

2/16/10
FOSTER
CARE
IN
ALASKA



Foster Care Fact Sheet

Independent Living

The Office of Children's Services Independent Living Program provides services to youth in foster care ages 16 ½ and older, and youth out of custody up to the age of 21. The number of youth being served by the OCS Independent Living Program by region as of February 1st is below.

236 Youth in care ages 16 ½ and older

- SERO-30
- NRO-35
- ANC-73
- SCRO-98

152 Youth out of custody up to age 21

- SERO-24
- NRO-32
- ANC-52
- SCRO-46

143 youth who received services from the Independent Living Program left custody in FY2009

Alaskan Foster Care Alumni Study Findings

Youth served by the Independent Living Program are more likely to, "age out," of custody at 18 or older. The Alaskan Foster Care Alumni Study conducted in 2005 measured outcomes for youth who age out of foster care in Alaska. Outcomes from the study are as follows:

Socio-emotional

- Rates of early parenthood-by age 19, 57% of females, and 41% of males were parents

Physical and Behavioral Health

- 80% reported lifetime use of behavioral or mental health services
- 35% reported overnight treatment stays
- 68% reported seeing a professional such as a psychologist, social worker, or minister

Education, Employment, and Housing

- Nearly 38% of alumni reported being homeless after leaving care. This number was higher than the 12-25% from other alumni studies.
- High school completion rates were below the statewide average. Alaskan Alumni took longer to complete their high school diploma (often finishing between the ages of 19-25). Few went on to complete post secondary education
- 4.5% graduated with a vocational or technical degree or certificate

Costs to Society

- Nearly 30% of alumni were incarcerated after leaving care.



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- Alumni reported high utilization of public assistance resources. 77% of alumni including those who lived alone or with others reported using some form of public assistance in the last 6 months.

Midwest Alumni Study

- Young adult who stayed in foster care beyond age 18 were more than twice as likely to be enrolled in a school or training program as those who had been discharged
- Young adults who extended custody beyond 18 were over 3 times more likely than those no longer in care to be enrolled in a 2-4 year college program
- Compared to the 19 year olds still in foster care those who left the system were more likely to become parents

Education

Educational stability is important for children and youth in foster care to obtain a GED or high school diploma. As children move between foster care placements, they often move between schools as well. With each school change a child falls behind 4-6 months in their education.

The Anchorage School Districts Child in Transition Program reported that only about 25% of high school freshman in foster care were on track to graduate with a diploma or GED on time in 2009.

The McKinney Vento Homeless Liaisons serve about 3/5 of school age children and youth in foster care by providing transportation, tutoring services, and the tracking of school information and credits.

Needed, Achievable Changes

Action To Allow School Stability: Allow youth to remain in their school when they are moved across town to a new foster home during the school term.

Cost-Efficient Action: Help Transition Youth To Success, Not Homelessness

- ❖ Grant Support To Recruit & Screen Volunteer Youth Mentors
- ❖ \$55,000 to expand UA Scholarships for foster youth from 10 to 15.
- ❖ Add Education and Mentorship into the OCS mission by statute
- ❖ OCS concedes that 4 statewide (ILP) staff is grossly inadequate to link youth aged 17-23 to job training, school, and success after care. OCS concedes this staffing is terribly inadequate.
- ❖ Allow Foster Care Until 21 Where There's An Available Family.
- ❖ Enhance Foster Parent Recruitment.