals, and in what timeframes.

Recent federal legislation, the **Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act,** requires a role for foster children age 14 and older in the development of their own case plan and transition planning for a successful adulthood. Under the Act, youth in foster care ages 14 and older must be consulted in the development of their own case plan, including selecting two trusted adults to be part of the permanency planning team (though the state has the ability to reject an individual selected if there is good reason to believe they would not act in the best interest of the child), and must receive a list of their rights while in foster care regarding education, health, visitation, court participation, and other matters. Youth ages 14 and older must also receive a free annual credit report and help resolving any inaccuracies.[104, 105]

Because the federal legislation is so new, it is unclear exactly how states will implement it in their policies or change their existing policies to reflect the new federal requirement. However, several states already had such services and policies in place. For example:

- In **Hawaii,** the E Makua Ana Youth Circle Program serves current and former foster youth in Hawaii who are transitioning out of the foster care system, helping them develop individualized, outcome-driven transition plans.
- Some states, **such as California, Iowa, and Minnesota**, provide special trainings for staff who are responsible for helping young people develop their transition plans.

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[103] Charting a Better Future for Transitioning Foster Youth: Report from a National Summit on the Fostering Connections to Success Act. American Bar Association. 2010. Available at: http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publications/center_on_children_and_the_law/youth_at_risk/transitioning_foster_youth_report.authcheckdam.pdf

[104] Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014, P.L. 113-183/H.R. 4980. Available at: https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/4980/text

[105] Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014. National Conference of State Legislatures. Available at: http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/preventing-sex-trafficking-and-strengthening-families-act-of-2014.aspx

Virginia has a strong transition planning process in place. According to the survey, the state has specialized training for those working with this population for child welfare staff and foster parents, in at least some parts of the state. Youth, foster care caseworkers, the Independent Living Coordinator, GALs, CASA workers, foster parents or group home staff, biological relatives or fictive kin, and health care workers/providers/therapists are all required to be invited to participate in the development of a transition plan, in addition to any other individual the youth invites. Foster care supervisors review the transition plans to ensure their quality. **One strategy for strengthening transition planning and youth engagement Virginia could consider is to include standardized training across the state to all foster care workers and foster parents about the unique needs of transition-age youth.**

Youth input and approval for materials

Another strategy is incorporating youth input and approval in materials used with transition-age youth. On our survey, we asked states if they use any materials designed with youth input and/or approval to provide information to transition-age youth about the major topics described above (e.g., post-secondary education, financial capability).

Virginia reported youth input and/or approval for materials under the following areas: (1) post-secondary education, (2) employment and career development, (3) accessing and managing health and mental health care, and (4) establishing permanent relationships with supportive adults. The state also reported youth input in the "Guide for Older Youth In and Aging Out of Foster Care in Virginia." The two categories not selected by Virginia as having youth input in and/or approval of materials designed to provide information to transition-age youth, were: (1) financial planning, and (2) securing safe, stable, and affordable housing.

Youth participation in planning and developing service array

In addition to planning for their own futures (i.e., transition plans), states frequently incorporate the youth voice into policy and practice planning for this population. Thirty-nine states reported on our survey that young people are or were a part of developing or designing the states' services and supports. Most frequently, states reported youth involvement in the development or design of **post-secondary education services** (33 states), and least frequently in developing or designing services to promote financial capabilities (23 states).

Virginia reported youth participation in the development and/or design of services/supports in the following areas: (1) post-secondary education and (2) establishing permanent relationships with supportive adults. The state also reported that Project LIFE, a private contractor with VDSS, worked with young people statewide.

Strategies for supporting youth engagement

States shared strategies for engaging young people in policy and practice improvements that may be helpful for Virginia, including:

Table 22: Youth engagement: Highlighting state strategies and approaches

Creating and supporting youth advisory boards or councils, comprising current or former foster youth

- In **Connecticut,** there are six Regional Youth Advisory Boards and one Statewide Youth Advisory Board. Through these boards, youth make recommendations for new policies, suggest revisions of current policies, and are asked to provide feedback on policies that affect them. Members were actively involved with the review of the newly revised Adolescent Services Policy and Practice guide, and many of their recommendations were included.
- In **Missouri,** the State Youth Advisory Board meets quarterly and has been in place since 1992, routinely providing input on policies pertaining to youth. They have looked at materials such as the NYTD survey and the transition plan, providing ideas for inclusion and thoughts on format. The Board has also provided input on processes such as the clothing voucher and worker visitation.

Virginia did not mention any such group on its survey. **The state may wish to create a similar board or council to encourage and facilitate the involvement of transition-age youth in policy planning and document development.**

Soliciting input from young people on specific policies or practices

- In **Colorado,** youth and young adults who have participated in the Pathways to Success grant have provided guidance on the programs and services they need in each of the key outcome areas of Permanency, Health and Wellness, Housing, Education, and, Employment. The Pathways grant engages a group of young people who call themselves "The Masterminds" to provide guidance to the grant. In addition, one young person is a permanent member of the grant's project management team. Young people now have positions on Colorado's Child Welfare Leadership Team and on the Supreme Court's Court Improvement Committee. Youth have been included on the hiring committees for all major positions in the Youth Services Unit at the Division of Child Welfare.
- In **New Hampshire,** the state's youth advisory board came up with the idea for their tuition waiver program. They worked with a legislator to craft the language of the bill and then testified on its behalf, securing successful passage.

In Virginia, the state reported that youth played a role in designing specific policies facilitated by a private contractor. **We recommend Virginia include the voice of transition-age youth within its own agency as well.**

Creating tools and materials for other foster youth

- **Louisiana's** Youth Leadership Advisory Council (LYLAC) assisted with the design of fliers relevant to youth who are aging out of foster care, such as a flier about the Education and Training Voucher program.
- In **New Jersey,** the new website for the youth advisory board, containing information and resources for current and former foster youth, was informed and designed by youth (www.njyrs.org). Youth also participated in and helped create two videos on education and keeping their cases open (http://www.njyrs.org/videos).

In Virginia, youth provided input on a "Guide for Older Youth In and Aging Out of Foster Care in Virginia." **We recommend including youth voices in any documents being created to support implementation of the new Fostering Futures extended foster care program.**

Table 22: Youth engagement: Highlighting state strategies and approaches

Presenting at conferences or training others about being in foster care as an adolescent

- The Fostering Pathways to Success conference is an annual event co-sponsored with the **Ohio** Department of Job and family Services and Ohio Reach to help emancipated youth and youth transitioning out of foster care who are between the ages of 14 and 21 successfully prepare for vocational training or college, work, healthy relationships, and independent living. The conference offers dynamic keynote speakers; workshops for both youth and adult professionals in the field; apprenticeship demonstrations, and various youth kiosks such as university and college display tables, Medicaid sign up, ETV, Nationwide Children's Hospital Fostering Connections Clinic, and shopping for professional dress attire in the "Suits for Success" room. There are workshops that are led by members of the Youth Advisory Boards that are co-facilitated by adult professionals who work with youth in transition.
- The **Pennsylvania** Child Welfare Resource Center, which is funded by the PA Department of Human Services, hires former foster youth who serve as youth ambassadors. The Youth Ambassadors participate in various state-level meetings related to policy and practice and provide training to caseworkers, foster parents, and others at various training venues, including meetings and conferences.
- **Hawai'i's** EPIC's E Makua Ana Youth Circle Program serves current and former foster youth in Hawai'i who are transitioning out of the foster care system, providing a group process for youth to celebrate their emancipation from foster care and to assist them in planning for their independence. http://www.epicohana.info/youthcircle.aspx

Table 23: Additional resources around youth engagement

Resource	Available at
Working with Youth to Develop a Transition Plan	https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/transitional_plan.pdf.
FosterClub Transition Toolkit	https://www.fosterclub.com/_transition/article/transition-toolkit
Authentic Youth Engagement: Featured Resources	http://www.aecf.org/work/child-welfare/jim-casey-youth-opportunities-initiative/areas-of-expertise/authentic-youth-engagement?gclid=CjwKEAiAm8nCBRD7xLj-2aWFyz8SJAAQNalaYhfeNYtxIxCmKsUwvfl5hesDeDAnS_C4zMvKliEa-hoC8Yjw_wcB
Seen, Heard, and Engaged: Children in Dependence Court Hearings	http://www.ncjfcj.org/sites/default/files/CIC_FINAL.pdf.
Achieving Authentic Youth Engagement: Core Values & Guiding Principles	http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/jcyoi-AchievingAuthenticYouthEngagement-2000.pdf

Section 5: Key Takeaways for Virginia

This report details areas in which stakeholders and state leaders can work to strengthen specific supports and services. In this section, we reiterate several overarching recommendations to guide your work.

Invest time and energy in the implementation of Fostering Futures

Extending foster care is a big investment for Virginia and it is important to do it well, especially since research has shown that young people who remain in care to age 21 are less likely to experience homelessness or become pregnant before age 21, and are more likely to be employed and attend college compared to those who leave care at age 18.[106, 107, 108] We encourage state stakeholders to monitor which young people, from which counties and with what experiences, are choosing to participate in extended care. Evaluate whether targeted outreach to specific counties or groups of young people is needed. Track how young people are doing—those in extended foster care as well as those who do not opt to participate. Are they using the same services? Are they achieving the same outcomes? Determine whether the service array needs to change with this new program in place. Internal data trackers, external evaluators, or both could be used to gather this vital data. Use the information you gather in messaging around programmatic improvements, benefits to the youth, and when making the case for including it in state law and advocating for funding that is consistent and appropriate.

Take a deep dive into the existing service array

Our survey uncovered a real strength for Virginia: a wide variety of services are available for transition-age youth in at least some areas of the state. The next step is to learn about where services are available and how they are implemented. Are they all located in one county, or spread more widely across the state? Which young people are using the services? Does everyone have access to them, or are there varied criteria around who can participate? Are research-informed supports and services being used? With that knowledge, stakeholders can determine whether and how to expand services statewide or support the locations that already provide each service.

Map areas of innovation in the state

From the survey, we see that there are cross-county differences in policies and practices. A comprehensive map of what is available for transition-age youth in each county in Virginia could help state leaders understand where additional investments need to be made. It may also help counties build stronger networks with each other—building on successes and strategizing ways to overcome challenges. Child Trends is happy to discuss with Virginia ways we could be helpful in capturing and describing local variation across the state, as we have

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[106] Courtney, M.E., Dworsky, A., Cusick, G.R., Havlicek, J. Perez, A., Keller, T. Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 21. Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, (2007). Available at: http://www-news.uchicago.edu/releases/07/pdf/071212.foster.study.pdf

[107] Dworsky, A., & Courtney, M.E. Assessing the Impact of Extending Care beyond Age 18 on Homelessness: Emerging Findings from the Midwest Study. Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, (2010). Available at: http://www.chapinhall.org/research/brief/assessing-impact-extending-care-beyond-age-18-homelessness-emerging-findings-midwest

[108] Dworsky, A. & Courtney, M. E. Does Extending Foster Care beyond Age 18 Promote Post-secondary Educational Attainment? Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, (2010). Available at: http://www.chapinhall.org/research/brief/does-extending-foster-care-beyond-age-18-promote-postsecondary-educational-attainment

experience working with a number of Virginia's counties, as well as other county-administered states.

Understand whether and how research-based services are being used

As public policy requirements shift to emphasize funding programs and practices that we know work for recipients, Virginia should prioritize implementing research-supported services. In most of the topic areas, Virginia's survey respondent was not aware of whether research-informed services were being used in the state. This may be due to the varied service array across the state or to local initiatives unknown to state-level staff.

Having a better understanding of whether current services have a research base, and how research can be used to inform program and policy development, is a critical step for Virginia stakeholders developing and administering programs that help young people succeed. In Appendix C of this report, we provide additional information about research-supported services and supports as gleaned through our survey.

Connect with other states

As Virginia works to improve policies and practices for transition-age youth, stakeholders may benefit from connecting with and learning from similarly situated states. Peer learning can help the state understand how to bring in additional services or make the services available statewide, or how to unify a county-administered system. Virginia may also benefit by reaching out to states with specific innovations to discuss strengths and challenges, as well as strategies for bringing successful programs to Virginia. Child Trends is happy to help connect Virginia staff to the Independent Living Coordinator in states of interest.

Overall, there is much work to be done for this population in Virginia and across the county. States are paying attention to youth aging out of care, and have designed policies, programs, and services to aid them as they transition to adulthood. We hope this report will prove useful in Virginia's efforts to support this vulnerable population.

Appendices

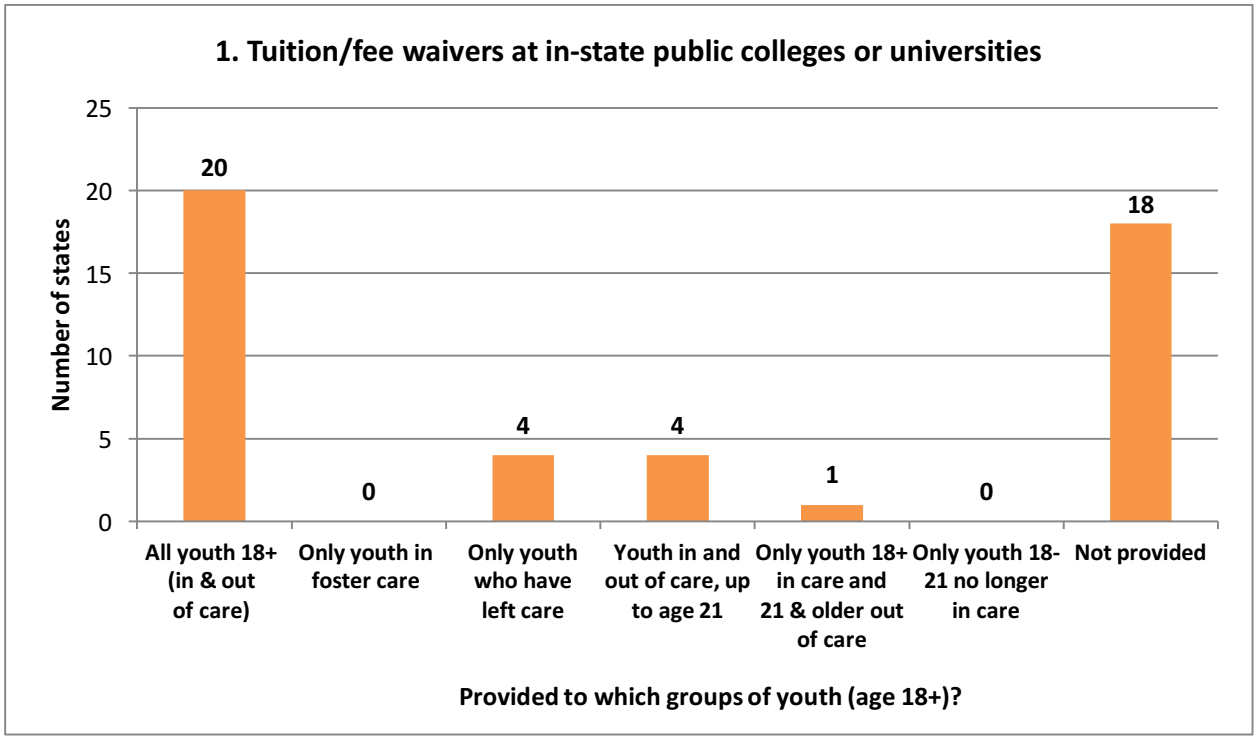
A. Detailed survey data for the six major domains

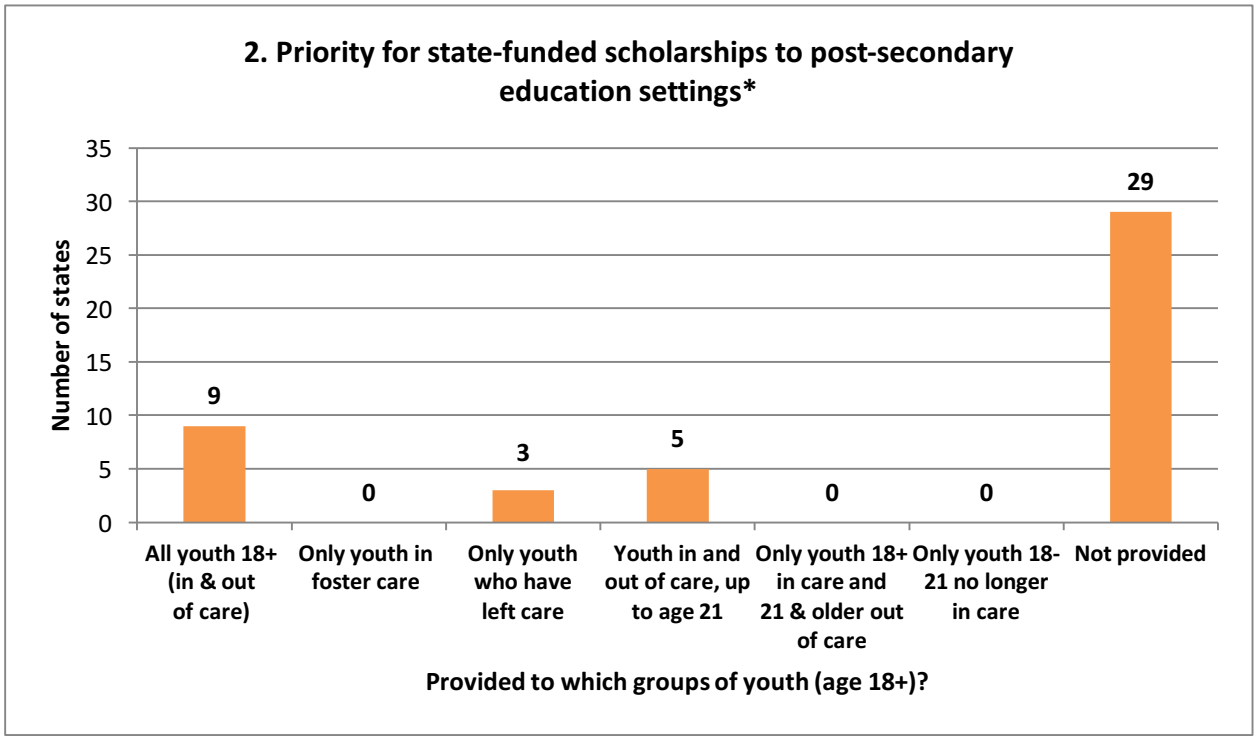
B. Services and supports for transition-age youth provided in Virginia

C. A closer look at research-based programs or practices

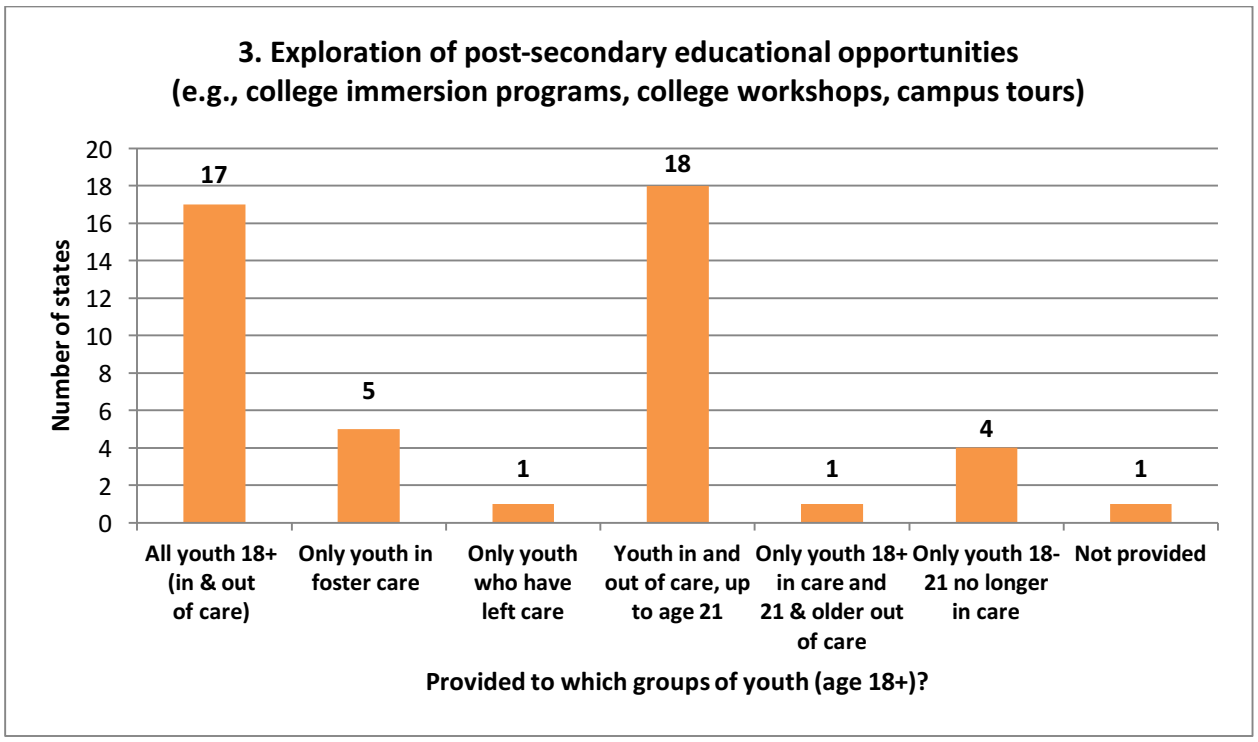
Appendix A: Detailed survey data for the six major domains

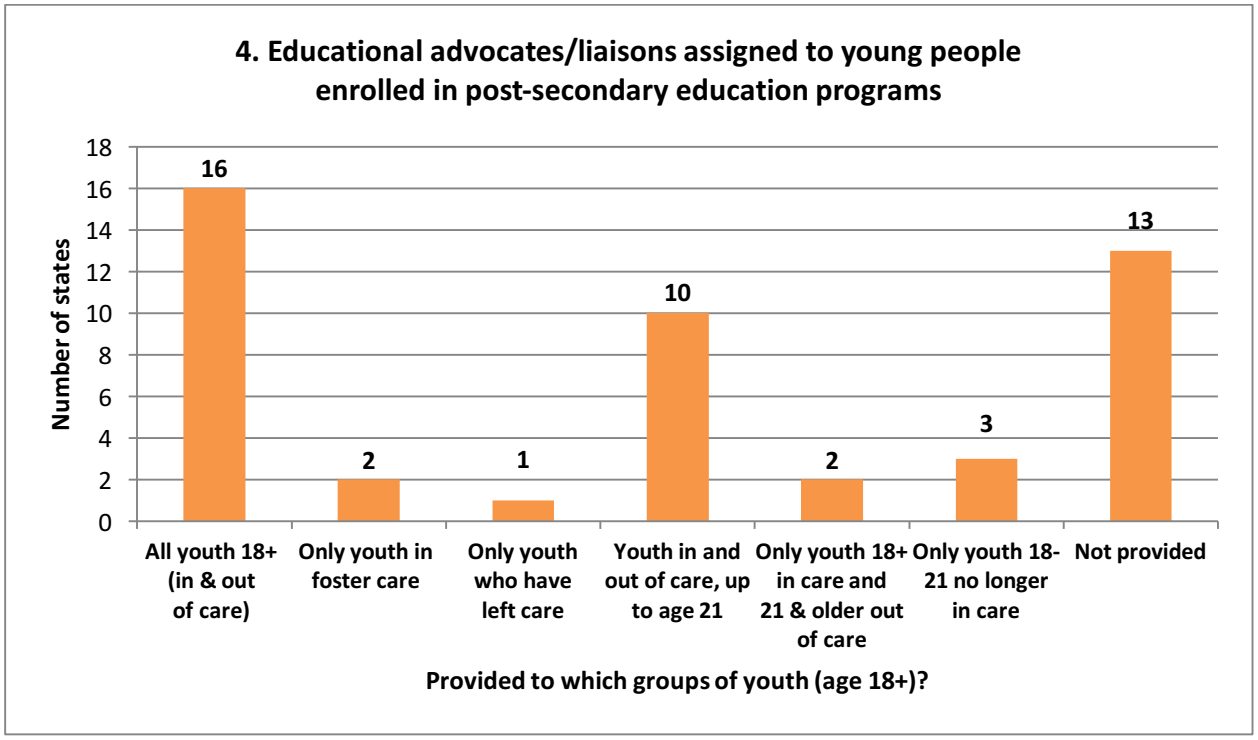
Post-secondary education

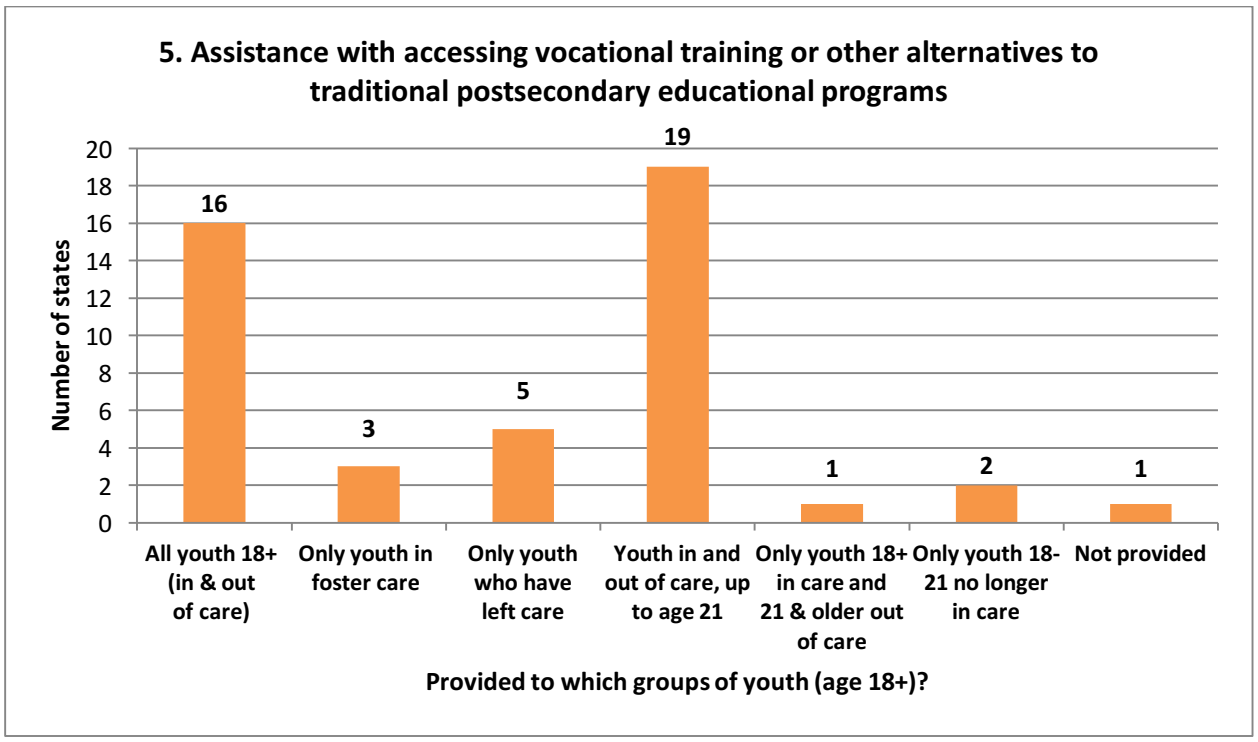




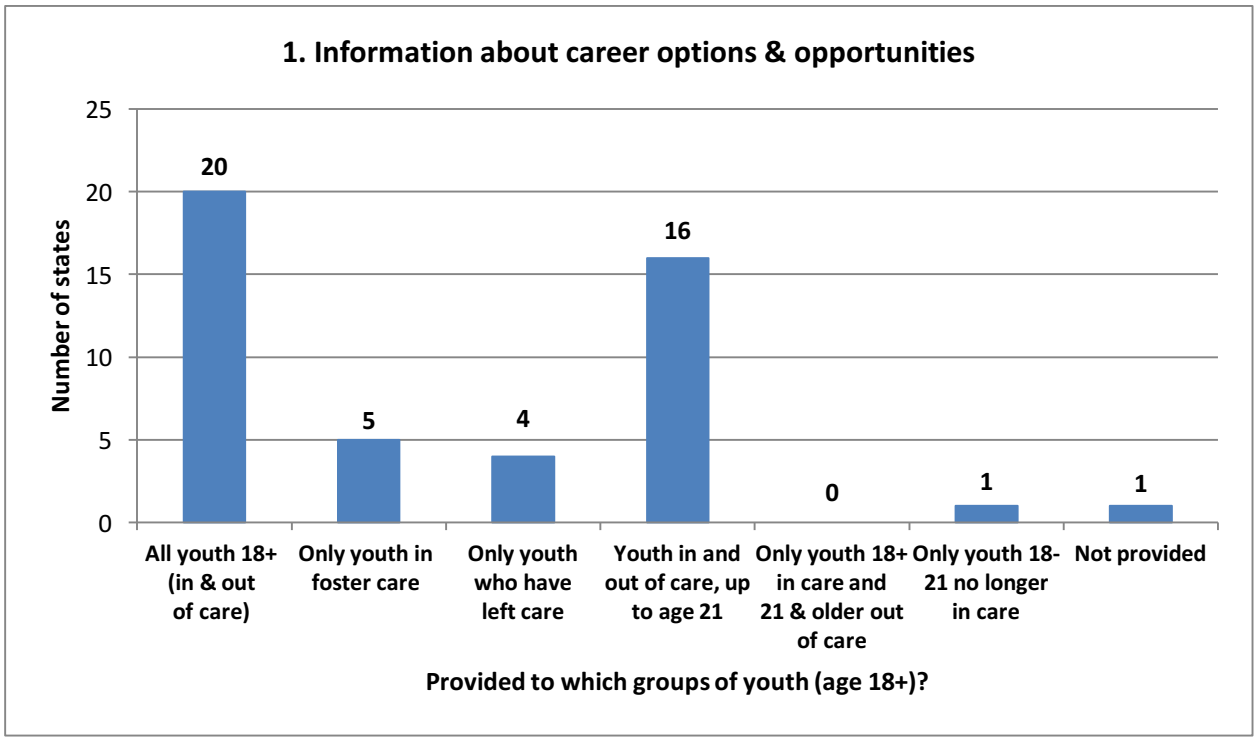
*One state did not respond to this part of the question.

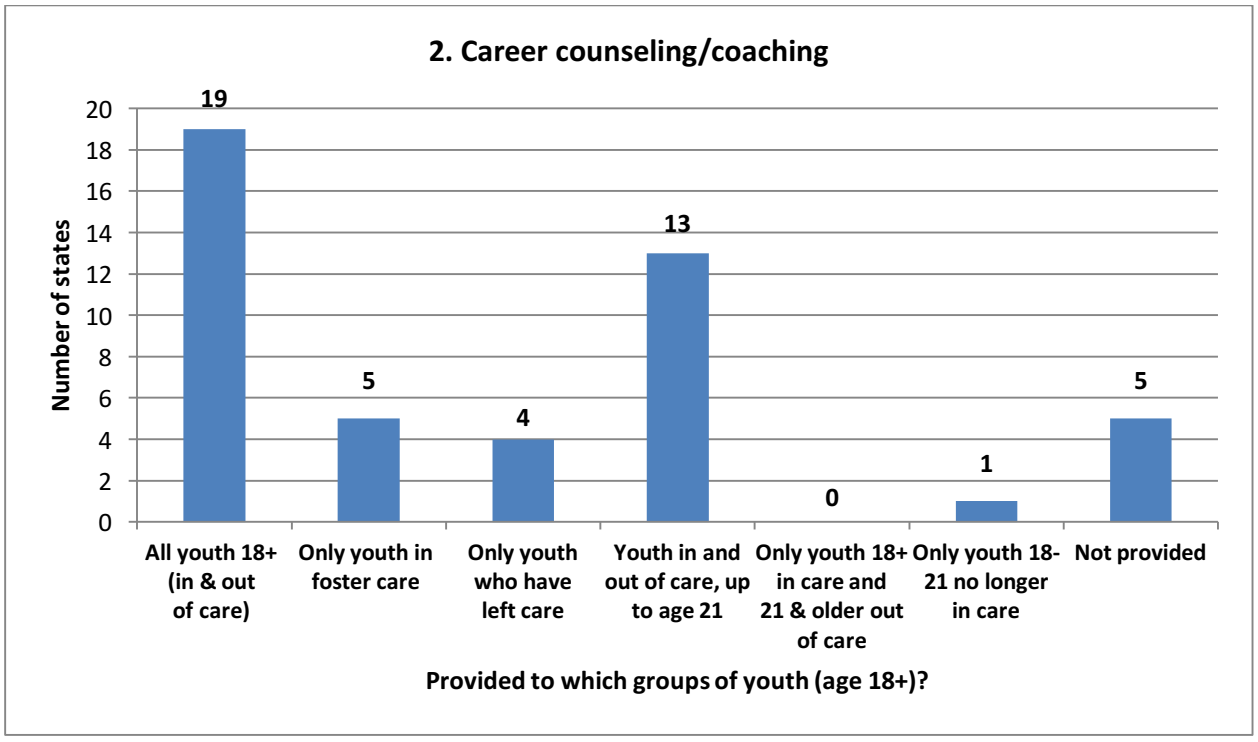

3. Exploration of post-secondary educational opportunities
(e.g., college immersion programs, college workshops, campus tours)
Number of states
20
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
17
5
1
18
1
4
1
All youth 18+ (in & out of care)
Only youth in foster care
Only youth who have left care
Youth in and out of care, up to age 21
Only youth 18+ in care and 21 & older out of care
Only youth 18-21 no longer in care
Not provided
Provided to which groups of youth (age 18+)?

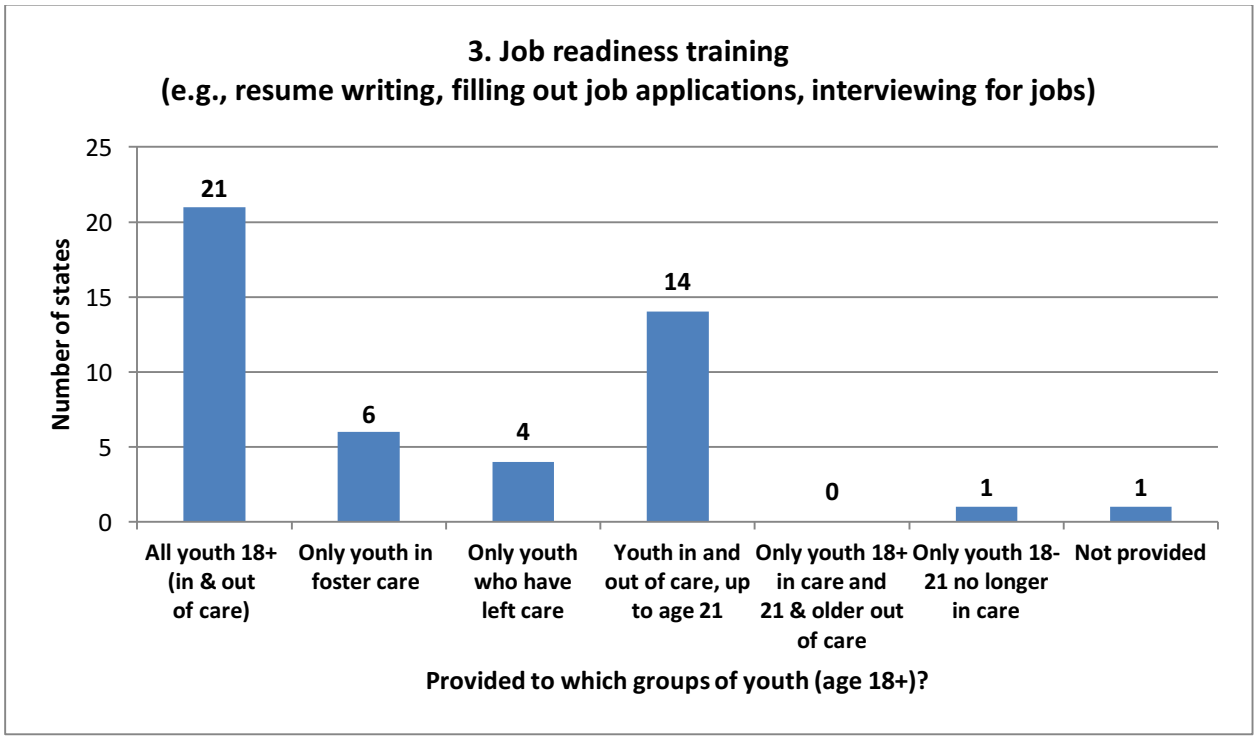

4. Educational advocates/liaisons assigned to young people
enrolled in post-secondary education programs
Number of states
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
16
2
1
10
2
3
13
All youth 18+ (in & out of care)
Only youth in foster care
Only youth who have left care
Youth in and out of care, up to age 21
Only youth 18+ in care and 21 & older out of care
Only youth 18-21 no longer in care
Not provided
Provided to which groups of youth (age 18+)?

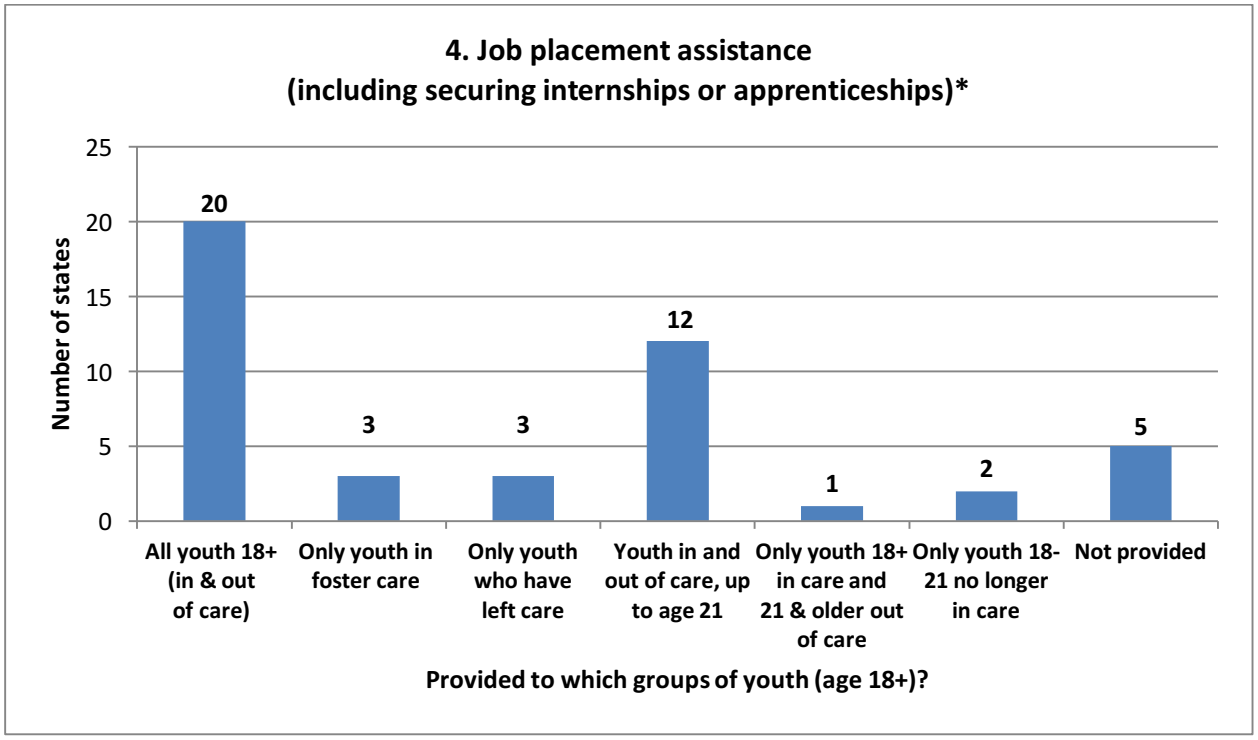

5. Assistance with accessing vocational training or other alternatives to traditional postsecondary educational programs
Number of states
20
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
16
3
5
19
1
2
1
All youth 18+ (in & out of care)
Only youth in foster care
Only youth who have left care
Youth in and out of care, up to age 21
Only youth 18+ in care and 21 & older out of care
Only youth 18-21 no longer in care
Not provided
Provided to which groups of youth (age 18+)?

Employment and career development

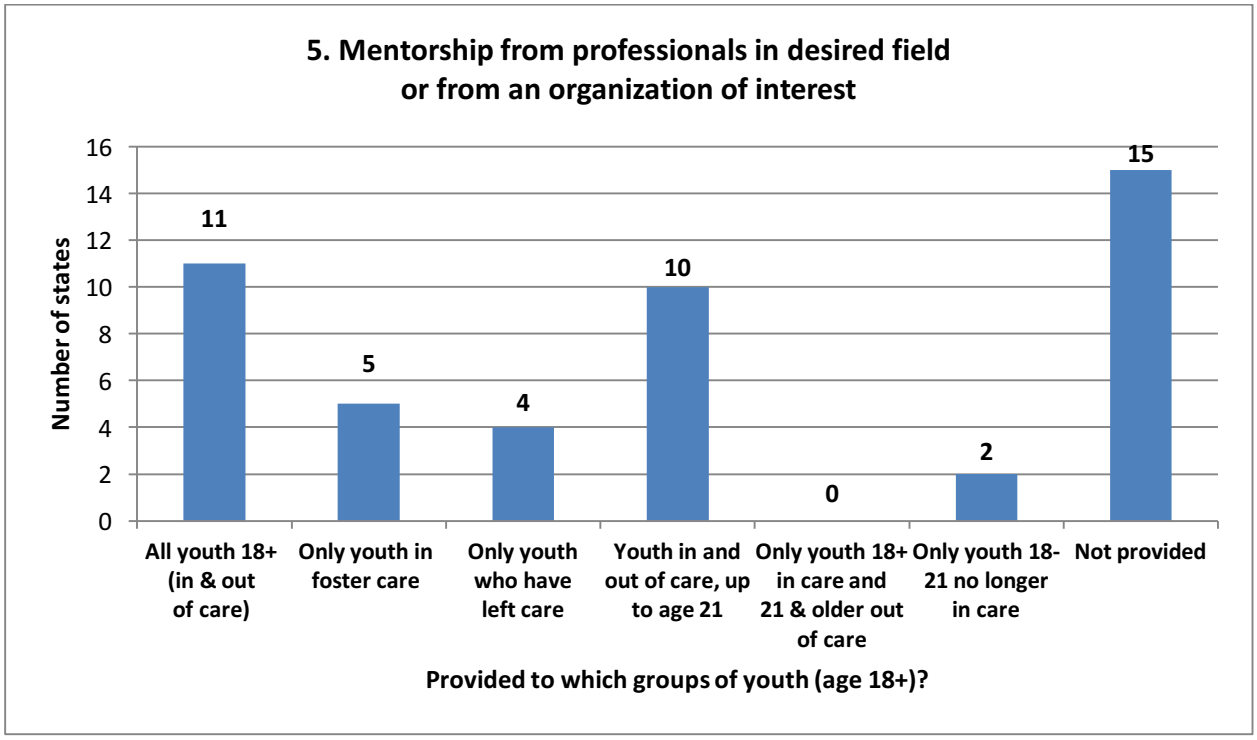




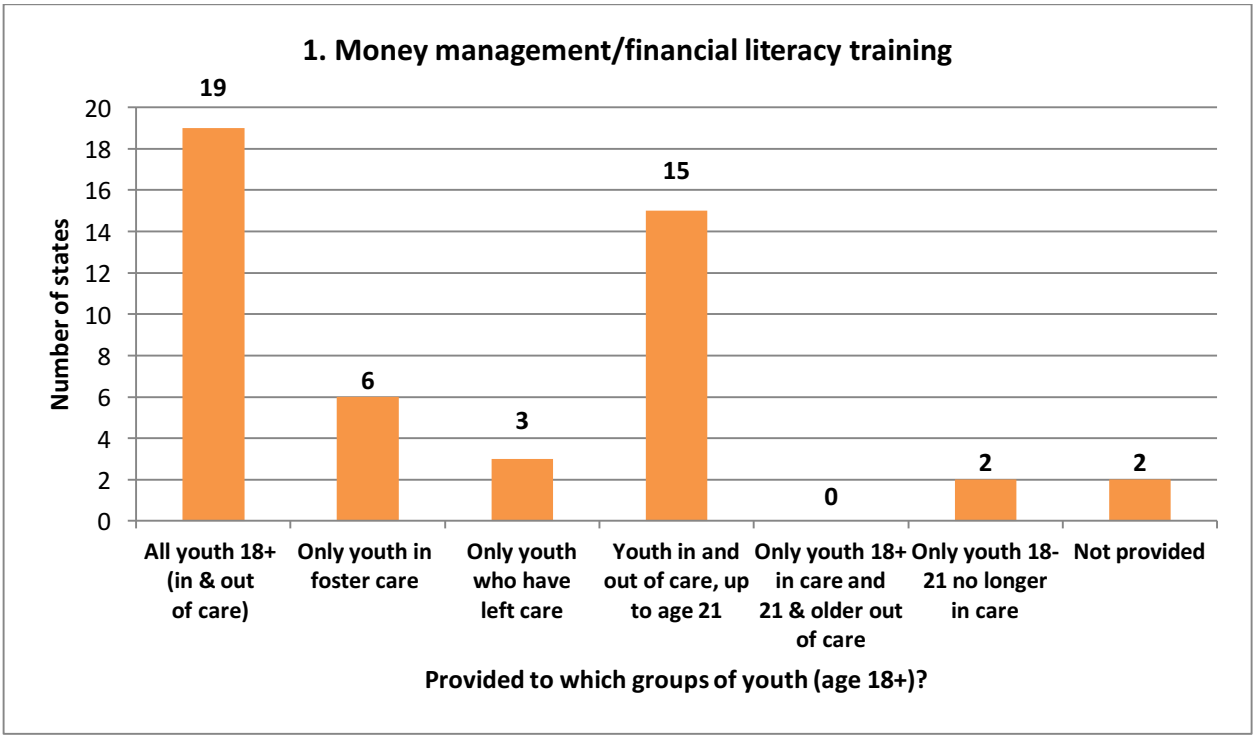


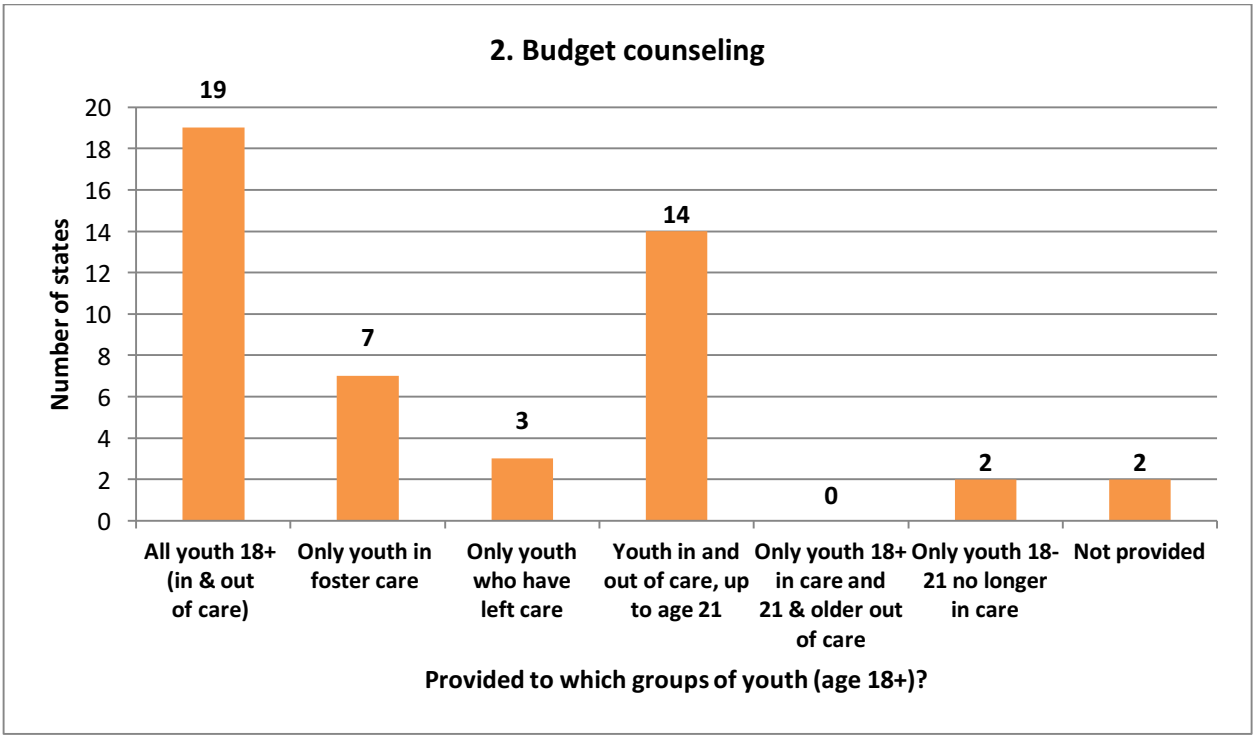


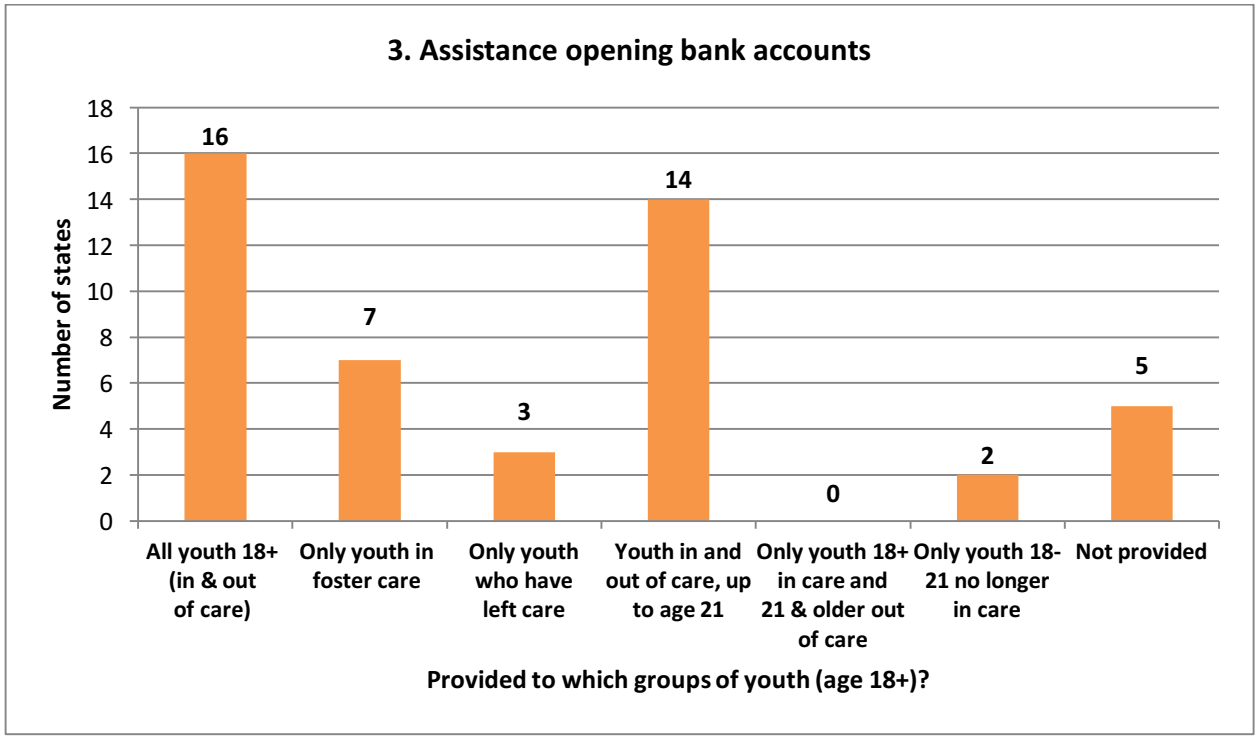
* One state did not respond to this part of the question.

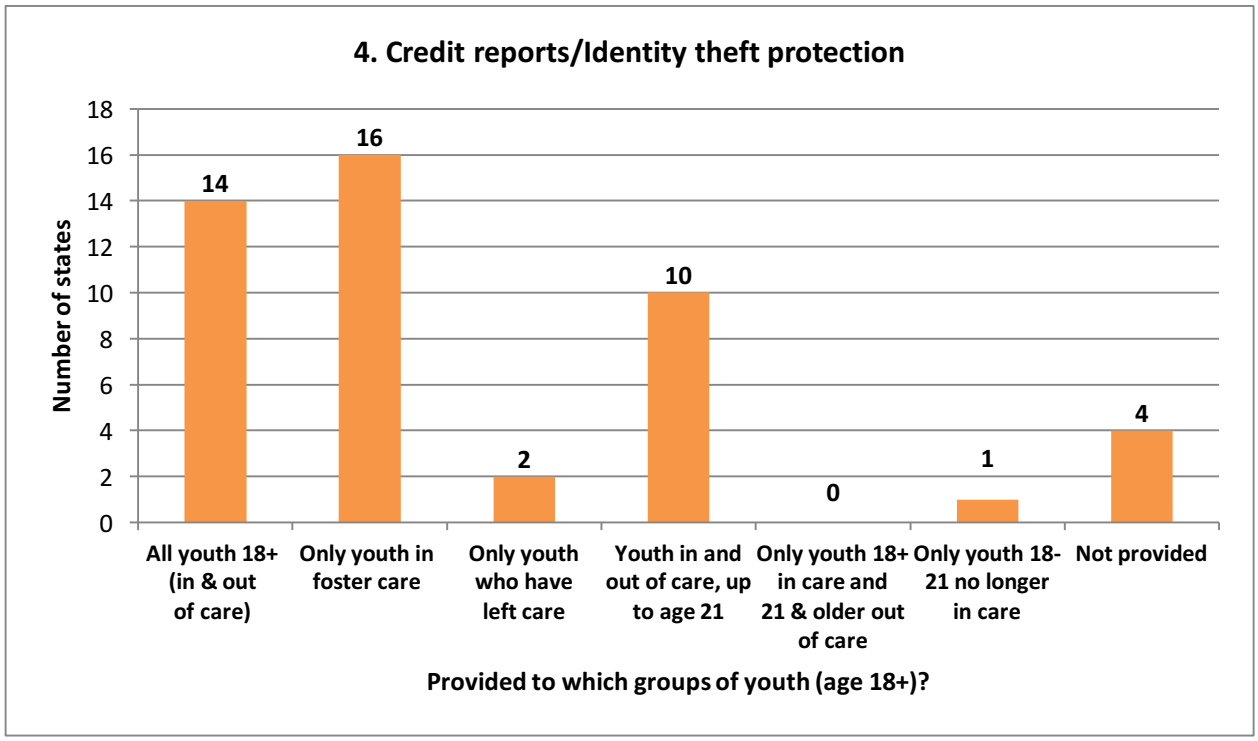

5. Mentorship from professionals in desired field or from an organization of interest
Number of states
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
11
5
4
10
0
2
15
All youth 18+ (in & out of care)
Only youth in foster care
Only youth who have left care
Youth in and out of care, up to age 21
Only youth 18+ in care and 21 & older out of care
Only youth 18-21 no longer in care
Not provided
Provided to which groups of youth (age 18+)?

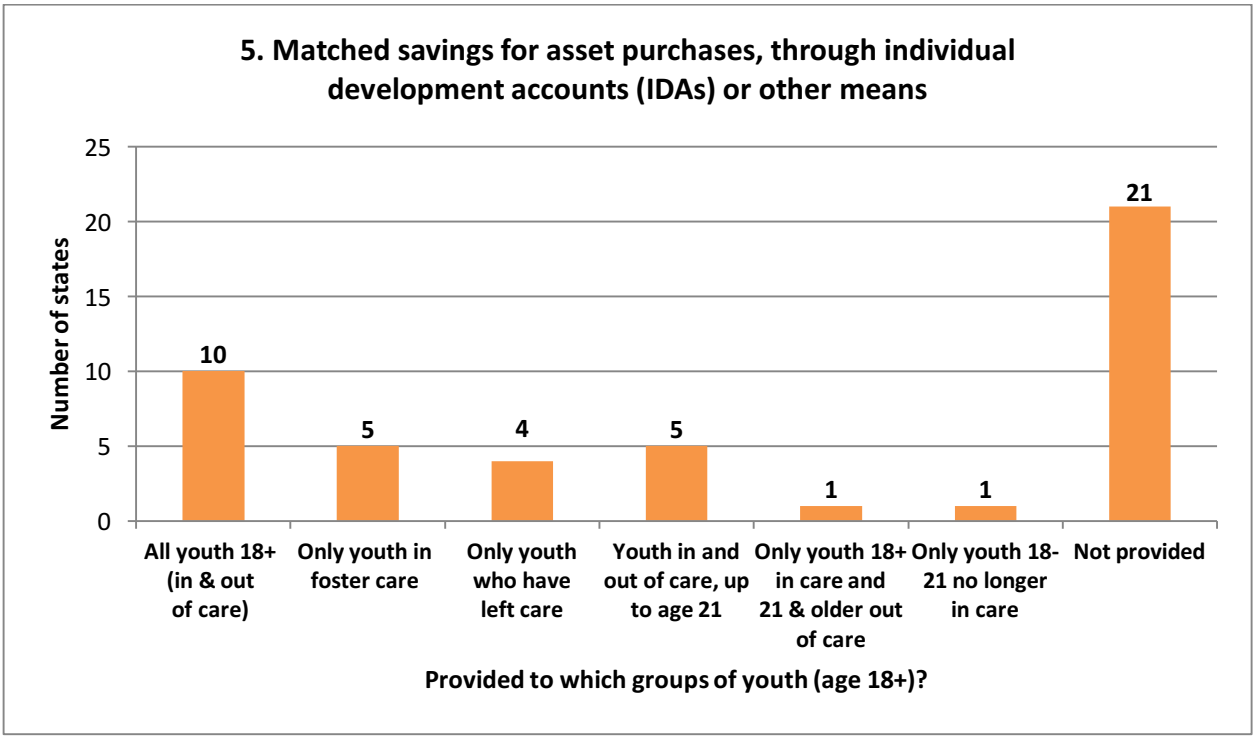
Financial capability



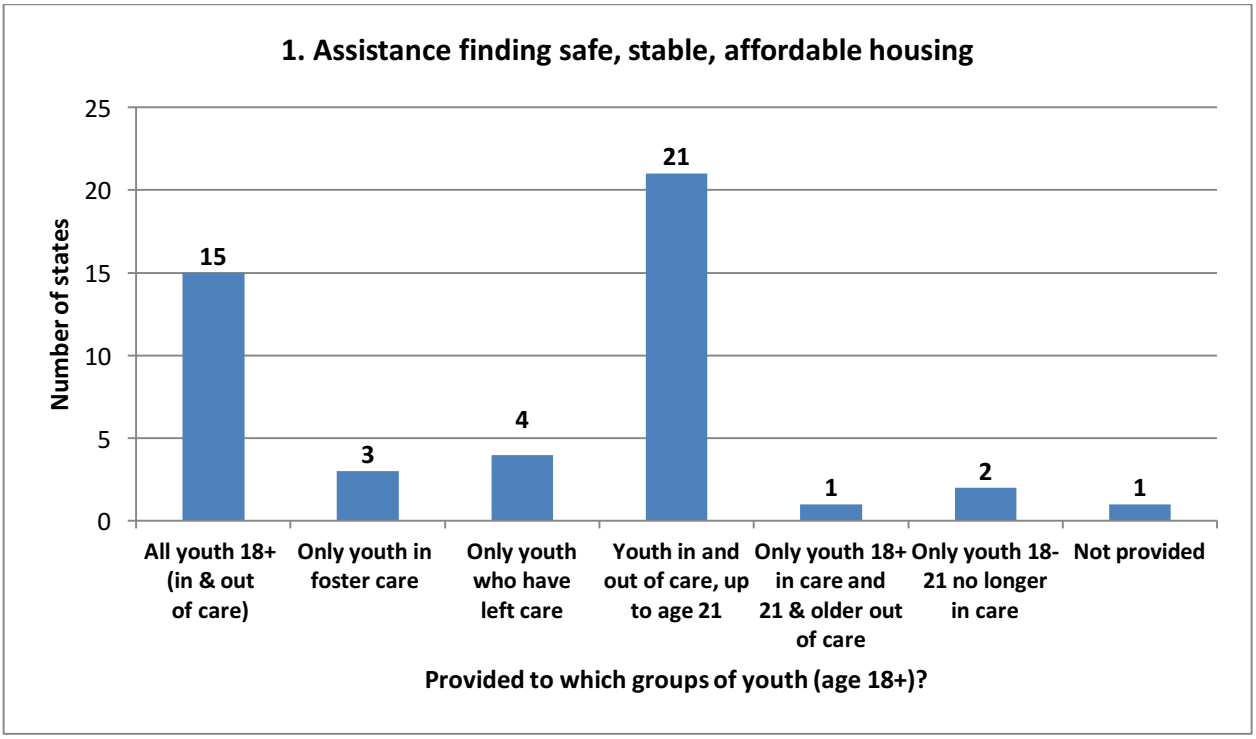


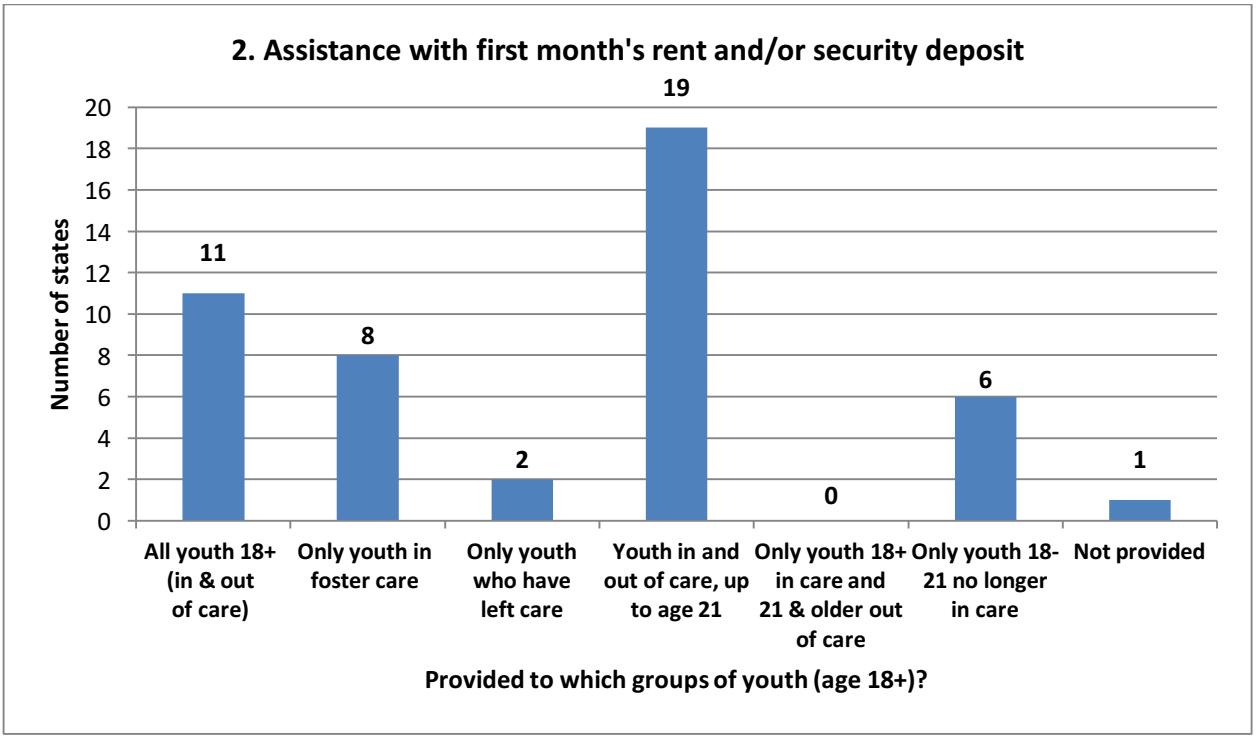

3. Assistance opening bank accounts
Number of states
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
16
7
3
14
0
2
5
All youth 18+ (in & out of care)
Only youth in foster care
Only youth who have left care
Youth in and out of care, up to age 21
Only youth 18+ in care and 21 & older out of care
Only youth 18-21 no longer in care
Not provided
Provided to which groups of youth (age 18+)?

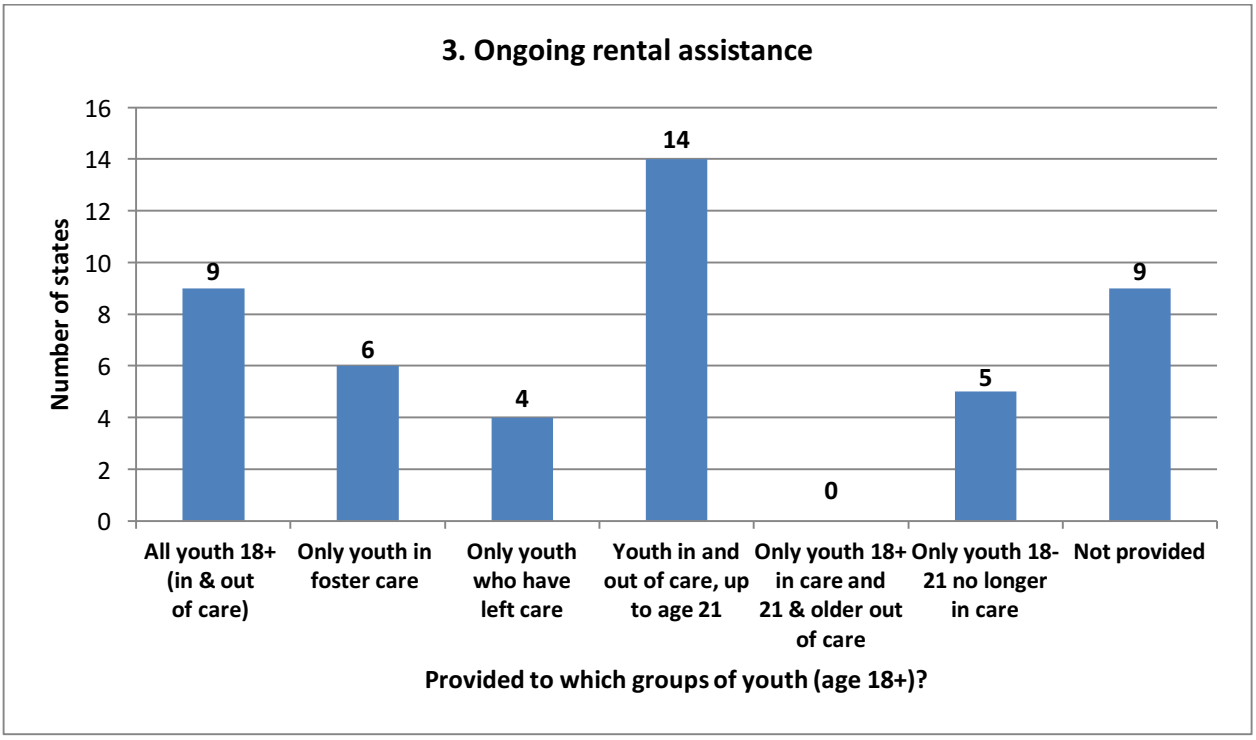

4. Credit reports/Identity theft protection
Number of states
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
14
16
2
10
0
1
4
All youth 18+ (in & out of care)
Only youth in foster care
Only youth who have left care
Youth in and out of care, up to age 21
Only youth 18+ in care and 21 & older out of care
Only youth 18-21 no longer in care
Not provided
Provided to which groups of youth (age 18+)?

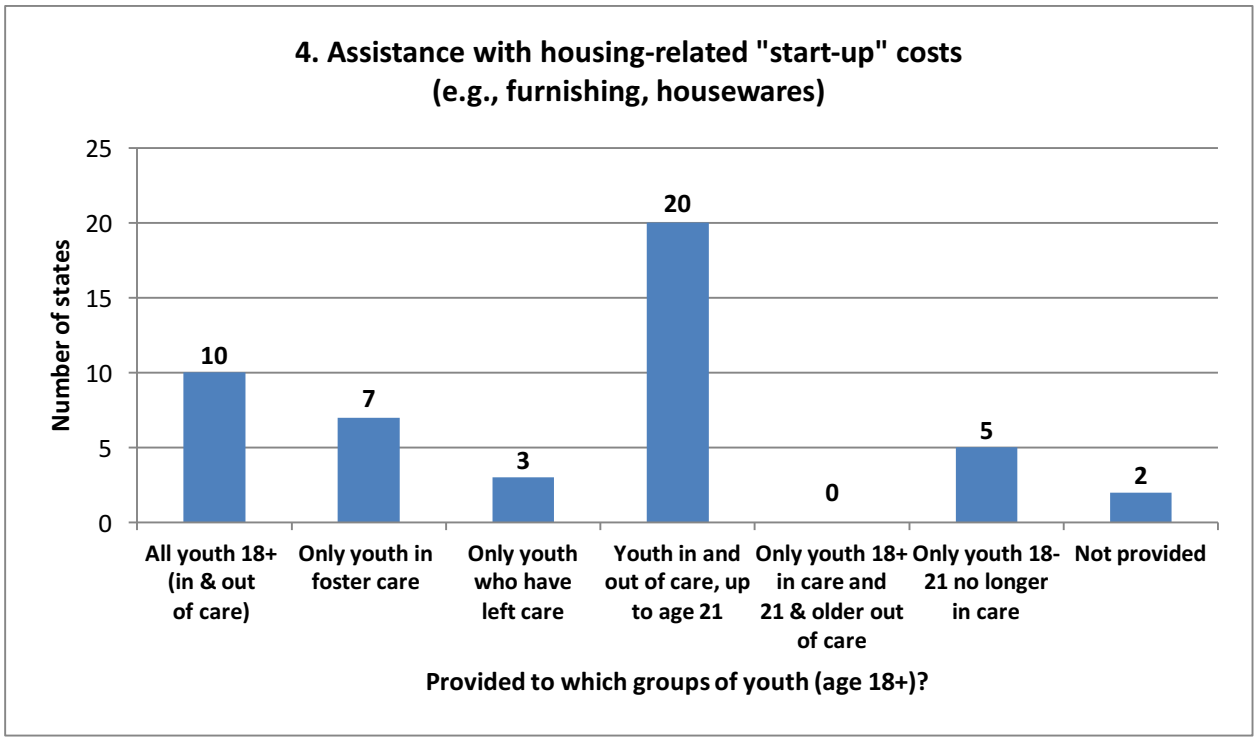

5. Matched savings for asset purchases, through individual development accounts (IDAs) or other means
Number of states
25
20
15
10
5
0
10
5
4
5
1
1
21
All youth 18+ (in & out of care)
Only youth in foster care
Only youth who have left care
Youth in and out of care, up to age 21
Only youth 18+ in care and 21 & older out of care
Only youth 18-21 no longer in care
Not provided
Provided to which groups of youth (age 18+)?

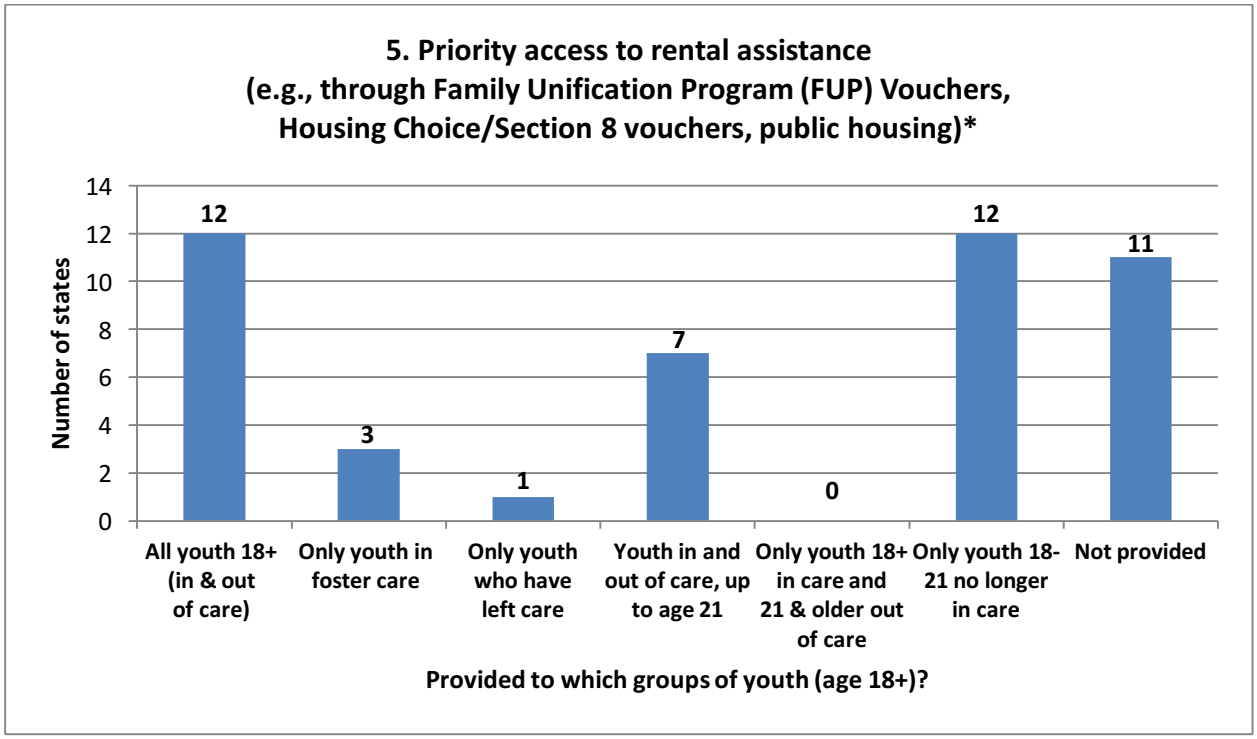
Securing safe, stable, and affordable housing



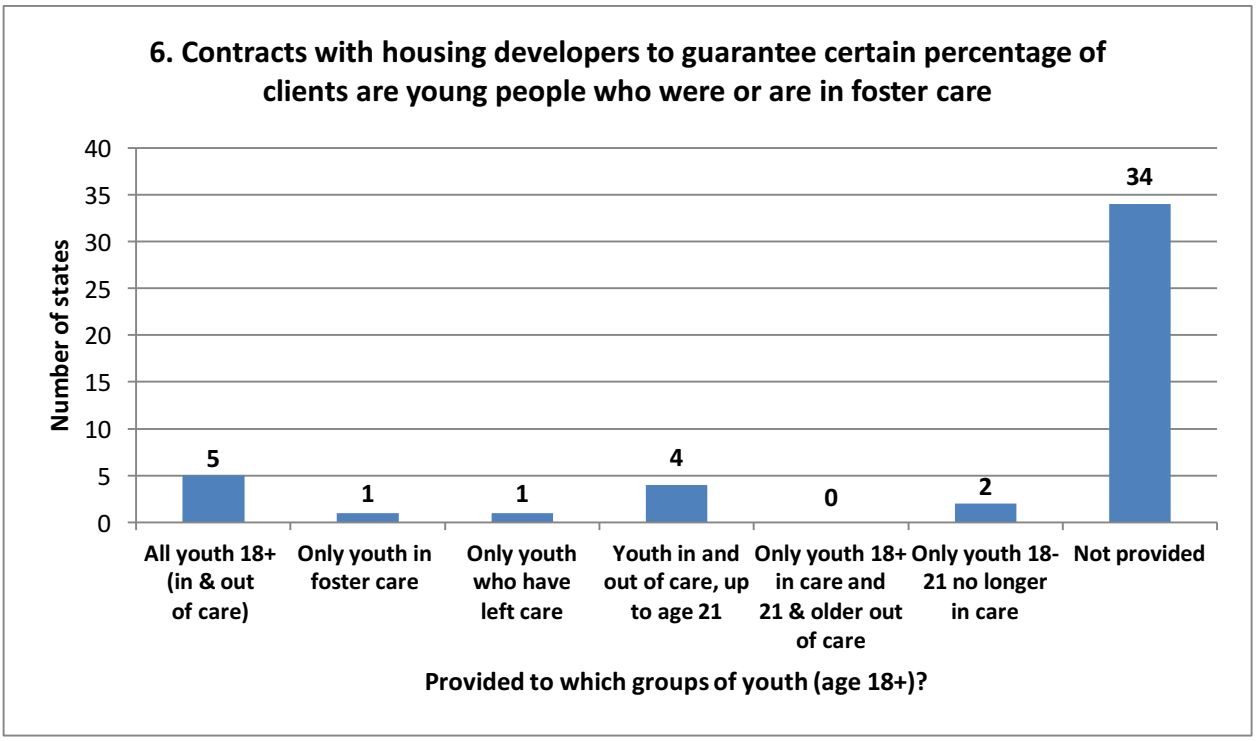


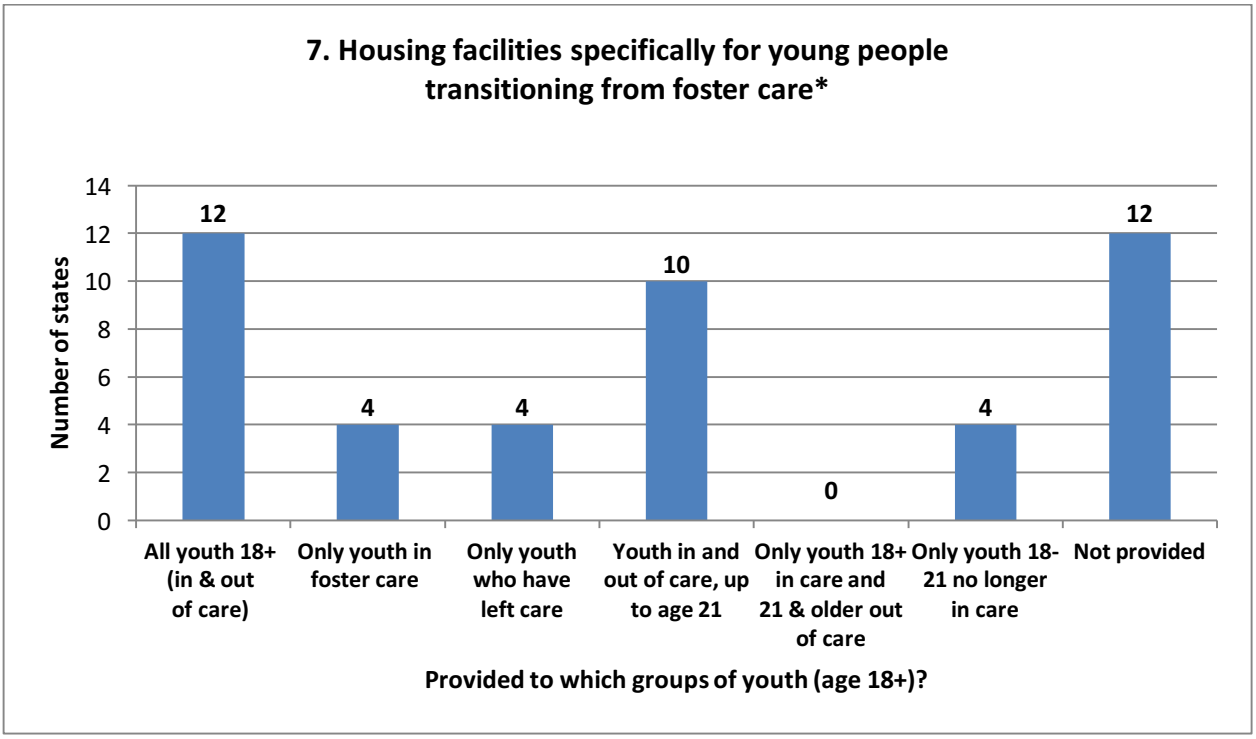

3. Ongoing rental assistance
Number of states
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
9
6
4
14
0
5
9
All youth 18+ (in & out of care)
Only youth in foster care
Only youth who have left care
Youth in and out of care, up to age 21
Only youth 18+ in care and 21 & older out of care
Only youth 18-21 no longer in care
Not provided
Provided to which groups of youth (age 18+)?


4. Assistance with housing-related "start-up" costs (e.g., furnishing, housewares)
Number of states
25
20
15
10
5
0
10
7
3
20
0
5
2
All youth 18+ (in & out of care)
Only youth in foster care
Only youth who have left care
Youth in and out of care, up to age 21
Only youth 18+ in care and 21 & older out of care
Only youth 18-21 no longer in care
Not provided
Provided to which groups of youth (age 18+)?



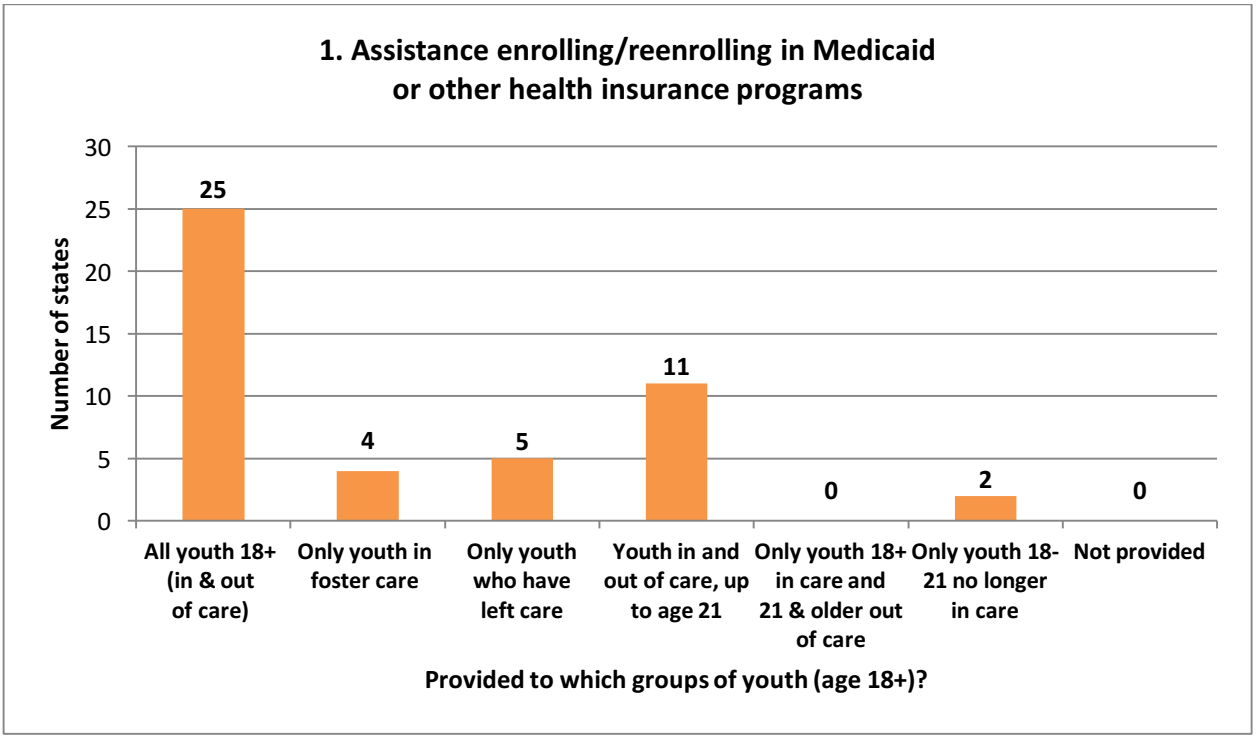
* One state did not respond to this part of the question.

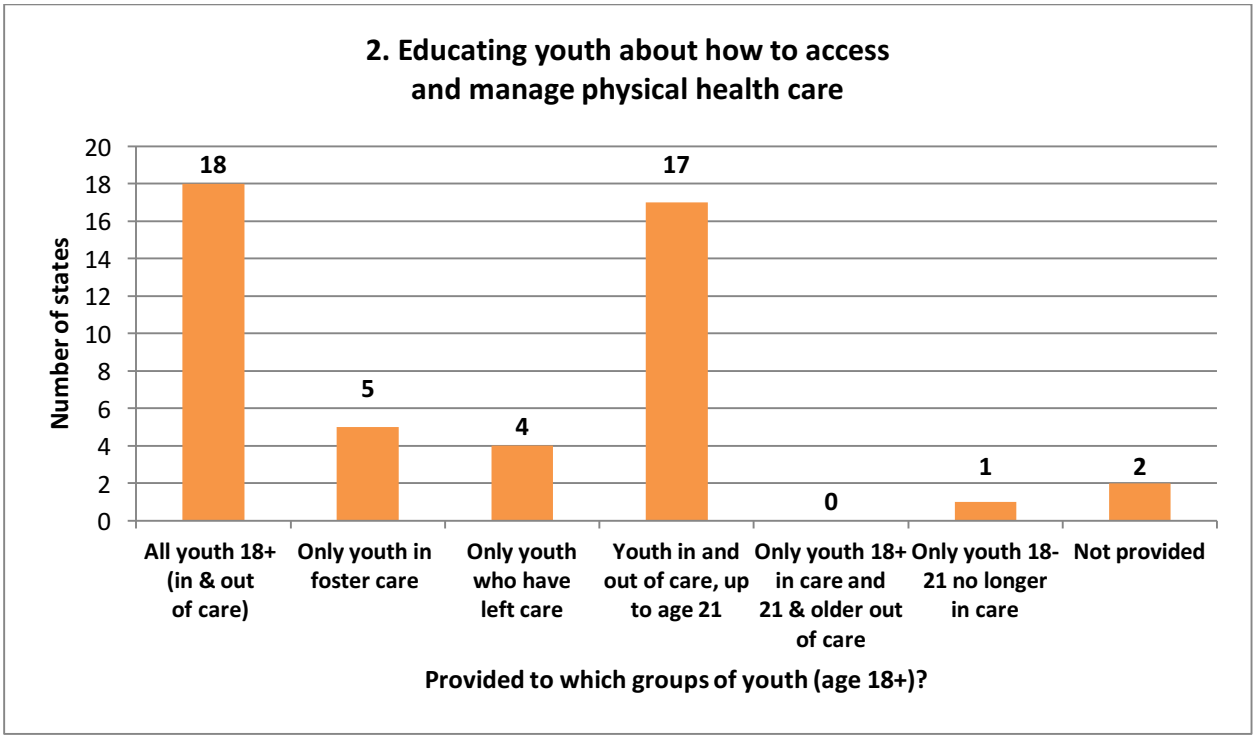


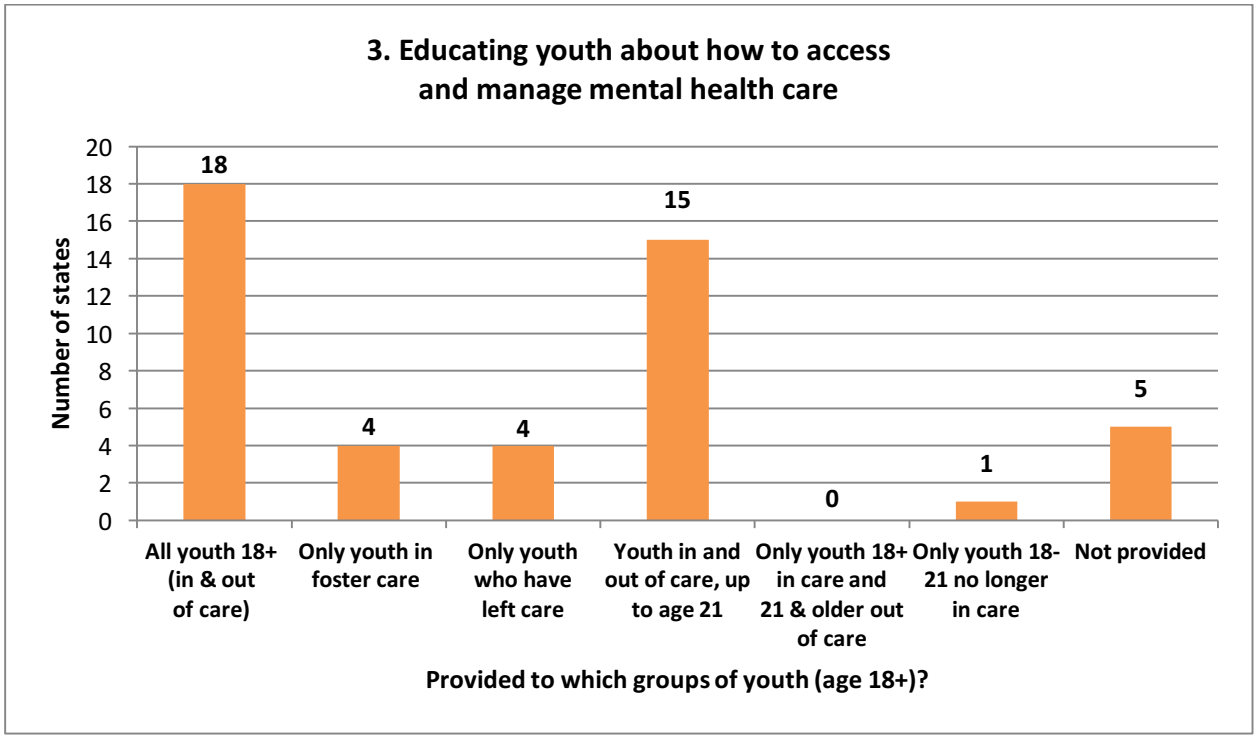


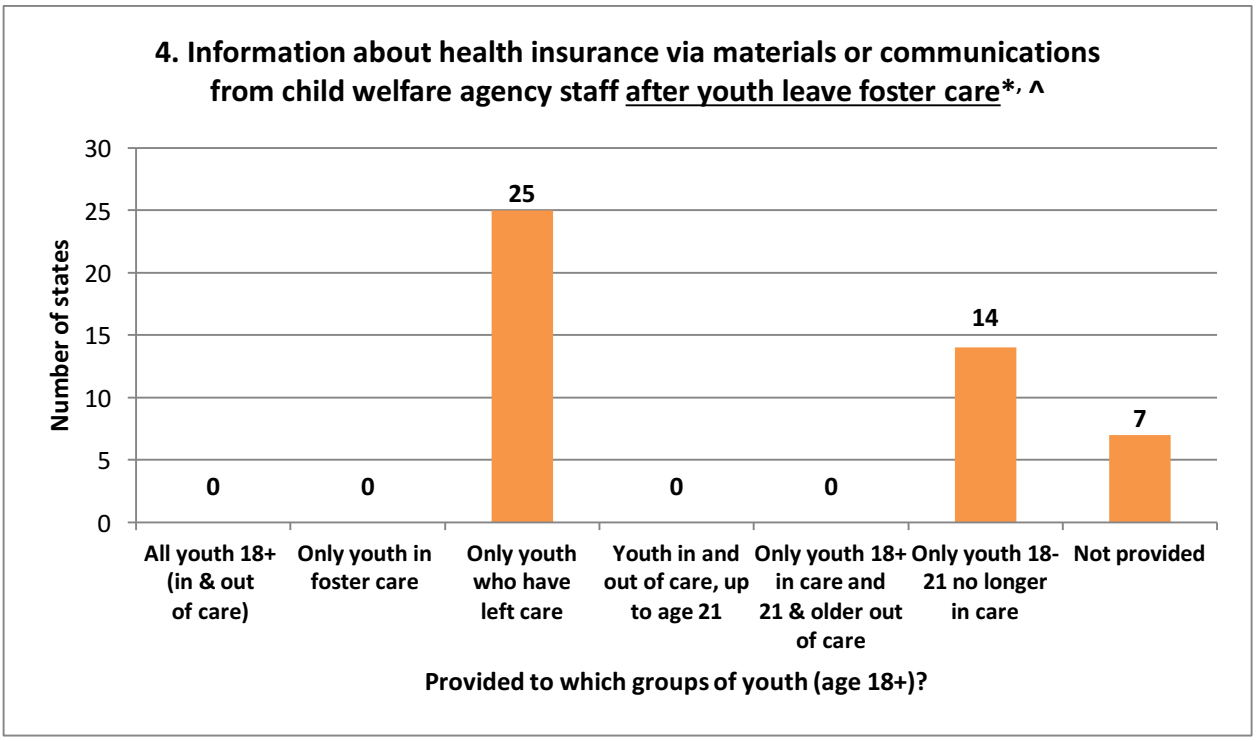
* One state did not respond to this part of the question.

Accessing and managing health and mental health care

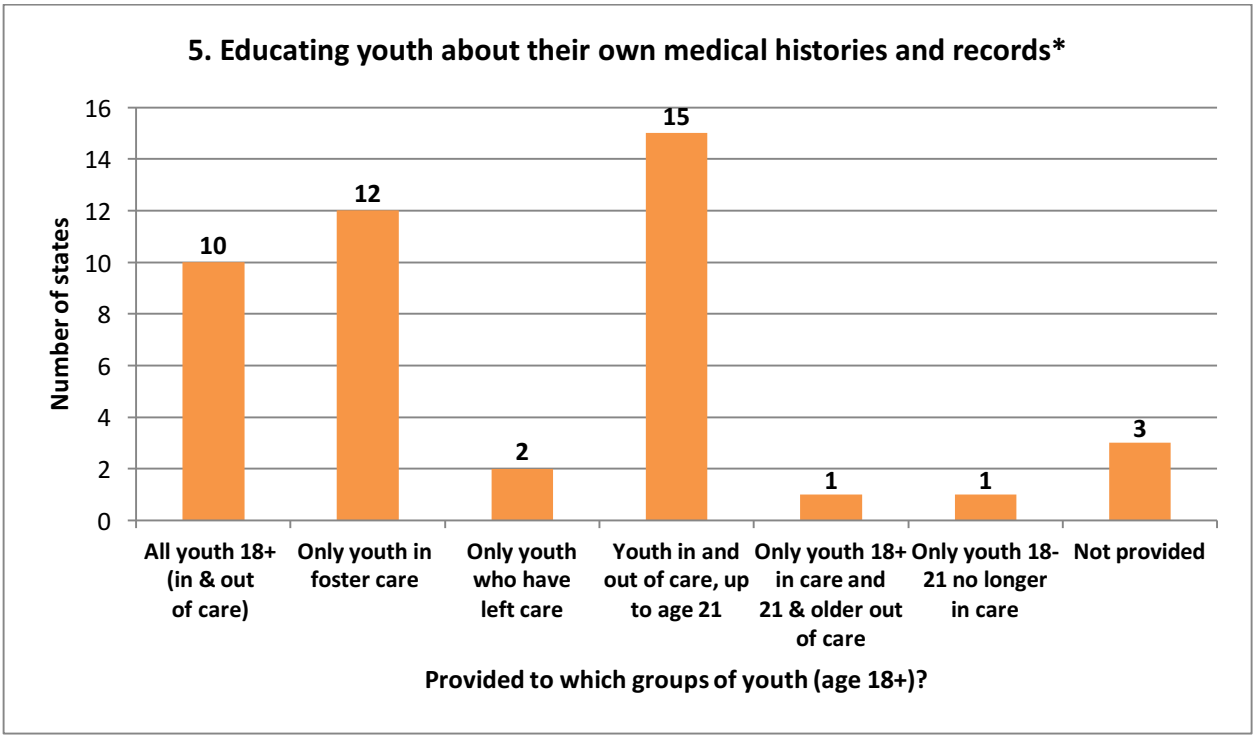




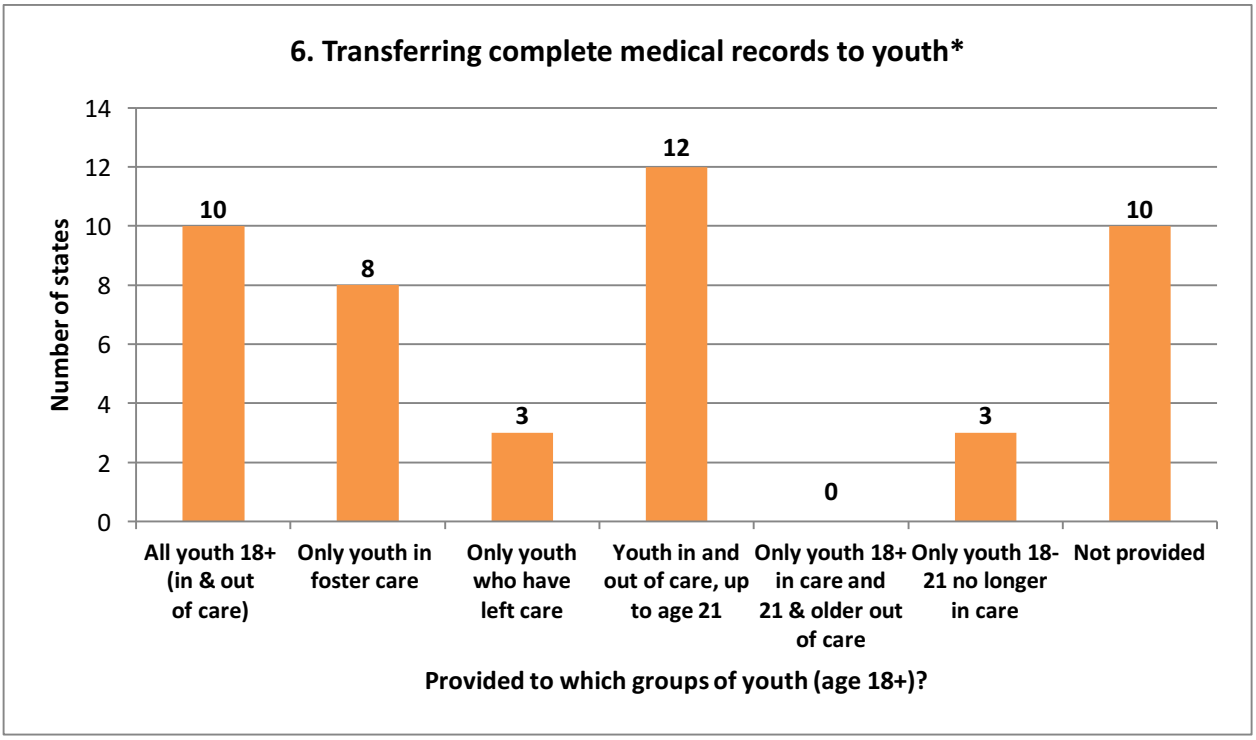




* One state did not respond to this part of the question.
^Since this question only asked about youth after they leave foster care we did not count the responses that included youth in foster care.

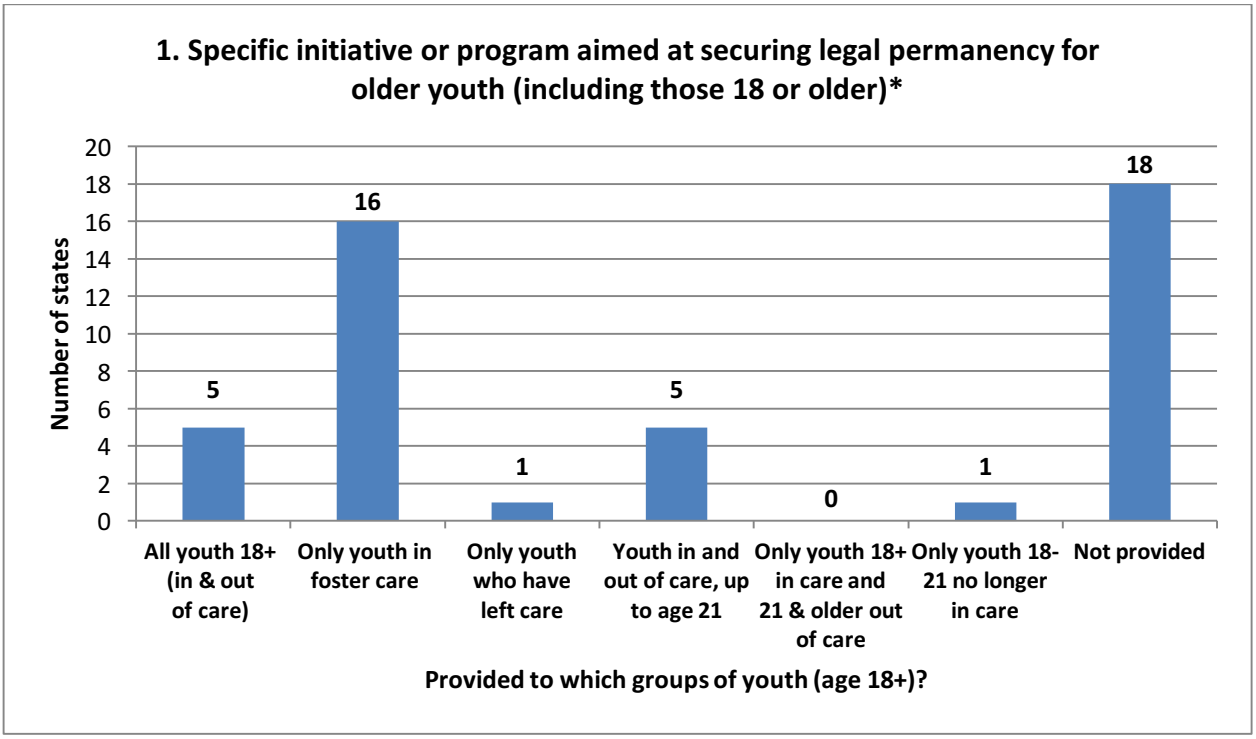


* Three states did not respond to this part of the question.

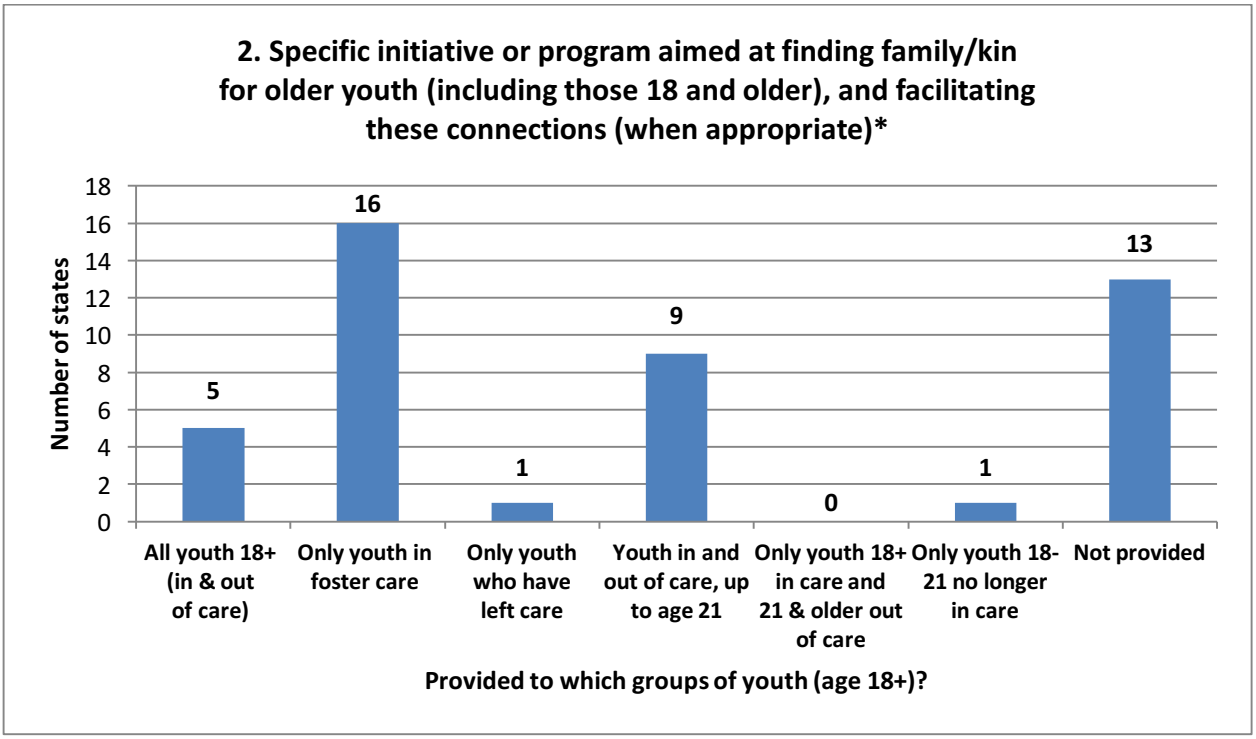


* One state did not respond to this part of the question.

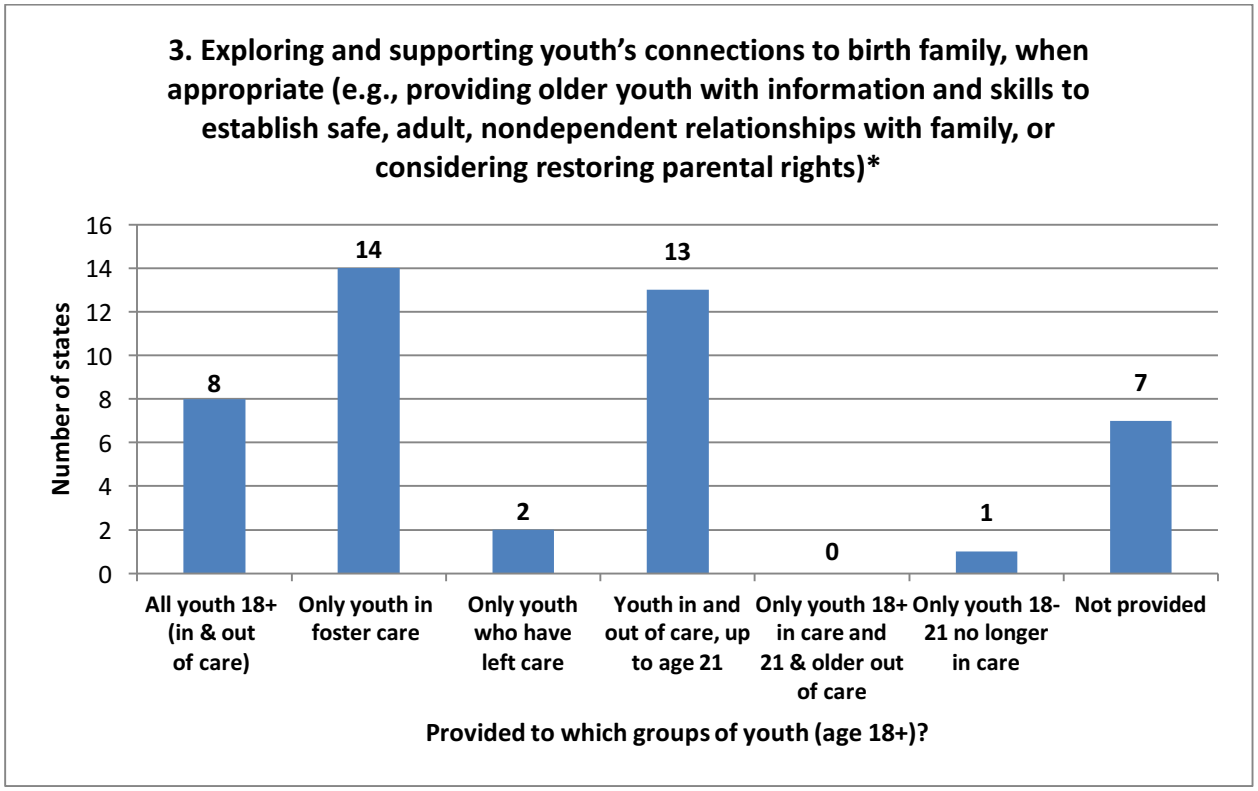
Establishing permanent relationships with supportive adults



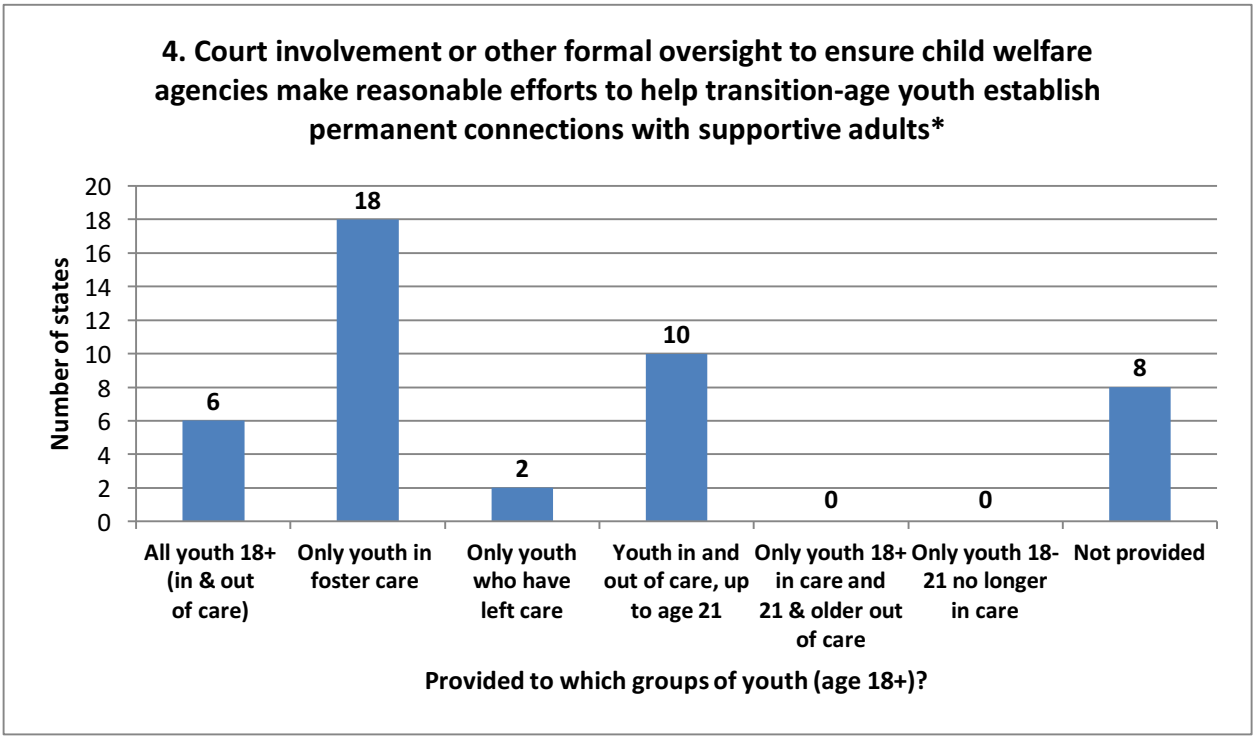
* One state did not respond to this part of the question.



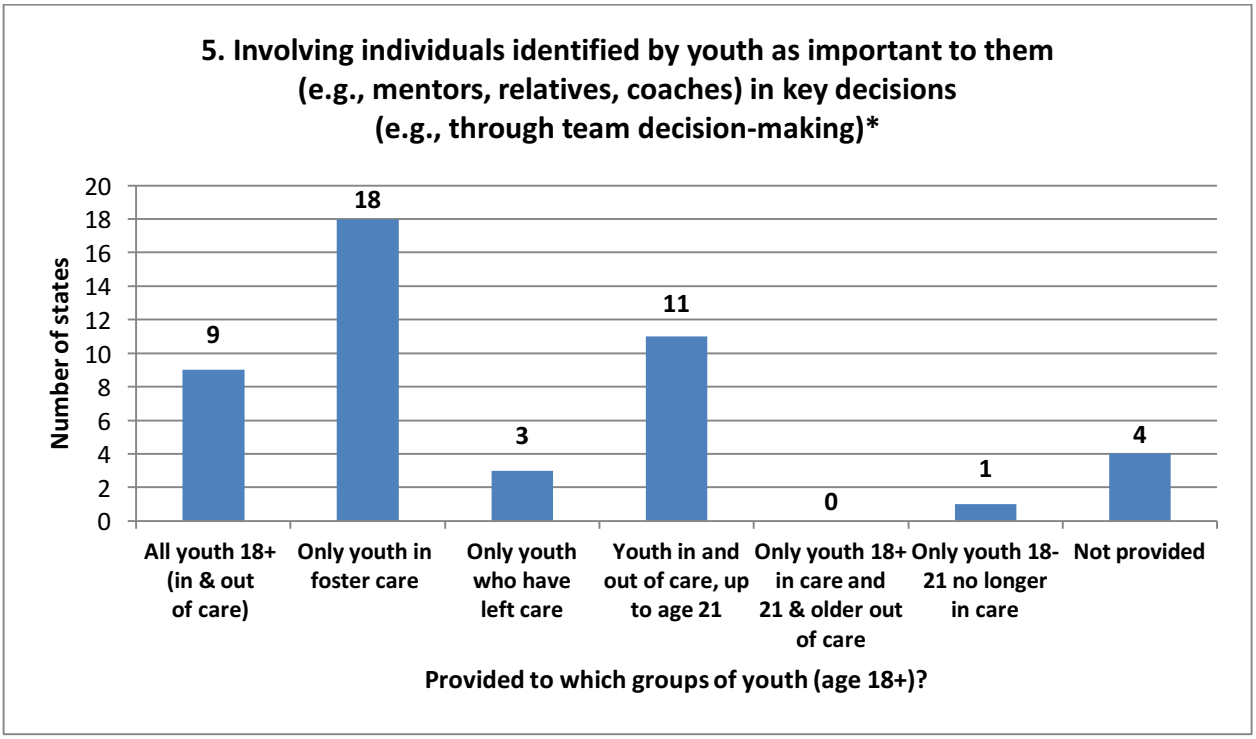
* Two states did not respond to this part of the question.



* Two states did not respond to this part of the question.



* Two states did not respond to this part of the question.
One state had conflicting responses that were not included in this count.



* One state did not respond to this part of the question.

Appendix B: Service and supports for transition-age youth provided in Virginia

	Service or Support?	Virginia Provides?	Where?
Post-secondary education	Tuition/fee waivers at in-state public colleges or universities	✓	Statewide
	Priority for state-funded scholarships to post-secondary education settings	✓	Only in certain areas of the state
	Exploration of post-secondary educational opportunities (e.g., college immersion programs, college workshops, campus tours)	✓	Statewide
	Educational advocates/liaisons assigned to young people enrolled in post-secondary educational programs	✓	Only in certain areas of the state
	Assistance with accessing vocational training or other alternatives to traditional post-secondary educational programs	✓	Statewide
Employment and career development	Information about career options and opportunities	✓	Statewide
	Career counseling/coaching	✓	Statewide
	Job readiness training (e.g., resume writing, filling out job applications, interviewing for jobs)	✓	Statewide
	Job placement assistance (including securing internships or apprenticeships)	✓	Only in certain areas of the state
	Mentorship from professionals in desired field or from an organization or interest	✓	Only in certain areas of the state
Financial capability	Money management/financial literacy training	✓	Only in certain areas
	Budget counseling	✓	Only in certain areas
	Assistance opening bank accounts	✓	Only in certain areas
	Credit reports and identity theft protection	✓	Statewide
	Matched savings for asset purchases, through Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) or other means	✓	Only in certain areas of the state
Securing safe, stable, and affordable housing	Assistance finding safe, stable, and affordable housing	✓	Only in certain areas
	Assistance with first month's rent and/or security deposit	✓	Only in certain areas
	Ongoing rental assistance	✓	Only in certain areas of the state
	Assistance with housing-related "start-up" costs (e.g., furnishing, housewares)	✓	Only in certain areas of the state
	Priority access to rental assistance (e.g., through FUP vouchers, Housing Choice/Section 8 vouchers, public housing)	✓	Only in certain areas of the state
	Contracts with housing developers to guarantee certain percentage of clients are young people who were or are in foster care	✓	Only in certain areas of the state
	Housing facilities specifically for young people transitioning from foster care	✓	Only in certain areas of the state

	Service or Support?	Virginia Provides?	Where?
Accessing and managing health and mental health care	Assistance enrolling/re-enrolling in Medicaid or other health insurance programs	✓	Statewide
	Educating youth about how to access and manage (physical) health care	✓	Statewide
	Educating youth about how to access and manage mental health care	✓	Statewide
	Information about health insurance via materials or communications from child welfare agency staff after youth leave foster care	✓	Statewide
	Educating youth about their own medical histories and records	✓	Statewide
	Transferring complete medical records to youth	✓	Only in certain areas of the state
Establishing permanent relationships with supportive adults	Specific initiative or program aimed at securing legal permanency for older youth (including those 18 or older)	✓	Statewide
	Specific initiative or program aimed at finding family/kin for older youth (including those 18 and older), and facilitating these connections (when appropriate)	✓	Statewide
	Exploring and supporting youth's connections to birth family, when appropriate (e.g., providing older youth with information and skills to establish safe, adult, nondependent relationships with family, or considering restoring parental rights after they have been terminated)	✓	Statewide
	Court involvement or other formal oversight to ensure child welfare agencies make reasonable efforts to help transition-age youth establish permanent connections with supportive adults	✓	Statewide
	Involving individuals identified by youth as important to them (e.g., mentors, relatives, coaches) in key decisions (e.g., through team decision-making)	✓	Statewide

Appendix C: A closer look at research-based programs and practices

As public policy requirements shift to emphasize funding programs and practices that we know "work" for their intended recipients, we asked states on the survey if they were using or implementing any evidenced-based, evidence-informed, "promising" or "emerging" programs or practices for each of the six service categories described above (post-secondary education, employment/career development, financial capability, housing, mental and physical health, permanent relationships). State responses varied as to whether they provide evidenced-based or informed programs and practices. For example:

- Eleven states reported not providing any such programs or practices in any of the service categories.
- Four states reported implementing such programs or practices in all service categories.
- One state did not know if it provides any research-based programs and practices in any of the service categories.
- The remaining 31 states reported a mixture of 'Yes', 'No', and 'Don't know' responses across the service categories.

In Virginia, the state reported promising practices or research-based programs in education (the Great Expectations program) and permanency (concurrent planning, family finding, permanency roundtables, youth voice). The state did not know whether or not whether there were research-based programs or practices in the other service categories.

We encourage local DSS offices in Virginia to coordinate with the state's central office to map the current evidence-based practice landscape. There is likely innovation happening in some communities that other regions of the state could benefit from learning about. Similarly, if there is no evidence-based practice happening in many of the service categories, policymakers may be interested in investing more funds into "what works" for this population.

Other surveyed states approached evidence-based programming in several ways:

- ***Few states describe programs that have been evaluated specifically for this population.*** However, some notable programs have been evaluated for transition-age youth. The *Youth Thrive* framework is used in Georgia, and New Jersey, infusing research on youth resilience, social connections, adolescence development, concrete support, and social-emotional competence into the entire child welfare system.[109] *YVLifeSet* in Tennessee provides intensive, individualized, and clinically focused case management, support, and counseling to transition aged youth, and participated in a random assignment evaluation which found positive effects for youth.[110] However, this level of evidence-based programming is only described by a few states.

[109] Youth Thrive. Center for the Study of Social Policy. Available at: http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/youththrive
[110] Becoming Adults: One-Year Impact Findings from the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation. MDRC, (2015). Available at: http://www.mdrc.org/publication/becoming-adults

Several states also describe permanence strategies, such as Wendy's Wonderful Kids,[111] that have an expanding evidence-base but may not be specifically designed to support transition-aged youth, or are being used by the child welfare agency generally and not being implemented *specifically* for this population.

- ***A few states are using programs and practices that have an evidence-base with other populations with transition-age youth.*** Services that have successfully supported low-income adults or other groups of vulnerable youth are being adopted by states and implemented with transition-age youth. For example, the Transition to Independence Process (TIP) model™, an evidence- supported practice based on published studies that demonstrate improvements in real-life outcomes for youth and young adults with emotional/behavioral difficulties (EBD),[112] is being used in **Colorado** and **Maine** for transition aged youth. **Colorado** is also adapting an evidence informed model called Colorado Challenge to provide wraparound services and supplemental advising to ensure students are on the path to success. This program provides services to low-income, first generation students at seven institutions of higher education and will be expanding in 2016. **New York's** Office of Children and Family Services is currently working with the Workplace Center (the Center) at Columbia University to implement their workplace readiness curriculum for youth in care, which should be in place in 2016-17. Although these programs and practices may address the needs of transition age youth, it is important to note that their effectiveness has not been assessed with this unique population.

- ***Some states are infusing research-based concepts into their service array.*** Opportunity Passport™ is a unique matched savings program that helps young people improve their financial capability when transitioning from foster care or navigating other youth-serving systems, and is grounded in research on adolescent brain development, trauma, and youth engagement.[113] Some states (**Michigan**, **New Jersey**, **New York**, **Tennessee**, **Texas**, and **Virginia**) are using what we know about post-secondary challenges for youth and their need for close social connections and employing Educational Liaisons to assist young people in their transition to post-secondary education. For example, **Virginia's** Great Expectations program, available at 18 of Virginia's Community Colleges, supports foster youth as they complete high school, gain access to a community college education, and transition successfully from the foster care system to living independently. Some states are infusing research on trauma informed care into their mental and physical health programs (**Missouri, New Hampshire, and North Dakota**). For example, in **New Hampshire** the Partners for Change Project is a Collaborative Trauma-Informed Child Welfare System between the Division of Children, Youth, and Families and the Dartmouth Trauma Interventions Research Center. The goal of this five-year project is to increase the availability and quality of evidence-based trauma and mental health screening, assessment, and interventions for youth in the child welfare system.

[111] Foster Care Adoption Attitudes Research. Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. Available at: https://davethomasfoundation.org/learn/research/
[112] Transition to Independence Process (TIP) Model™. TIP Stars. Available at: http://www.tipstars.org/
[113] Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. Annie E. Casey Foundation. Available at: http://www.aecf.org/work/child-welfare/jim-casey-youth-opportunities-initiative/