



Provide a solid road to adult independence for youth aging out of foster care

Issue Overview

Despite our best efforts, youth aging out of the foster care system face huge obstacles. They come from families that were unable to provide the basic safety and security a child needs. Lacking safe, stable families, they are often left to make their way in life without adult guidance and support. The poor outcomes for these youth are not surprising. According to a study by Casey Family Services¹ :

- Almost 1 in 5 had not completed high school or received a GED (according to KidsCount, New Hampshire's overall drop out rate is 5%)
- Only 1 in 5 had completed any degree or certificate beyond high school; only 2 in 100 had completed a bachelors degree (according to KidsCount, 32 in 100 of NH high school graduates between 25 and 29 have a college degree)
- 1 in 5 had been homeless after leaving foster care
- 1 in 3 lived below poverty; a similar number had no health insurance (according to KidsCount, fewer than 1 in 10 of all NH children live below poverty)

Approximately 60 children leave the foster care system every year in New Hampshire because they reach 18 with no permanent family.² Although a relatively small number, these are children for whom the state has taken



special responsibility by placing them in foster care because their families were unable to safely care for them.

Proposed Solution

We propose to work closely with DCYF, the legislature, service providers and foster care youth and alumni to devise legislation and administrative policies that implements these principles, beginning with 2 House bills

which were retained by the Children and Family Law Committee: HB 502 and HB 702.

HB 502 complements SB 168 enacted in 2007 which provides for tuition waivers in the NH University and Community College systems for young adults who have aged out of foster care. HB 502 seeks to provide Medicaid coverage for former foster children who are attending college. HB 702 addresses the other social service supports available for all young adults who have aged out of foster care. Together, these bills continue the work begun by DCYF and SB 168 to assure that all children aging out of foster care have a fair opportunity to become productive adults.

Call to Action

NH CAN partners, especially those serving older youth, can help us design, advocate for, and implement

The 2008 Priorities for New Hampshire's Children

NH CAN is a statewide, nonpartisan network of nearly 100 child-serving organizations working to improve the health and well-being of New Hampshire's children by driving governmental policy, changing budget priorities, and inspiring community action. Each year, NH CAN develops a collective set of Priorities for New Hampshire's Children, a child-centered plan of action for the legislature, state leaders, state agencies, social service providers, schools, communities and families. The Priorities for New Hampshire's Children reflects the consensus of nearly 100 partner organizations, and creates a common call to action that can be shared across our state.

a comprehensive independent living policy for young people aging out of foster care.

Find Out More

- Child and Family Services of New Hampshire is the lead NH CAN partner for this Priority and is leading this effort in New Hampshire. More information about CFS is online here: <http://www.cfsnh.org/>
- New Hampshire General Court. You can follow the progress of the bill, or find



contact information for your local representatives by going to <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/default.htm>.

- Children's Alliance of New Hampshire: You can download copies of the complete Priorities for New Hampshire's Children, additional fact sheets, and information about the New Hampshire Child Advocacy Network at the Children's Alliance website, www.childrennh.org. You can also track the progress of all the Priorities-related bills, as well as contact your local representatives, under the "Get Active" link.

References

Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 19, Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. http://www.ncset.org/summit05/docs/NCSET2005_2a_Courtney.pdf

Kessler, M. (2004). *The transition years: Serving current and former foster youth ages eighteen to twenty-one* [monograph]. Tulsa, OK: The University of Oklahoma National Resource Center for Youth Development. <http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/yd/resources/publications/monographs/transitions.pdf>

Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, US Dept. of Health and Human Services, Child Welfare Information Gateway, Outcomes for youth aging out of foster care. <http://www.childwelfare.gov/outofhome/independent/outcomes.cf>

¹ Improving Family Foster Care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study (2003) available at www.casey.org

² Information provided by NH Division for Children, Youth and Families, October, 2007. This number does not include children aging out of foster or residential care in the juvenile justice system.



NH CAN is a project of the Children's Alliance of New Hampshire

For more information on the *2008 Priorities for New Hampshire's Children*, please visit www.ChildrenNH.org

2 Greenwood Avenue, Concord, NH 03301 (603) 225-2264