



# *Cultivating Opportunities for All Youth to Flourish in Franklin County*

Webinar Series #1

April 3, 2020



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**Today's Presenter:**

***Tracy Nájera***  
***Executive Director,***  
***Children's Defense Fund-Ohio***



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## Agenda:

- Who are Opportunity Youth?
- Overview of the Report
- Interview with The Columbus Foundation's Dr. Mark Lomax, II
- Q&A Session



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## Who does the term “Opportunity Youth” refer to?

*This term is commonly used to refer to youth ages 16-24 who are disconnected from both workforce and educational opportunities.*



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Research indicates that youth most likely to be Opportunity Youth also frequently face many challenges, including:

- *Youth who lack resources or are living in poverty*
- *Youth experiencing homelessness*
- *Youth who have been/are in foster care*
- *Youth who are pregnant or young parents*
- *Youth who identify as LGBTQIA+*
- *Youth with formal court involvement*
- *Youth who are differently-abled*
- *Youth experiencing mental health challenges*
- *Youth who are immigrants or refugees*

Social inequities and the enduring impacts of racism and discriminatory policies and practices also figure prominently into youth disconnection. These inequities further undermine our youth's adolescent development.



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# How many Opportunity Youth are living in Franklin County, Ohio?

*According to census data, Franklin County has over 15,000 youth who are considered Opportunity Youth - but we speculate this number to be far higher due to difficulty collecting data on this population.*



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## Bottom line:

*Even if a young person is in school or is employed, this does not mean that our community is meeting their basic needs.*

*Many youth who are working or in school are struggling to survive - let alone thrive - and this is something our community leaders must address.*



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## 2020 Report: [Cultivating Opportunities for All Youth to Flourish in Franklin County](#)

The Children's Defense Fund-Ohio, in partnership with the Columbus Foundation and their Opportunity Youth Steering Committee, wrote this report with the aim of addressing three key research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of youth who face barriers to becoming successful adults?
2. What are the life paths experienced by youth who face barriers as they become adults?
3. Which specific resources and strategies can be used to help Franklin County youth achieve the following goals?



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Meet our Featured Guests:

*Dr. Mark Lomax, II*  
*Community Research and*  
*Grants Management Officer,*  
*The Columbus Foundation*



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## Meet our Featured Guests:

*Ann Bischoff*  
*CEO, Star House*



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# Questions?

*Post them using the chat feature or raise your hand and we will unmute you.*



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# *Cultivating Opportunities for All Youth to Flourish in Franklin County*

Webinar Series #2

April 16, 2020



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## Today's Presenter:

***Kim Eckhart,  
KIDS COUNT Project Manager,  
Children's Defense Fund-Ohio***



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## *Agenda:*

- Overview of Report Methodology, Data & Research
- Interview with Nikki Thomas, PhD
- Q&A Session



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## To more deeply understand the challenges and characteristics of Opportunity Youth, CDF-Ohio:

- *collected and analyzed demographic, economic, and education data from government and nonprofit organizations;*
- *reviewed national and local research on outcomes and factors that contribute to youth success; and*
- *hosted a series of focus groups with Franklin County youth, service providers, and program leaders.*



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In this report, CDF-Ohio focused its research on 6 areas of child well-being to identify opportunities for intervention and to ensure every youth in Columbus achieves the following goals:



**Housing:** Youth have equitable access to safe and decent shelter and housing



**Health and Wellness:** Opportunity Youth have the tools to be and stay healthy



**Education:** All youth are supported and prepared to engage and navigate an ever-changing world



**Support Systems:** Our community ensures that all youth are connected, engaged, and supported



**Workforce:** Opportunity Youth will have meaningful and fulfilling career opportunities



**Civic Engagement:** Opportunity Youth are actively engaged in our community



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# Key data highlights from the report in these areas include:



## HOUSING:

More than 3,000 Franklin County youth experience homelessness annually—a figure that is likely an underestimate.



## EDUCATION:

6 out of 10 Franklin County high school graduates enroll in college, but just 1 out of 3 them completed a 2- or 4-year degree within six years.



## WORKFORCE:

4 of 10 of Ohio's most common jobs paid an entry wage of more than \$10.36 per hour—the amount needed for a single adult in Franklin County just to survive.



## SUPPORT SYSTEMS:

40.3 per 1,000 15-17 year-olds in Franklin County are in foster care—nearly double the state rate.



## HEALTH & WELLNESS:

1 in 4 Franklin County youth ages 18-25 reported having mental health challenges in the past year. In fact, Ohio is one of only five states where at least 1 in 7 children have three or more adverse childhood experiences.



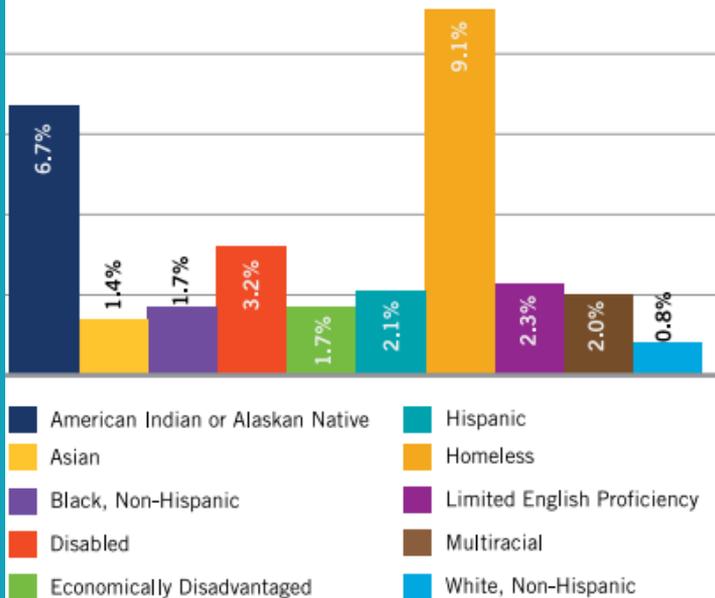
## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:

"My biggest strength is my political advocacy," said one youth whose career goals are closely tied with civic engagement.

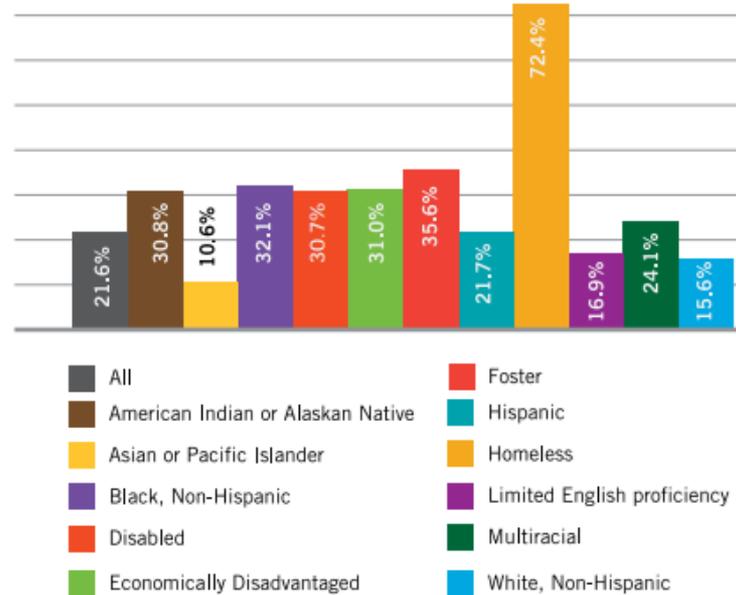


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## Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspensions in Franklin County



## Students Chronically Absent from School in Franklin County



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# Equity issues and Opportunity Youth

- *Many policies, programs, and practices are not designed to respond to youth trauma*
- *Do not address lasting effects of racism and discrimination*
- *Further distance already marginalized youth in our community from pathways to success*



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# Qualitative data from Youth perspective

- *Partnerships with youth-serving organizations*
- *Series of focus groups*
- *Strengths-focused interviews*
- *Youth definitions of success*
- *Resources needed to pursue their aspirations*



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Meet our Featured Guest:

*Nikki Thomas, PhD*  
*Program Manager,*  
*Ohio State ADVANCE*



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# Questions?

*Post them using the chat feature or raise your hand and we will unmute you.*



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**CDF-Ohio greatly appreciates the support of the following organizations that helped to facilitate the focus groups and interviews with service providers:**

*Achieve More & Prosper! Program (A.M.P.) with Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services*

*Directions for Youth and Families*

*Boys & Girls Clubs of Columbus*

*Equitas Health's Mozaic Program*

*Buckeye Ranch*

*Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services (ETSS)*

*Center for Healthy Families*

*Jewish Family Services*

*Columbus City Schools Mentorship Program*

*Star House Columbus*

*Community for New Directions*

*The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at The Ohio State University Ohio*

*Education Research Center (OERC)*



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# *Cultivating Opportunities for All Youth to Flourish in Franklin County*

Webinar Series #3

May 15, 2020



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**Today's Presenter:**

***Alison Paxson,  
Policy Fellow,  
Children's Defense Fund-Ohio***



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## *Agenda:*

- Human-Centered Design
- Importance of Human-Centered Design
- Panel
- Q&A Session



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# *What is Human-Centered Design?*

A philosophy that empowers an individual or team to design products, services, systems, and experiences that address the core needs of those who experience a problem.

Human-centered design is all about building a deep empathy with the people you're designing for; generating tons of ideas; building a bunch of prototypes; sharing what you've made with the people you're designing for; and eventually putting your innovative new solution out in the world.



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*Human-centered design means developing and designing solutions with young people - not for young people.*



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**Youth told us how they envisioned their lives as happy, healthy adults 10 years from now.**

**“For me, in 10 years, I would like to run a LGBTQ foster home.”**



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**Youth told us  
what they want  
leaders making  
decisions on their  
behalf to know  
about their lives.**

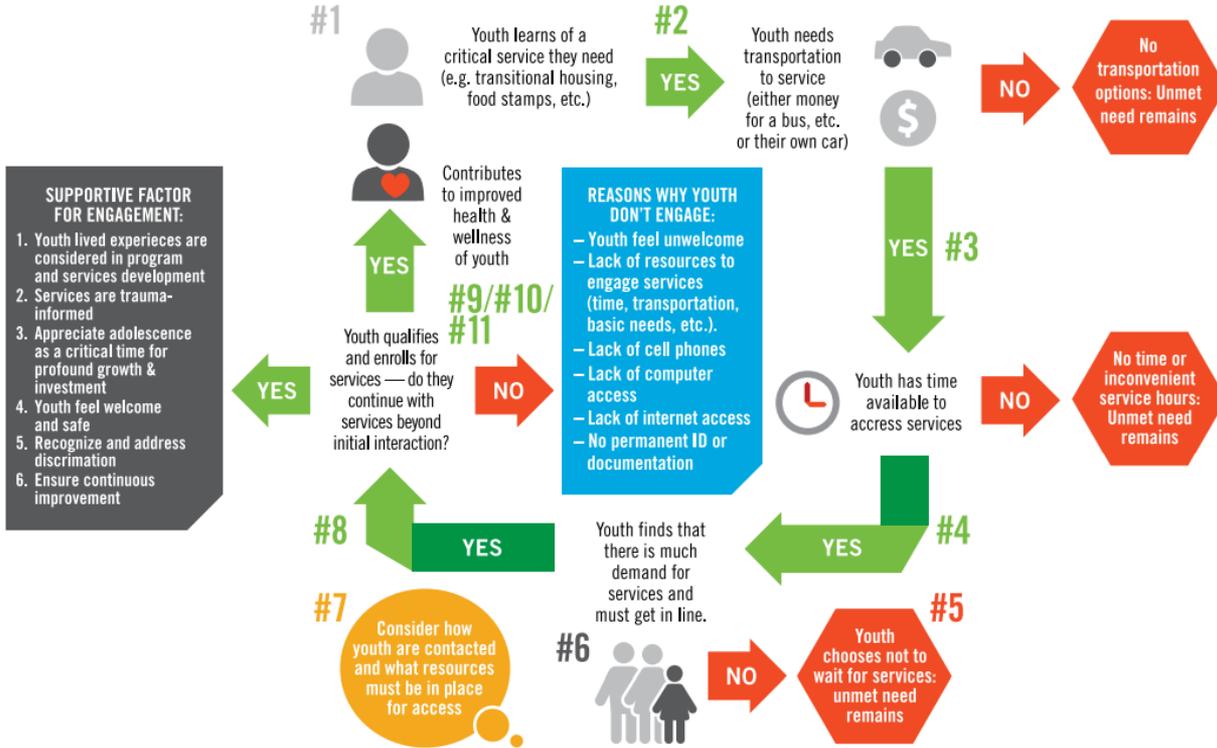
"If I could tell one thing to the governor or someone higher up, take a walk in tent city. They would look at everything differently," said one youth experiencing homelessness in Franklin County, Ohio.



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# WALKING IN THE SHOES OF YOUTH AS THEY ATTEMPT TO NAVIGATE SERVICES THEY NEED

Youth shared the difficulties they experience attempting to navigate and access services directly tied to their overall livelihoods.



WAITS CAN LAST ANYWHERE FROM SEVERAL HOURS TOR SEVERAL MONTHS

Please welcome our featured guests for today's panel:

*Cloé Cooper*  
*Destiny Higgins*  
*Michael Outrich*  
*Joshua Hatch*  
*Talia Holmes*



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**How do you envision your life as a happy, healthy adult 10 years from now, and what key strengths do you possess that you believe will help you achieve this future you imagine?**



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What do you wish caring adults and community leaders here in central Ohio knew about your everyday life that could help them better support you and other youth in the decisions they make on your behalf?



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What experiences have you had sharing your voice and perspective with others advocating for issues you care about?

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**What do you think some best practices are for making sure that youth who take the time to share their perspectives feel empowered by the experience and also valued for their time, energy, and insights?**

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**In your opinion, what conversations among policymakers or other leaders regarding issues impacting young people do you feel that youth are largely left out of or included in?**



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**Is there anything you think that adults and decision-makers should know about what youth and young people your age are dealing with during this crisis that they are not currently considering or talking about?**



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**What are some actions you can think of that our city, state, or nation should be doing to better support youth in the areas of housing, education, workforce, health, or support systems?**



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What question(s) did we not ask you that you wish we would have?



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# Questions?

*Post them using the chatbox feature.*



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# *Cultivating Opportunities for All Youth to Flourish in Franklin County*

Webinar Series #4

June 12, 2020



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## *Agenda:*

- Putting the research into practice: What's next?
- Policy landscape for youth
- Our featured guest Cloé Cooper
- Q&A Session



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## Today's Presenter:

***Kim Eckhart,  
KIDS COUNT Project Manager,  
Children's Defense Fund-Ohio***



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## Putting research into practice: What's next?

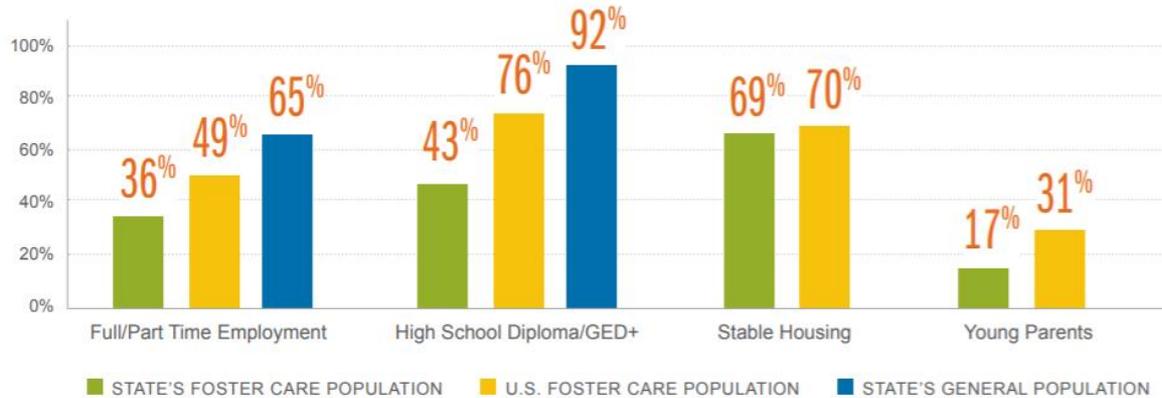
*Focusing efforts on youth who have been involved with the child welfare system, especially those who have “aged out” of care. Roughly one third of whom experience homelessness by age 21.*



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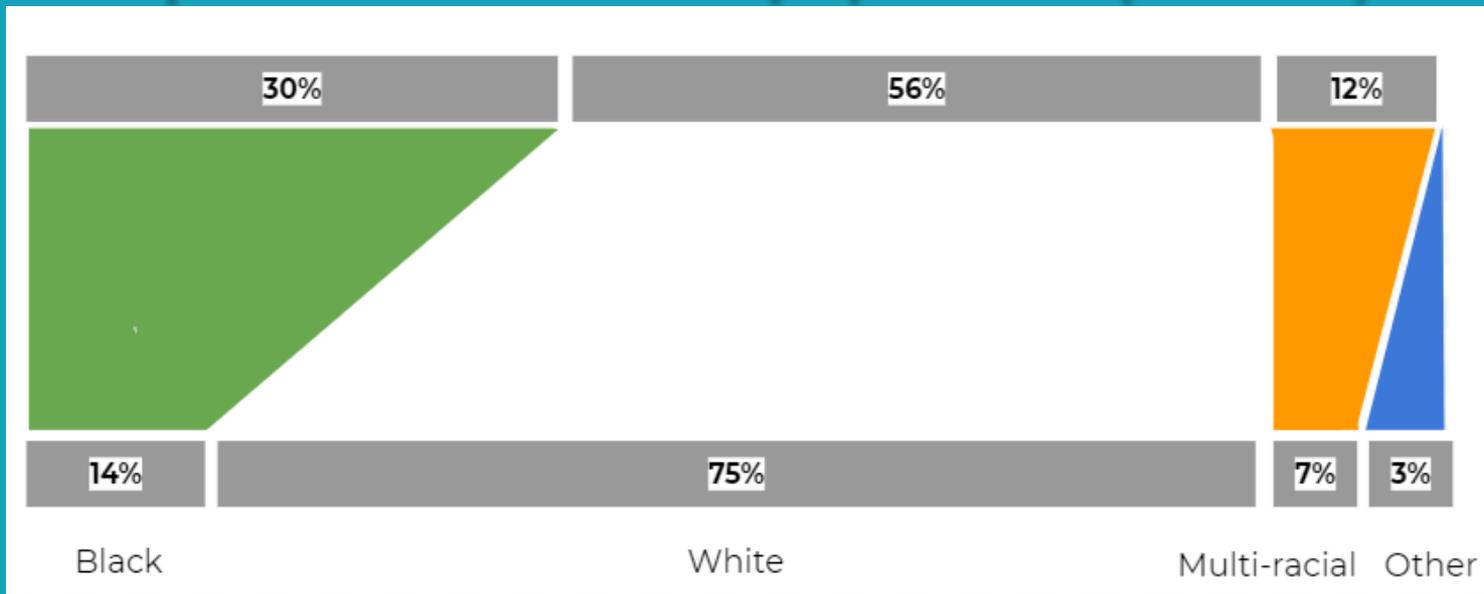
## Young Adult Outcomes by Age 21

Research shows that young adults who experienced foster care have worse outcomes than their peers in the general population across a variety of spectrums — from education to employment to housing to early parenthood. Examining data on these outcomes in Ohio is important as we strive to improve the practices, programs and policies that help ensure these young people have the relationships, resources and opportunities they need for well-being and success.



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# Racial makeup of children in custody (top) compared to Ohio child population (bottom)



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# Policy landscape for youth affected by child welfare

- Federal legislation: HEROES Act; Family First Prevention Services Act
- Ohio's leadership in reform



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## HEROES Act: COVID-19 Relief

- Broad stimulus package which includes child welfare provisions
- Passed House in May, now Senate is considering
- Focus on older youth and Chafee funding and eligibility



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## Family First Prevention Services Act

- Allows states to use federal funding for evidenced-based services to keep children safely with their family
- The Transition Act provides \$18.2 million\* for Ohio next year
- Implementation by October 2021



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## Ohio's leadership in reform

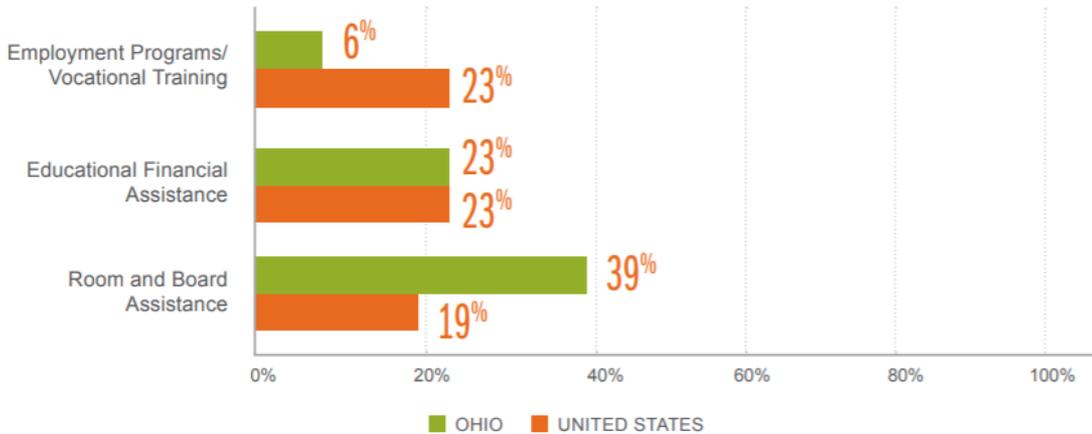
- In 2018, the Bridges program began providing room and board assistance to youth in transition



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## Services

Transition services, such as vocational training and housing assistance, are designed to help young people with foster care experience transition to adulthood. Participation in federally funded transition services provides a window into how well young people are being equipped for employment, education and housing.



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## Ohio's leadership in reform

- **Family First implementation led by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services**
- **Child Welfare Transformation Office and Advisory Council**



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## *Meet our Featured Guest:*

### ***Cloé Cooper***

*Director of Outreach for AgedOutt;  
Member of Action Ohio;*

*Coordinator and Peer Mentor for the Scholar Network,  
Columbus State Community College*



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# What is the Foster Youth Independence Program (FYI)

*This program provides on demand housing vouchers to public housing authorities to prevent or end homelessness among young adults under age 25 with a history of foster care.*



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# FSHO Coalition & Foster Youth Independence Program

What will it take to make this national resource available in my area?

This program requires a local partnership between the PCWA (public child welfare agency) and the PHA (public housing authority).

First, they need to meet, establish a point of contact, and sign an MOU or letter of agreement.

Then, they need to stay in contact and nurture the program.

Public housing authorities can collaborate with more than one public child welfare agency, they just need to establish a partnership agreement with each one.



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# FYI and FUP in Ohio

with number of youth aging out in 2019



- FYI available
- FYI eligible
- FUP before 2008
- FUP 2008-2010
- FUP in 2020

## How does this program differ from FUP?



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# Helping PCWA maximize the success of FYI Program

How can public child welfare agencies maximize the success of the FYI program?

PCWAs (public child welfare agency) seek to maximize use of existing resources (i.e. Title IV-E and Chafee) with a focus on preparing young people for adulthood and supporting their transition.

IL coordinator and young person file paperwork with local PHA about 3-6 months prior to leaving care.

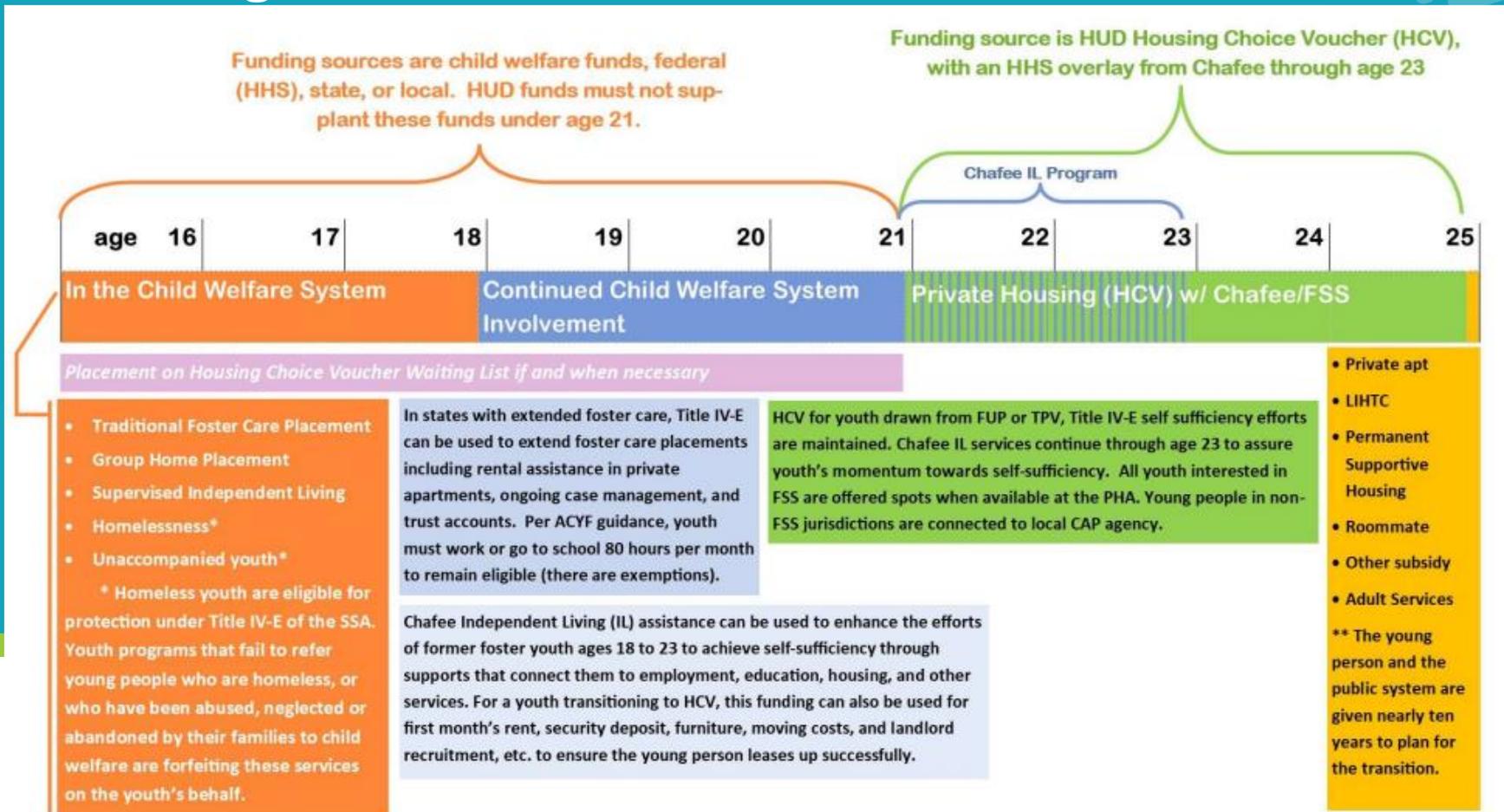
PCWA assists with landlord recruitment and positive youth development services through age 23.

PCWAs utilize existing data to predict the need for future vouchers.



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# Understanding the Process



# We need an Ombudsman's Office in Ohio. Here's why...

- Ombudsmen offer independent investigation and resolution of complaints made directly from youth
- Youth who experience abuse in biological, foster, adoptive, kinship, respite, residential and group home placements would have access to voice their concerns.



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# What services are offered by a Foster Care Ombudsman?

- Maintaining a toll-free telephone number that would be available to foster youth and young adults in the state.
- Provides information about youth rights, care and wellbeing, listens to complaints, documents concerns, remains neutral, provides information on how to help.



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# Examples of Ombudsman Offices in Other States

- California State Ombudsman was created in 1998 with passage of Senate Bill 933, Chapter 311
- Oregon's Office of the Foster Care Ombudsman was created in 2013 with passage of Senate Bill 123 (section 2, part 7)
- Texas Office of the Ombudsman created in 2005 established by Senate Bill 830



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# Extending the Moratorium set out by Governor DeWine preventing youth from aging out and its correlation to the unemployment rates

- COVID-19 has caused the unemployment rates in Ohio to be sky high
- For youth to be successful and self-sustainable, they need to be able to earn income
- The inability for former foster youth to gain employment should be a major factor in their discharge now and always.



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# Questions, Feedback?

*Post them using the chatbox feature.*



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# Thank you for joining us!



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or Kim Eckhart ([keckhart@childrensdefense.org](mailto:keckhart@childrensdefense.org))*