



CHAPIN HALL

CENTER FOR CHILDREN
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Midwest Evaluation of the Adult
Functioning of Former Foster Youth:
Outcomes at Age 19

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Purpose of Study

- Measure the young adult self-sufficiency of former foster youth in Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin
- Provide guidance to 3 states regarding their compliance with and implementation of the John Chafee Foster Care Independence Act

Study Design and Sample

Largest longitudinal study of foster youth making the transition to adulthood post-FCIA

Foster youth in 3 states who:

- Were in out-of-home care at age 17
- Had entered care before their 16th birthday
- Had been placed in care due to abuse and/or neglect

Study Design and Sample (continued)

- Baseline survey data collected from 736 youth in '02-'03
- Response rate of 95.8 percent
- Age 17 or 18 at first interview

- 603 (82 percent of sample) re-interviewed in '04 when nearly all were 19 years old
 - 47 percent were still “in care” (nearly all in Illinois)
 - 53 percent had already been discharged

- Third wave of data will be collected at age 21

Living Arrangements at Follow-Up

	Still in Care	No Longer in Care
Own place	----	28.7
Supervised independent living	49.6	---
With biological parents	----	16.8
With other relatives	19.1	17.8
With unrelated foster parents	20.2	10.1
Group quarters	6.7	9.0
Homeless	----	0.6
Other	4.3	17.1

Independent Living Services

	Total	Still in Care	No Longer in Care
Educational support	51.7	60.6	43.9
Employment/vocational support	43.0	49.3	37.4
Budget and financial management support	36.7	46.1	28.3
Housing services	35.5	45.0	27.1
Health education services	38.3	45.7	31.8
Youth development services	21.4	29.1	14.6

Health and Mental Health Services

	Total	Still in Care	No Longer in Care
Has Health Insurance	71.3	98.2	47.1
Medical Exam Since Last Interview	47.4	53.2	42.4
Did Not Receive Needed Medical Care	13.5	4.6	21.4
Received Psychological or Emotional Counseling	20.6	28.5	13.7

Markers of Transition to Adulthood: Educational Attainment

	Total	Still in Care	No Longer in Care
No high school diploma/GED	38.2	38.2	36.1
Enrolled in school	47.7	66.7	30.8
High school/GED program	15.2	20.9	10.1
Vocational training	8.8	8.5	9.1
2 or 4 year college	23.7	37.2	11.7

Markers of Transition to Adulthood: Employment and Earnings

	Total	Still in Care	No Longer in Care
Never held a job	7.8	7.8	7.8
Worked during past year	67.0	61.0	72.3
Currently employed	40.5	33.0	47.0
Median hours worked	35	30	35
Median hourly wage	\$7.00	\$7.00	\$7.00

Markers of Transition to Adulthood: Partnering and Parenthood

	Total	Still in Care	No Longer in Care
Pregnant after first interview	37.4	31.1	44.2
Married or cohabiting	10.0	5.0	14.3
Males	6.5	5.0	7.6
Females	12.9	4.9	20.9
Any living children	23.4	24.5	22.5
Males	13.8	15.1	12.7
Females	31.6	31.3	31.9

Markers of Transition to Adulthood: Criminal Justice System Involvement

	Total	Still in Care	No Longer in Care
Arrested since last interview	28.1	21.9	33.8
Males	38.0		
Females	20.1		
Incarcerated since last interview	19.2	14.4	23.7
Males	29.8		
Females	10.7		

Markers of Transition to Adulthood: Selected Problems

	Total	Still in Care	No Longer in Care
Homeless since leaving care	---	---	13.8
Shot, stabbed, beaten up or threatened with a weapon during past year	24.2	23.8	24.6
Males	34.7	35.3	34.2
Females	15.3	15.3	15.3

Markers of Transition to Adulthood: Disconnectedness

	Total	Still in Care	No Longer in Care
Not in school and not employed	30.9	24.1	37.0
Not in school, not employed and not parenting	24.3	19.9	28.1

Optimism about the Future

	Wave 1 (N = 736)	Wave 2 (N = 603)
Very optimistic	58.4	56.9
Fairly optimistic	33.0	32.2
Not too optimistic	4.1	7.0
Not at all optimistic	3.8	3.3
Do not know	0.7	0.7

Summary

- Youth about to age out of foster care in the U.S. face considerable challenges including educational deficits, limited employment experience, and significant psychosocial problems
- They also have significant assets, including strong relations with members of their families and foster families, connection to the child welfare services system, and optimism about their future

Policy Implications

- Demographic changes call into question federal and state policies that curtail government responsibility for wards of the state at age 18
- A variety of policies regarding health care, mental health care, education, and employment should also be reconsidered in light of these demographic changes