

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Youth Transitioning out of Foster Care



Research-to-Policy
— Collaboration —

The COVID-19 pandemic has been especially harmful to members of social groups in the most vulnerable of situations, including youth in foster care and those who have recently exited care. Although, data on the number of youth exiting foster care during the pandemic is unclear, data from 2019 can be found [here](#). Data below highlights the unique impact of COVID-19 on these youth.

Data from the Texas [Youth Permanency Study](#)

- Longitudinal study following 200 youth (age 14 and older) as they exit foster care (e.g., aging out, adopted, reunified)
- Goal is to understand the quality and continuity of relationships developed by youth in care and identify factors that support strong relationships that may be sustained as youth transition into adulthood
- Preliminary findings suggest:
 - Youth with the strongest relationships tend to report better outcomes in safety, education, health, life skills, and vocation
 - The importance of these connected relationships is heightened by tragedy or societal turmoil like the current pandemic
 - Youth who aged out of foster care during the pandemic to live on their own, with a friend, dating partner, or relative experiences the most instability in terms of housing security and job loss
 - Enduring connections, emotional support, and a sense of belonging facilitate resilience for former foster youth transitioning to adulthood
- Read more initial results [here](#) and [here](#)
- Read anecdotes about the study programs and participants [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)

Data from the Field Center at University of Pennsylvania

- Online survey study of 281 young adults (ages 18-23) from 32 US states (191 cities)
- Goal was to learn about participants' housing food security education employment finance health mental health and personal connections over one month of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Results indicate:
 - About 50% reported COVID-19 having a negative impact on their living situation (e.g., being forced to leave their living arrangement, experiencing homelessness/housing instability)
 - About 75% reported a financial situation that would be stable for no more than a month
 - 55% reported being food insecure as a result of COVID-19
 - About 50% indicated a negative impact on their employment (e.g., being laid off, having hours/income severely cut)
 - 66% reported a negative impact on their educational progress or attainment
 - About 50% reported symptoms of depression or anxiety
- Read the full report and recommendations [here](#)

The Field Center's Policy Recommendations

- Ensure that older youth in foster care stay safe, housed, and connected to services and caring adults
- Professionals and other caring adults should connect with youth in foster care and young adults who have recently exited foster care as frequently as possible during this time, providing emotional and material support and reliable information
- Ensure access to assistance programs and distribute concrete resources (e.g., gift cards, bags of groceries, laptops, and/or Wi-Fi hotspots) directly to youth to alleviate financial or interpersonal stressors

Additional Resources

- [Policy Brief: The Forgotten Students: COVID-19 Response for Youth and Young Adults Aging out of Foster Care](#)
- [COVID-19: Child Welfare Resources and Recommendations for Legislators](#)

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