

A Call to Action For Transition-Aged Foster Youth During the Pandemic

Fulfilling the Promise of the Supporting Foster Youth
and Families Through the Pandemic Act and Building
a Bridge to Thriving in the Recovery

Jennifer Pokempner and Sixto Cancel

In partnership with



**This report is a joint project of
Think of Us and Youth Law Center.**

Think of Us (TOU) operates as a Research and Development Lab for child welfare, transforming the system so that people with Lived Experience are at the center of designing, imagining, and building.

Youth Law Center (YLC) is a nonprofit legal advocacy organization that has worked for four decades to transform foster care and juvenile justice systems across the nation so every child and youth can thrive. YLC's advocacy aims to ensure children and youth are not only protected from harm and dangerous conditions in systems, but also receive the support, opportunities and love they need to grow up healthy and happy through child-focused, research-informed advocacy strategies, including litigation, policy reform, media advocacy, collaborative system-change projects, training and advice, and public education.

Acknowledgments

This report is the result of the work and feedback of many organizations and individuals and we are grateful to them all for their commitment to transition aged youth, advocating for positive change in partnership with young people, and their willingness to provide input on this report.

Thanks to the Check for Us Team at Think of Us, including Jess Skylar, Shae Harris, and Lived Experience Advisors Eddy Vanderkwaak, Yahnii Bridge, Justina Hall, Sabrina Abong, Azar Webb. Special thanks to Jennifer Rodriguez, Lauren Brady, Marisa Lopez-Scott and Jasmine Miller from the Youth Law Center for their collaboration and feedback.

We are grateful to the Check for Us Community Of Practice, which includes child welfare agencies from 35 states. These 35 states have been working to implement the Division X of the CAA and have answered the call to provide feedback on the challenges and bright spots of the implementation process.

We also want to thank our partners from Foster Success in Indiana and the child welfare agency in Kentucky, including its wonderful youth navigator team.

We also want to thank Hope Cooper, Angel Petite, and Celeste Bodner for providing feedback.

We are also grateful to the members of the federal older youth coalition, which came together at the beginning of the pandemic and has continued to work for pandemic and post pandemic policy transformation for transition aged youth with experience in foster care. Coalition members include: ACTION Ohio; California Youth Connection; Center for the Study of Social Policy; Children's Advocacy Institute; Children's Defense Fund; Children's Law Center of California; Children's Rights; Child Welfare League of America; Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute; First Focus Campaign for Children; Foster Care Alumni of America; FosterClub; Futures without Violence; John Burton Advocates for Youth; Juvenile Law Center; National Center for Housing and Child Welfare; National Center for Youth Law; National Crittenton; National Foster Youth Institute; iFoster; National Association of Counsel for Children; Partners for Our Children of the University of Washington; Think of Us; Youth Law Center and Youth Villages.

Finally, we want to acknowledge the contributions made to this report by young people with experience in foster care. The Supporting Foster Youth and Families Through the Pandemic Act was passed as a result of the tireless advocacy of young people. We hope this report supports their continued advocacy to both make sure states implement the current law and push for a new law that includes extended flexibilities and deadlines.

We hope this report will support their continued advocacy for effective implementation of the current law, their fight for an extension of the law's deadlines, and post-pandemic transformation of policies to support young people.

Contents

I. Introduction	5
1. A Call to Action for Transition-Aged Foster Youth with Experience in Foster Care	6
2. Data Sources	8
II. Background: The Path to the Older Youth Provisions of the Supporting Foster Youth and Families Through the Pandemic Act	9
1. The Continued Needs of Young People with Experience in Foster Care and the Cost of Failing to Take Action	10
2. The Older Youth Provisions of the The Supporting Foster Youth and Families Through the Pandemic Act	13
3. The Check for Us Campaign	16
III. Implementation Challenges and the Progress Made to Overcome Them	17
1. Challenges Reported by State Child Welfare Agencies	18
2. Challenges Reported by Stakeholders	21
3. How We Are Poised for Effective Implementation in FY 2022	25
IV. Recommended Immediate Actions Prior to September 30, 2021	28
V. Recommended Actions For Post Pandemic Innovation and Reform for Transition-Aged Foster Youth	30
	34
References	



I. Introduction

1. A Call to Action for Transition-Aged Youth with Experience in Foster Care

This report calls on Congress to extend the aid and deadlines provided in the older youth provisions of the Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act. This continuation is needed to ensure that eligible youth can receive the intended aid, which is critical to helping them weather the many difficult challenges brought on by the pandemic. The pandemic has intensified every inequity for youth exiting foster care to crisis levels – homelessness, unemployment, physical and mental health crises, and poverty. It has set them behind their peers in countless ways and our delayed response has compounded the negative impact. This report also urges Congress to gear up for far-reaching post-pandemic reforms to better support young people transitioning to adulthood from foster care.

The older youth provisions of the Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act, Division X of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (“Division X of the CAA¹”), was enacted with bipartisan support to provide targeted aid to youth in foster care and young adults who recently left foster care. This law provided new funding and expanded services to create a lifeline of support to young people and has made a difference in the lives of many young people across the country. However, its intended aid has not yet reached all eligible young people with the speed hoped for. **Many provisions of the law will expire on September 30, 2021.** If these provisions are not extended thousands of young people will age out of foster care without having a plan for stable housing and many more will be cut off from financial and other assistance and case work support. Congress should continue to champion the needs of these youth and young adults by extending the deadlines of these provisions to allow needed aid to actually reach young people.

Important lessons have been learned over the last nine months about factors that contributed to slower-than-expected implementation of the Congressionally enacted emergency assistance to youth and young adults from foster care. Insights gained during the last nine months are now informing state and local approaches to delivering that aid to young people, but without an extension of the implementation timeline, young people will lose out on receiving the aid intended for them. This report describes key implementation challenges, how they are being addressed and how we are now poised to complete effective implementation of the law as a result of lessons learned, increased capacity, infrastructure, and staffing.

Congress has a strong record of legislative achievements aimed at promoting the well-being of young people who have experienced foster care as they transition to adulthood. This passage of Division X of the CAA is further evidence of that Congressional support. It is also evidence of the effective advocacy and mobilization of young people with experience in foster care. They are not only the intended beneficiaries of the law, but were and are a powerful national advocacy force. Young people have bravely shared stories of their hardships and are urging policymakers to grant more time for implementation so that they can be connected with the support they need. These young people are also calling attention to the need to re-evaluate how we serve, support, and partner with transition-aged youth in the long term. The pandemic, and our responses to it, have highlighted the degree to which we continue to fail young people and the related need to redesign and expand services and investments for older youth and young adults. It is imperative that we plan for bolder and more far-reaching reforms to promote better outcomes for all young people, and eliminate harmful disparities.

We urge Congress to do the following:

Extend & Enhance Existing Provisions of Division X of the CAA:

To ensure the health, safety and well-being of young people with experience in foster care during the pandemic and recovery and to avoid devastating outcomes, Congress must take immediate action to extend and enhance the older youth provisions of the Supporting Foster Youth and Families Through the Pandemic Act that were contained in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, until at least September 30, 2022.

Begin Far Reaching Re-Visioning of Policies and Supports for Transition-Aged Youth with Experience in Foster Care:

Far-reaching legislative reform is needed in our post-pandemic world to develop an improved infrastructure for service delivery and supports and an adequate and sustainable funding stream to better support young people to achieve family stability and succeed as they transition from foster care to adulthood.

Develop Law and Policies that Meaningfully Engage Young People with Experience in Foster Care at All Levels:

Meaningful engagement and power sharing with young people with experience in foster care must be institutionally supported and consistently maintained at the federal, state and local levels for all policies related to young people.

“This [Division X] assistance has been life changing for so many older youth transitioning out of foster care. Youth are able to thrive and not just survive, they used this money to better themselves and create opportunities for themselves. This population struggles so much financially because they are provided with the bare minimum. Having some of that financial stress relieved has improved mental health and self confidence, as well as provided opportunities that were previously inaccessible. It is unfortunate it took a global pandemic for us to provide older youth transitioning out of foster care more than just the bare minimum to get by, however, it has shown that these youth do not have to be destined for homelessness, unemployment, experience mental health and health issues, experience generational system involvement, or have poor educational outcomes. This assistance has provided equity to older youth in foster care by providing them with similar resources needed to transition into adulthood as their non-foster care peers. However, this assistance has only begun to reach a small percentage of those it is intended for. We need more time to outreach, regain trust from youth who had poor experiences in the foster care system, and get this assistance in the hands of those who need it most.”

Megan Tribble, Foster Success, Indiana

2. Data Sources

This report uses the following data sources:

- Responses from child welfare agency leaders in 30 states to survey questions posed by Think of Us in August 2021 as part of the Check for Us Chafee Stimulus Community of Practice. Of the 30 respondents, 20 responded directly to a survey and 10 provided feedback via email. The respondents provided qualitative and quantitative responses that shed light on their challenges and approaches to implementation of the pandemic aid for foster youth. The survey did not ask states to identify themselves, so as to allow for open feedback from respondents. See below for more information about the Check for Us Campaign.
- Lessons learned from the Check for Us Campaign’s Chafee Stimulus Community of Practice.
- Feedback from stakeholders, including members of the federal older youth coalition, which includes approximately 20 national and state advocacy organizations and service providers. ²
- Information gathered through the work of Juvenile Law Center, Youth Law Center, and FosterClub on implementation, which provides many examples of state implementation and practices. ³

II. Background

1. The Continued Needs of Young People with Experience in Foster Care and the Cost of Failing to Take Action

A. The Current Needs of Young People with Experience in Foster Care as the Pandemic Continues

The pandemic continues to significantly impact young people with experience in foster care. While states are now making strides to get funds into the hands of young people, many young people still await the promised assistance of Division X of the CAA. A targeted response for young people with experience in foster care through Division X of the CAA was necessary because many of these young people do not have the emotional and financial support of family that has been a lifeline to so many of their non-systems involved peers during the pandemic. That targeted response is still needed as young people continue to confront the impacts of the pandemic as the September 30th cutoff approaches.

Several surveys and polls were conducted in the last year and a half that show the continued devastating impact of the pandemic on youth with experience in foster care. These surveys demonstrate the need for a continued federal response through an extension of Division X of the CAA; without it, young people with experience in foster care will fall even further behind their peers.

“If we think about the pandemic as a community trauma ... our foster youth, because of the vulnerabilities that they’ve experienced already and their prior history of trauma and developmental challenges, really have been impacted in a more significant way.”

Moisés Barón, CEO of the San Diego Center for Children, quoted in *How the Pandemic Roiled the Foster Care System*, Scientific American (June 27, 2021).

[Appendix A](#) contains a summary of the results of the polls and surveys that were completed by: FosterClub, Think of Us, The Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice and Research, Foster Advocates in Minnesota, Foster Youth Success Alliance in New York, and John Burton Advocates for Youth. This data includes national surveys and state specific polls, providing a large cross section of experiences from across the country.

John Burton Advocates for Youth (“JBAY”) completed the most recent survey, [Hanging on by a Thread](#): The Cumulative Impact of the Pandemic on Youth Who Have Been in Foster Care or Homeless (John Burton Advocates for Youth May 2021) (“Hanging on by a Thread”). JBAY surveyed 598 youth aged 18 to 24 from across California who have been in foster care or experienced homelessness. The results are consistent with the other survey and poll results detailed in Appendix A. Hanging on By a Thread also compares its findings to the Field Center

survey, which was released in May 2020, [The Experiences of Older Youth In & Aged Out of Foster Care During COVID-19](#). *Hanging on by a Thread* shows that the already significant challenges facing foster youth have increased in almost every area since the first months of the pandemic. Of those surveyed:

22% experienced homelessness since the pandemic began

29% feared being forced to leave their current living arrangements

100% reported at least one negative impact on their schooling

68% reported a negative impact on employment, including being laid off, experiencing reduced hours, and an inability to find work

50% reported a negative impact on mental health (doubling the 24% report in April 2020)

The survey also noted that challenges were compounded for parenting youth⁴ and that Black youth were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, particularly in the area of housing.⁵

“It’s clear from [the JBAY] survey findings and interviews that many youth feel alone and abandoned. For some, it has resurfaced deeply held trauma and for others, it has made their day-to-day effort to maintain their mental health that much harder. Many of the institutions that offered guidance and support were no longer accessible, such as schools, counselors, friends and extended family members.”

Hanging on by a Thread, p. 32, (May 2021).

All of the surveys and polls demonstrate an extreme level of stress and need that deserves a continued tailored response through the extension of Division X of the CAA. The following are findings from the polls and surveys mentioned above that further demonstrate consistent troubling data points and trends:

- **Financial Insecurity:** 73.8% of respondents to the Think of Us survey reported experiencing high degrees of financial insecurity.⁶
- **Housing Instability:** Almost 50% of the respondents in the Field Center survey reported housing instability or homelessness.⁷
- **Employment Challenges:** Almost 50% of respondents to the Field Center survey reported negative impacts on employment.⁸
- **Food Insecurity:** 22% of respondents to the Think of Us Survey reported experiencing high food insecurity.⁹
- **Educational Challenges:** 22% of respondents to the Fostering Youth Success Alliance survey reported that their education was derailed by the pandemic, many completely pausing their studies.¹⁰

- **Racial Disparities in Impact:** Results from the surveys completed by Minnesota's Foster Youth Advocates and Think of Us showed that Black youth and youth of color were impacted more negatively than their peers. ¹¹
- **Expectant and Parenting Young People Were Disproportionately Impacted:** Results from Think of Us showed a rate of 80.3% of parenting young people experiencing financial insecurity. ¹²
- **Lack of Support Network and Family:** 20% of youth polled by FosterClub reported being entirely on their own, lacking connections that might help them endure the pandemic. ¹³
- **Anxiety and Mental Health:** 66% of respondents to the Fostering Youth Success Alliance survey reported heightened anxiety during the pandemic. ¹⁴

The depth and scope of the challenges young people have faced and continue to face will only be adequately addressed by continuing and improving the targeted responses of Division X of the CAA and beginning to design a longer term, comprehensive response.

B. The Cost of Failing to Take Action by September 30, 2021

As you read this report, many current and former foster youth are still experiencing financial strains and housing instability, their connection to education and employment has been negatively impacted, and their mental health needs have grown. Chafee eligible young people are transitioning to adulthood. This is a pivotal time of development when our investment, or lack of investment, can make a significant difference in the trajectory of their lives. Providing more robust services during this time period results in better adult outcomes and will reduce social and economic costs long term.

For example,

- The gains we see in better outcomes when youth are provided support through extended foster care are great: youth in extended foster care experience better outcomes than those who do not receive continued services and even a small amount of time in extended care makes a difference. ¹⁵
- There is a return on investment of \$4.1 billion per year per cohort of youth aging out of foster care if they are supported in achieving outcomes similar to their peers in families. ¹⁶
- When we do not provide transition aged youth the support all youth need and deserve as they reach adulthood, we put them at great risk for poor outcomes like homelessness and reliance on public assistance. ¹⁷

If young people lose access to critical supports and services at a time of such high need, they are at even greater risk of negative and costly outcomes.

"Without intervention and additional resources, the instability and disconnection magnified during the pandemic will persist and prevent (young people's) growth and achievement."

Foster Youth Success Alliance, *Moving Forward:
A Post-Pandemic Blueprint for New York's Foster Youth 6 (2021)*.

2. The Older Youth Provisions of The Supporting Foster Youth and Families Through the Pandemic Act

A. Summary of the Bill and Key Timelines

Division X of the CAA aimed to provide targeted relief and aid to young people with experience in foster care with two main goals:

1. Ensure safety and security during the pandemic by prohibiting youth from aging out of foster care (discharging from foster care due to age) and allowing youth to re-enter foster care.
2. Help young people currently in foster care as well as those who have left foster care meet their immediate needs by providing an increase in Chafee funds ¹⁸ by \$400 million (without any state match) and by providing temporary flexibilities in the administration of the Chafee program, including the Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) Program.

The text of Division X of the CAA can be found in [Appendix B](#). The law was effective on December 27, 2020. A Program Instruction on the law was issued by the Administration for Children and Families on March 9, 2021, more than two months after the enactment of the law. See [ACYF-CB-PI-21-04](#) (March 9, 2021).

While states have until September 30, 2022 to expend their supplemental Chafee funds, the following provisions of the law expire on September 30, 2021, bringing an end to vital federally-funded support that has reached only a fraction of its intended recipients.

The provisions that expire September 30, 2021 include:

- The moratorium on aging out of foster care, which requires that child welfare agencies not terminate services for youth aging out of foster care even if they reach age 21;
- The requirement to allow re-entry into foster care if they aged out of foster care from January 27, 2020 to the present;
- Waiver of participation requirements (maintaining employment or attending school, for example) for extended foster care and re-entry;
- Extending the age of eligibility for Chafee services and funds until age 27;
- Waiver of the 30% cap on Chafee funds for housing;
- Waiver of the enrollment and satisfactory academic progress requirements (SAP) for the Education and Training Voucher Program;
- Provision of flexibility in the use of ETV funds for maintaining training and postsecondary education for expenses that are not part of the cost of attendance but would help support youth in remaining enrolled;
- The \$4000 cap per year per youth on using Chafee funds for costs related to driving.

B. The Chafee Program and Extended Foster Care

The aid provided through Division X of the CAA is built on the existing structure of the Chafee program and foster care for youth and young adults, including extended foster care (foster care for youth ages 18–21). This section provides a summary of the Chafee program and extended foster care to provide context. More detail can be found in [Appendix C](#) and in the excellent publication, [Youth Provisions of the Supporting Foster Youth and Families Through the Pandemic Act](#) (Div. X of P.L. 116–260) (CRS Report April 21, 2020).

The John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood, 42 U.S.C.A. § 677, was enacted in 1999, and has been amended periodically since that time to, among other things, expand the eligibility criteria and to include the Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV). The Chafee program provides flexible funds to states to provide services, supports, and funds to young people as they make the transition to adulthood.¹⁹ Currently, Chafee funds can be used to provide funds and supportive services for young people in foster care who are age 14 or older and who have had experience in foster care and have aged out and are under age 21 or 23.²⁰ The Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV) provides up to \$5000 for the cost of higher education and training programs per youth per year for up to five years for Chafee eligible youth. The Family First Prevention Services Act increased the age of eligibility for ETV to 26 and provided states with extended foster care the option to extend Chafee eligibility to age 23. As of December 2020, 21 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, and two tribes have taken the option to expand Chafee eligibility to age 23.²¹

Chafee funding has remained fixed at \$140 million for many years and only recently increased to \$143 million annually. The Program provides up to \$60 million annually in discretionary funding for the ETV program, but only provided \$43 million in fiscal year 2021. Given the number of Chafee eligible young people and the array of supports needed, the Chafee allocation continues to be inadequate.²² The Annie E. Casey Foundation estimated that currently there are 539,296 Chafee eligible young people who are ages 14–23.²³ The number increases to 880,967 under Division X of the CAA,²⁴ which extends eligibility through age 26.

Since 2008 and the enactment of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoption Act, P.L. 110–351, states have had the option to provide extended foster care and receive federal Title IV–E funds to share the cost of care.²⁵ Extended foster care (the provision of foster care supports for young people between ages 18 and 21) has been shown to improve adult outcomes and reduce poor outcomes like homelessness, unemployment and reliance on public benefits.²⁶ Its impact on providing stability was accentuated during the pandemic as many young people avoided homelessness due to the moratorium on aging out.²⁷

“FosterClub’s poll showed that Division X’s moratorium on aging out prevented youth from aging out to homelessness during the pandemic. The opportunity to remain in a foster care placement was a stabilizing force. Thousands of young people will be propelled into homelessness if we end the moratorium on September 30th.”

Angel Petite, Senior Policy Manager, FosterClub

II. Background

Prior to the pandemic, 32 states had an extended foster care program that used Title IV-E funds.²⁸ An additional five states elected to provide federally funded extended care during the pandemic pursuant to Stafford Act Authority.²⁹

Division X of the CAA did not change what Chafee funds could be used for, but did dramatically increase the amount of funding states were provided. Providing direct financial assistance, housing support and aid to make driving possible have always been permissible uses of Chafee funds. Division X of the CAA almost doubled the Chafee funds available to child welfare agencies, expanded the age of eligibility, and provided crucial temporary flexibilities. Division X also mandated extended foster care services across the country by placing a moratorium on aging out and requiring re-entry into foster care regardless of whether the state had federally funded extended care (and allowed states to draw down federal funds for that purpose).

C. Youth Advocacy to Pass the Supporting Foster Youth and Families Through the Pandemic Act

The Supporting Foster Youth and Families Through the Pandemic Act, HR 7947, was included as Division X in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, P.L. 116-260, as a result of months of advocacy from young people impacted by the foster system. Young people shared their unique needs, and explained that the pandemic aid being provided to most families was not reaching them. Young people made it clear that they needed financial assistance as well as other supports and that they, as a group, needed targeted aid if we were to ensure that their needs were met. Unlike many young people who were relying on family for critical support during the pandemic, young people with experience in foster care do not have that safety net. Young people met with numerous lawmakers, including the prime sponsors of the bi-partisan bill, Representatives Danny Davis (D-IL) and Jackie Walorski (R-IN), wrote op-eds, participated in Town Halls, met with key members of the Administration, wrote letters, and mobilized their peers. Their advocacy was instrumental in ensuring that HR 7947 was included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act and their continued engagement in implementation is equally vital.

3. The Check for Us Campaign

Think of Us launched the Check for Us Campaign following the enactment of Division X of the CAA. Think of Us is an organization that drives systems change in child welfare, building proximity to ensure that people with lived experience in the foster care system are at the center of decision making and change. Think of Us envisions a world in which every person has the conditions they need to heal, develop, and thrive. One of its programs works to connect current and former foster youth with critical resources, including job opportunities, housing vouchers, direct cash assistance, and emergency aid opportunities needed to prevent homelessness, keep families together, and provide funds for food and basic needs. With philanthropic support, Think of Us developed the Check for Us Campaign in response to the enactment of the Division X of the CAA, and built on existing efforts of Think of Us prior to and during the pandemic. The Campaign responded to the void that existed at the federal level to provide outreach and communications around the law.³⁰

The Check For Us Campaign seeks to connect Chafee eligible youth with emergency funds and other opportunities made available through Division X of the CAA. The Campaign was developed to spread the word to young people about aid, the expansion of eligibility criteria and to assist states in simplifying the process to request and distribute aid. A key tool that the Campaign developed was a [secure application](#) for assistance that could be used by all child welfare agencies across the country. The online application collects information from young people directly and allows child welfare agencies to identify eligible youth, understand their needs, and reach out to them to provide assistance. The [Campaign website](#) serves as a hub of information about assistance in states, how to apply for aid, and communications materials. The Campaign developed social media materials for states to use, partnered with states, non-profits, and service providers to do outreach, and led Days of Action as well as other social media events to spread the word.

As part of the Campaign, Think of Us developed a Chafee Stimulus Community of Practice (CoP) to support state and county child welfare agencies and provide up-to-date information to aid with implementation. Thirty Five states are participating in the CoP. As a result of the Campaign, forty three states are working closely with TOU as they administer their Chafee pandemic aid program and twenty three states are using the secure application for youth to request aid. The Campaign has also built an infrastructure to provide text messages to up to 40,000 young people as part of outreach efforts and has engaged more than 23,000 young people in their Days of Action.

“We knew from day one that states needed help building the infrastructure to provide aid to young people. We launched this initiative to help them with this work. We co-designed everything with young people and implementation staff and created concrete tools that were able to reach 23,000 young people.”

Sixto M. Cancel, Founder and CEO, Think of Us



III.

Implementation Challenges and How We are Overcoming Them

This section describes implementation challenges identified primarily by state and county child welfare agencies charged with implementing Division X of the CAA, including the thirty states that responded to Think of Us's request for feedback. This section also includes feedback from other stakeholders. Finally, strategies that have been employed to overcome these challenges are described. At this stage in the pandemic, states are now in a better position to use these strategies and take them to scale. [APPENDIX D](#) contains more detail on recommended implementation strategies.

1. Challenges Reported by State Child Welfare Agencies

A. The Timeline for Implementation Was Too Short

All respondents reported that the timeline for implementation of Division X of the CAA was the most significant challenge. While child welfare agencies recognized the urgency of getting assistance out to young people, many did not have the capacity or infrastructure to administer aid nor increase their staffing capacity quickly. As will be discussed directly below, procurement, contracting, and hiring processes also posed challenges to quick action. In addition, staffing shortages and virtual work slowed implementation.

While many child welfare agencies faced structural challenges that were beyond their control, most, over time, worked through or made strides to overcome those barriers. For many of these states more time will greatly increase the number of young people to which states can provide assistance.

"It takes time to find eligible young people and to equitably distribute funds, especially in a county-administered system. Additional time to continue accessing these funds would ensure the funds go toward meaningfully supporting the youth who need it the most."

Child Welfare Agency Professional

"We KNOW there are many more [eligible young people]. We are partnering with Think Of Us for tech-based outreach and continue to expand our partnerships with community-based providers that serve this population to get the word out, but I'm certain there is more we can do to reach the largest number of eligible young adults as possible if we had additional time."

Child Welfare Agency Professional

B. State Legislative Action Was Needed

Over half of the survey respondents reported that the child welfare agency could not receive and distribute Chafee funds without state legislative action. This structural issue created a delay in several states, and at least one state is still awaiting funds to be released to the child welfare agency despite significant advocacy.³¹

Several states reported that delays in implementation resulted from child welfare agencies not being able to release Chafee funds outside of the state's budget cycle, which for some occurred several months after the law's enactment. Some states were able to use state funds to begin implementation, and then make up the gap once the federal funds were released through the state budgetary process. At this time, almost all states have addressed this issue, but the delay created at the outset resulted in a need for extended time to reach the greatest number of youth.

C. Federal Guidance on Division X of the CAA and its Impact on Related Federal Programs was Delayed

Almost all of the respondents reported that implementation was delayed and made more complicated due to delays in the issuance of federal guidance. More than two thirds reported challenges related to unclear interpretations of the law. While the law was enacted and effective on December 27, 2020, federal guidance in the form of a [Program Instruction](#) was not released until March 9, 2021. Respondents also reported that the guidance left several areas unclear, causing further confusion and delay. Examples of this lack of clarity included whether Chafee funds were taxable and the status of Chafee funds with respect to other means tested benefits.³² Only very recently has guidance on this issue been forthcoming from some of the relevant agencies. See Letter to TANF Administrators, CCDF Administrators, and Child Welfare Agency Leaders from the Administration for Children (August 26, 2021); [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\) – State Guidance for Pandemic Funding under the Chafee Foster Care Program \(Chafee Program\)](#) (August 6, 2021); [Effect of COVID-19-Related Financial Assistance on SSI Income and Resources](#) (July 23, 2021).

D. Out of Date/Inefficient Data Systems Created Challenges for Outreach and Eligibility Verification

Agencies need accurate and efficient data systems to identify eligible youth, verify eligibility, and undertake effective outreach. Over half of the respondents reported having insufficient or outdated technology or infrastructure and over one third reported information and technology challenges. Examples of challenges included not having systems to capture personally identifiable information efficiently and not having child welfare data systems that include comprehensive data such as accurate names, dates of birth, phone numbers, emails and addresses. These structural issues made verification of eligibility very time consuming and was a barrier to connecting with potentially eligible youth. Providing states more time to do this work is critical given the reality of current systems. While there is not a quick fix to modernizing aging data systems, child welfare agencies are employing strategies such as use of peer navigators and staff to help with verification issues. In addition, the technical assistance provided to states by the Check for Us Campaign and Think of Us, innovative

models for data collection and sharing in some of the states, and the potential of utilizing the talents of the United States Digital Service to improve child welfare agency data systems support more far reaching improvements.



Bright Spots

The Child Welfare agency in Oregon collaborated with FosterClub to develop a plan for outreach and communication that included partnering with many community stakeholders and employing young people to conduct outreach and provide resource navigation.

Allegheny County in Pennsylvania has an integrated data warehouse and currently serves young people until age 26. This put them in a good position to identify and outreach to eligible youth. The child welfare agency also enlisted its Family Finding/ Diligent Search Unit to find accurate contact information for young people.

E. Inflexible Finance, Procurement, Contracting, and Hiring Rules and Processes Delayed Quick Implementation

Many states reported that they have rigid finance, procurement and contracting rules that made swift implementation challenging for the moratorium, re-entry and Chafee provisions. Approximately two thirds of the respondents reported both procurement and payment system gaps and problems. Examples included: long delays in approval for expanding contracts, the inability to release funds directly to young people, and procurement procedures to purchase goods and services that were not amenable to responding to crises.

Many child welfare agencies needed to expand contracts or enter new ones to have capacity to implement the law. However, some reported that they were not permitted to contract with any new vendors or local organizations to distribute funds or provide outreach. Many states also reported that their processes for hiring staff took time they did not have.

While lawmakers clearly intended that Chafee funds should be used for direct financial payments, many respondents reported that their agencies were not set up to do so and had to develop whole new processes for direct payments.



The Oregon Department of Human Services contracted with FosterClub to administer funds to youth not currently in care or connected with Independent Living Services. FosterClub can issue funds electronically (Zelle, PayPal, Cash). In addition to providing funds, FosterClub connects young people with services, supports and resources to comprehensively address their needs.

“Child welfare isn’t a direct payment system so that component has been difficult to maneuver”

Child Welfare Professional

2. Challenges Reported by Stakeholders

Below are implementation challenges identified by stakeholders and young people. Stakeholders include advocacy and service provider organizations that work with older youth and young adults with experience in foster care. We note where the feedback of stakeholders was consistent with that of child welfare agency leaders.

A. Reluctance to Provide Direct Financial Assistance

Federal guidance has consistently been clear that child welfare agencies should be using their increased Chafee allocation for stimulus-style direct financial assistance to young people. For example, the Program Instruction included the following:

In the past year, CB has heard from many young people who are in or were in foster care that they have not benefited from other COVID-19 relief assistance, such as stimulus payments or unemployment insurance. Therefore, CB urges all child welfare agencies receiving the additional Chafee grant to consider using at least a portion of the funds to facilitate quick and streamlined access to direct financial support for youth. Program Instruction, pages 9–10. During a [Town Hall on April 15, 2021](#), Associate Children’s Bureau Commissioner Aysha Schomburg stated “[Providing direct financial assistance] is not controversial....Give young people the cash and trust them to make the decisions they need to make for their lives and their priorities. That’s my message.”

Despite this clear message, community stakeholders reported that implementation has been challenging in some jurisdictions where child welfare agencies were reluctant to provide direct financial assistance to young people because they did not trust young people to manage their money properly. This mindset resulted in implementation delays, failures to provide direct financial assistance all together, and the development of programs that placed many restrictions on eligible young people.

It is noteworthy that many child welfare agencies embraced the opportunity to provide direct financial assistance and to shift their practice. Some child welfare agencies reported that providing funds with no strings shifted the dynamic with young people in a positive way: they felt respected, valued and trusted in a way they hadn't before. Building this trust between the agency and young people was an asset that aided in engaging young people in services. Agencies also shared that providing youth funds along with multiple opportunities for support, including financial management instruction and case management, was welcomed by many young people. This shift in mindset and practice has increased over the last nine months and child welfare agencies that are providing direct financial assistance and seeing the positive results are sharing this experience and providing support to their peers in other states.

"We are... making sure that we educate these youth on money mindfulness and they are running with it. Many youth are learning about saving money, building their credit, and improving their money lifestyle."

Tia, Peer Navigator, Kentucky



Bright Spot

Kentucky provided unconditional (stimulus style) direct financial assistance to young people while also providing an array of other supports and opportunities for youth to engage with the agency and peer navigators. They trusted young people to know how best to spend their money, but offered voluntary financial management sessions as well as other services to provide support.

B. Lack of Infrastructure for Meaningful Youth Engagement

Stakeholders reported that some child welfare agencies did not have infrastructure to engage youth and alumni. They reflected that this gap resulted in: a. delays in implementation, b. implementation plans that did not reflect what youth and young adults identified as important to them, and c. limited agency capacity to outreach to young people. Effectively reaching out to large numbers of young people, especially those who have aged out, depends on partnerships with young people. Agencies that did not have partnerships with young people that they could easily activate and who could offer an understanding of their experience of youth and their channels of communication were at a disadvantage in the implementation process. We now have many excellent examples from states as diverse as Hawaii, Ohio, California, Indiana, Iowa, and Kentucky, just to name a few, that can serve as youth engagement models for other states going forward. Given additional time to implement the provisions, we are confident that many states will be able to learn from their peers and successfully implement new practices that will resolve many of the gaps in access described here.



Bright Spot

Iowa began implementation planning as soon as the law passed and included their Foster Care Youth Council, Achieving Maximum Potential (AMP), in the planning and implementation process by doing focus groups, surveying 378 young people, and including them in planning discussions. Iowa was able to easily tap into and partner with the existing structure that had organizational support.

C. Challenges in Outreaching to the Older Cohort of Young People (21–27) and Those Most in Need

Community stakeholders and youth reported that many eligible youth and young adults who were older and those who were in the most challenging situations were not receiving assistance and faced even greater barriers to accessing aid. Child welfare agency respondents echoed this challenge. This included eligible youth who are or were:

- between ages 21 and 27 and are not connected to services,
- in the juvenile justice system or criminal justice system,
- housing insecure young people who are not connected to services,
- expectant and parenting youth,
- youth with disabilities, and
- youth who moved to other states.

While some states eventually did develop policies to address the needs of some of these populations, it was late in the game. The result is that many eligible youth have not yet received any aid despite the need.

In addition, several child welfare agency respondents reported that they did not have the capacity or expertise to outreach to youth 21 and older who were no longer connected with child welfare services. Many states reported that they did not have contact information for large numbers of eligible youth to undertake notification and outreach. As noted above, respondents were frustrated by lack of access to data and were eager for technical assistance and interagency collaboration that could aid in identifying and providing outreach to young people they knew were eligible and could benefit from aid.



The child welfare agency in Oregon collaborated with FosterClub to develop a plan for outreach and communication that included partnering with many community stakeholders and employing young people to do outreach and provide resource navigation.

Tennessee identified Chafee eligible youth who were in juvenile justice placements and provided assistance with applications for aid.

California developed a FAQ that detailed how youth in the juvenile and criminal justice system could access direct financial assistance.

D. Lack of Transparency, Oversight and Accountability in How Funds are Used

Many stakeholders and young people reported that child welfare agencies did not share publicly their implementation plans and information about how young people could request assistance. Many states had no public information or contact people who were publicly available to answer questions or help young people. While the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) developed a website related to the law, it does not contain any state specific information about how to access aid other than a list of state Independent Living Coordinators who coordinate Chafee services for the state.

Young people and stakeholders reported that the lack of transparency in state policies was perceived as enabling discretion that was at odds with the law, which contained no eligibility criteria other than Chafee eligibility for aid and being in foster care or having aged out at a designated time for re-entry. They also reported barriers to applying for and receiving aid that did not take into account the realities facing many young people such as not having reliable internet, required documentation, or easy access to banking.

Stakeholders and young people also expressed frustration that some child welfare agencies were not open about how funds were being used, specifically how much of their allocation went to direct financial assistance and housing. They were frustrated that the law was not more specific about how states are to serve youth and did not include a requirement to share that information publicly. There was also frustration that ACF has not stepped in to provide more oversight and accountability. We believe ACF has the capacity and skill to provide more oversight and leadership on implementation going forward and that both Congress and the Administration's leadership team for American Rescue Plan (ARP) implementation can provide more accountability and support to state child welfare agencies so they can be successful in getting out assistance.

“There needs to be a consistent practice/mandate for all states to serve the same populations in the same way. Some states didn’t provide any assistance which is not helpful to the youth who needed support. More federal guidance/directives to force states/agencies to work in a more efficient way with less barriers would help get funds/services in youths hands faster.”

Child Welfare Professional

3. How We Are Poised for Effective Implementation in FY 2022

We are in an improved position nine months following the enactment of Division X of the CAA. Not only do we have the lessons of the last nine months, but child welfare agencies, private providers, and community stakeholders have increased their staffing capacities, have overcome challenges related to administrative processes, and have benefited from the scaling up of other pandemic relief programs. Child welfare agencies and partners know that young people with experience in foster care still need targeted assistance and want to make good on the promises made to them in Division X of the CAA. Division X implementation efforts are also benefiting from national efforts to distribute relief under the American Rescue Plan (ARP). Outreach efforts tailored to transition aged youth, young families, and individuals unconnected to formal services for ARP efforts are being developed and can be leveraged to reach young adults with experience in foster care eligible for Chafee funds and other aid. The following developments and model practices put states, territories, and tribes in an improved position to effectively complete implementation of Division X and get funds out to young people if given more time:

- Many states and jurisdictions are well into implementation and almost all states have begun implementation.
- As described in Section II(3), The Check for Us Campaign and Think of Us have helped child welfare agencies build the infrastructure to outreach to young people and administer aid. It has helped states develop systems to communicate with large numbers of young people, securely apply for aid, and improved processes for verification and distribution of funds. These are gains that are allowing states to pick up the pace of distributing aid and are also improvements that will serve the child welfare agency long term in their capacity to respond to young people.
- There are models that address many of the implementation challenges discussed above, including strategies for:
 - identification and outreach of eligible youth that include: hiring alumni and peers, collaborating with other agencies and organizations serving transition aged youth (including data sharing), and using family finding technologies to identify up-to-date contact information.
 - streamlined eligibility verification that includes use of self-attestation.

- transparent information sharing through the development of websites and direct applications for assistance that includes specific instructions on how to seek aid.
- addressing procurement and hiring challenges by contracting with private providers and expanding existing contracts.
- building youth and young adult engagement into the implementation process by hiring young people directly, leveraging and building upon existing youth boards, and pairing surveying youth with the delivery of funds and services.

[APPENDIX D](#) contains more details on recommended implementation strategies.

“During the pandemic, I became unemployed and then became homeless. I couldn’t keep my car, so I had no transportation. Because of this assistance, I now have a place to live, a job, and a car to help me get to my job every day. I was also able to earn a certification that is going to help me start my own business. Within a short amount of time, I was put leaps and bounds ahead of where I would have been without this help. This assistance has changed my mindset of despair to a mindset of motivation. I feel more capable and supported than I ever have before. I feel seen. People are finally paying attention.”

Dejuna R., Age 22, Indiana

“When reaching out to these youth, you hear the struggles that they are going through because of the pandemic and it is heartbreaking. As soon as we let them know about the assistance you can just feel the shift change to this hopefulness...All of this good is happening but we have barely scratched the surface. We need more time to reach more youth and let them know about this amazing opportunity. With all of this in mind I believe it is incredibly beneficial to extend this aid for these youth. It would provide a lot of much needed support.”

Tia, Peer Navigator, Kentucky



Bright Spots

Think of Us launched the Check for Us national campaign to support states with finding and connecting with eligible young people so that they can receive aid through Division X. All aspects of the campaign were developed in collaboration with young people with lived experience in the foster care system. This included members of the campaign staff. Over the course of three months, Check for Us built capacity to implement Division X across the country by: (1) designing, testing and launching a national website and marketing campaign, (2) building a national application that achieved an 80% completion rate (compared with an industry norm of 20%), and (3) connecting nearly 30,000 young people to assistance in 43 states, transferring data including contact information and reported needs directly with state departments.



IV. Recommended Immediate Actions Prior to September 30, 2021

1

Extend all provisions of Division X of the CAA until September 30, 2022 and continue the increase in Chafee funds.

There is overwhelming consensus that child welfare agencies need more time to implement Division X of the CAA. They need more time because of the administrative barriers that have severely delayed implementation in many states and because the challenges of the pandemic continue. Eligible young people deserve more time to receive assistance since so many have not yet received aid at all. Without this extension, young people face a steep service cliff on September 30th when the moratorium ends and youth ages 21-27 or 23-27 lose Chafee eligibility. As a result, large numbers of youth will “age out” of foster care and service eligibility on the same date. This dynamic is a concern for many communities struggling to provide housing and other resources to young people in need. This flood of youth exiting foster care to homelessness will place great economic and social strains on states who are already dealing with waves of evictions and limited financial resources.

To prevent a crisis that young people do not deserve and our communities are not equipped to address, Congress should provide a continued increase in Chafee funds, an extension of all Chafee and ETV flexibilities, an extension of the moratorium on aging out of foster care, and the requirement for re-entry. These actions will ensure that young people have stability during this difficult time and provide the funds child welfare agencies need to cover all eligible young people.

2

Increase federal agency and Congressional oversight of implementation and increase technical assistance provided to child welfare agencies.

Child welfare agencies should be required to have youth friendly information made publicly available about assistance provided pursuant to Division X of the CAA and how young people can access this assistance. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) should collect this information on its website so young people across the country have access to it. State and local child welfare agencies should be required to make public their plans for using Chafee funds, including how much will be used for direct financial assistance, and how young people were engaged in developing those plans. Agencies should report in detail how they are using Chafee funds during the course of the implementation process and ACF should proactively monitor these plans to ensure that young people are receiving aid and provide assistance to states when youth are not.

ACF should identify a Foster Care Pandemic Relief Manager to lead implementation and provide oversight to mirror current efforts to administer relief under the American Rescue Plan.

3

Enhance transition planning requirements and provide additional support to states to reflect the increased stresses and challenges young people face during the pandemic and recovery.


The moratorium on aging out and re-entry into foster care has been invaluable to provide housing stability to young people, as has the opportunity to provide Chafee service for a longer period of time and to an older cohort of young people. There is a need for more intense transition planning support during this time so young people have solid plans for discharge when they do leave the child welfare system. Increased accountability with respect to transition planning and technical assistance from ACF as well as other federal agencies, including the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Department of Labor, and Department of Education, is needed to ensure that appropriate planning is done.

“We are concerned about the significant drop off of support that young adults ages 21 to 26 will experience after 9/30/21. We would like to have flexibility in decreasing support over a period of time to allow young adults a smoother transition period.”

Child Welfare Professional

“Young adults need support after September 30th, 2021. It would be GREAT to have a longer period of time through the next 6 months to year. The pandemic is not over yet with the Delta Variant.”

Child Welfare Professional



V. Recommended Actions for Post Pandemic Innovation and Reform for Transition-Aged Youth

The pandemic has brought many challenges in our child welfare system to the forefront. Among them is the inadequacy of our systems of supports for transition-aged youth in the child welfare system. The lack of a meaningful safety net for these young people during the pandemic was exacerbated by an equally devastating lack of connections to the community and family. Many young people reported having no one to rely on for support or guidance during this crisis. Instead, they were turning to system and these systems were not providing the support they need. While our first priority must be to meet the immediate needs of young people now by extending the deadlines and provisions of Division X of the CAA, some of the challenges to implementation of Division X of the CAA reflect entrenched and structural problems that require longer term and more far reaching reform. Additional action in the coming year is needed to address the fundamental challenges that are barriers to supporting a successful transition to adulthood for young people in foster care.

While there was great consensus from child welfare agencies, stakeholders, and young people that an immediate response is critical, there was also consensus that significant reform is needed in the long term. Respondents and stakeholders expressed a desire for opportunities to serve young people differently and more expansively than they are currently able to. For example, many agencies and service providers were thrilled to have the opportunity to engage and serve young people through age 26 and to have more funding to meet the many needs young people have as they transition to adulthood. For years the need for Chafee services has dramatically exceeded the funding allocation. The law has rightly asked child welfare agencies to do more and serve more young people, but an increase in funding has not followed, resulting in agencies making hard choices and not being able to serve all eligible young people. In the midst of a crisis, Division X of the CAA provided child welfare agencies an opportunity to serve more young people and to provide more enhanced and creative services as part of the Chafee and ETV program and extended foster care.

Child welfare agencies, stakeholders, and young people are eager for more far reaching legislative changes that will last over time so they can truly invest in transformation and not be fearful of temporary investments. Many are laying the groundwork for these changes as we speak, but need Congressional leadership and action to make them a reality.

“Chafee must be increased significantly and permanently to meet the needs of youth aging out of care.”

Child Welfare Professional

“For there to be significant supports provided, sustainable increased funding would be much more useful.”

Child Welfare Professional

Below are initial recommendations for post-pandemic reforms to better serve young people in and transitioning from foster care.

- 1** Enact and enforce laws and policies that address the structural racism in the child welfare system and affirmatively promote anti-racism in the development and provision of services and supports to families and young people.
- 2** Require that all states provide extended foster care and remove all participation requirements to ensure that all youth have the opportunity to be served.
- 3** Re-envision extended foster care to ensure that it is able to provide the support intended for our most vulnerable youth in a new pandemic and post-pandemic reality, including applying adolescent and young adult development principles to practices and policies.
- 4** Require that the age of eligibility for Chafee services and funds be permanently extended through age 26, expand eligibility to young people who were adopted or entered guardianship prior to age 16, and remove any citizenship or immigration requirements.
- 5** Permanently increase the Chafee allocation, including the allocation for ETV, to reflect the number of eligible youth and the array of services and supports needed, and explore revamping the Chafee program to be more responsive to the needs of transition-aged youth.
- 6** Increase investments in older youth permanency and family based settings and continue efforts to limit the use of congregate and institutional settings that leave youth without family support while transitioning to adulthood.
- 7** Clarify that IV-E funds can be used to engage youth and alumni of the foster care system in designing and implementing policies and increase investments in engagement and hiring of youth with experience in foster care.
- 8** Increase federal investments in housing for young people as they transition to adulthood to reflect the need, and to account for regional housing costs.
- 9** Improve federal and state information technology systems generally and data collection while youth are in care and after they leave so that there is a more efficient means to connect youth to services, communicate with them, and track outcomes.
- 10** Develop systems for accountability that are co-designed with young people and ensure that any needed services are provided, and that services are high quality, engaging and result in positive outcomes.

“FosterClub is talking to young people who are in need of emergency support, but don’t have anyone to rely on. When we ask if they have anyone who can help them during this crisis, the answer is often ‘No. I wish I did.’”

Celeste Bodner, Executive Director, Foster Club

“Through our implementation of these changes we have realized that our young people’s needs go beyond just cutting a check. Our youth continue to struggle and need support after aging out of the Chafee services and funding is helpful but is not addressing the continued needs.”

Child Welfare Professional

“We have had youth input- the most critical need was to get youth money in their hands to support themselves as best they could. We plan on investing more into support for sustainable housing opportunities that can last much longer than the Fall of 2021. It has been extremely difficult in the current market to find apartments and safe housing options..”

Child Welfare Professional

References

1. In this document we will use “Division X of the CAA” to refer to the older youth provisions of the Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act that were included in the P.L. 116–260.
2. Members of the federal older youth coalition include: ACTION Ohio; California Youth Connection; Center for the Study of Social Policy; Children’s Advocacy Institute; Children’s Defense Fund; Children’s Law Center of California; Children’s Rights; Child Welfare League of America; Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute; First Focus Campaign for Children; Foster Care Alumni of America; FosterClub; Futures without Violence; John Burton Advocates for Youth; Juvenile Law Center; National Center for Housing and Child Welfare; National Center for Youth Law; National Crittenton; National Foster Youth Institute; iFoster; National Association of Counsel for Children; Partners for Our Children of the University of Washington; Think of Us; Youth Law Center; Youth Villages
3. Information on state implementation that has been gathered and shared publicly can be found on FosterClub’s Older Youth Pandemic Relief web page at: <https://fosterclub.com/oypr>
4. Hanging on by a Thread, at 24–25.
5. Hanging on by a Thread, at 27 (reporting that since February 2020, 35% of Black youth respondents reported episodes of homeless, as compared to 20% for non-Black youth. Sixteen percent of Black youth reported being currently homeless or couch surfing as compared to 5% for non-Black youth.)
6. Think of Us, [COVID-19 Microcash Grant Application Data Briefing](#) 21 (March 2021).
7. Johanna K.P. Greeson et al., [The Experiences of Older Youth In & Aged Out of Foster Care During COVID-19](#) 3 (The Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice, and Research September 2020).
8. Johanna K.P. Greeson et al., [The Experiences of Older Youth In & Aged Out of Foster Care During COVID-19](#) 3 (The Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice, and Research September 2020).
9. Think of Us, [COVID-19 Microcash Grant Application Data Briefing](#) 26 (March 2021).
10. Foster Youth Success Alliance, [Moving Forward: A Post-Pandemic Blueprint for New York’s Foster Youth](#) (Spring 2021)
11. Think of Us, [COVID-19 Microcash Grant Application Data Briefing](#) 21 (March 2021); Foster Advocates Minnesota, [Foster Youth COVID-19 Impact Report](#) 2 (October 2020).
12. Think of Us, [COVID-19 Microcash Grant Application Data Briefing](#) 21 (March 2021).
13. FosterClub, [Poll Results: Checking in on Young People from Foster Care As COVID-19 Continues](#) (December 22, 2020).
14. Foster Youth Success Alliance, [Moving Forward: A Post-Pandemic Blueprint for New York’s Foster Youth](#) (Spring 2021)
15. [Supporting Older Youth Beyond Age 18: Examining Data and Trends in Extended Foster Care](#) (ChildTrends June 3, 2019).
16. [Future Savings: The Economic Potential of Successful Transitions from Foster Care to Adulthood](#) (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2019),
17. [Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Ages 23 and 24](#) (Chapin Hall 2010).
18. Chafee funds are authorized through 42 U.S.C.A. § 677, which is the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood. The current allocation is \$143 million per two year spending cycle. The increase provided by the CAA, \$400 million, is significant. Chafee funds are provided to state and tribal child welfare agencies to distribute to young people and to provide transition to adulthood services to eligible young people. The CAA did not change this structure, which meant that fund distribution relied on the existing structures of state and county child welfare agencies. See [Appendix C](#) for more detail on the Chafee Act.

References (cont)

19. 42 U.S.C.A. § 677 (a) lists the purposes and uses of Chafee funds.
20. Chafee eligible youth include youth who are age 14 and older and in foster care, youth who are under age 21 (or up to 23) and had experience in foster care when they were age 14 or older, and youth who are under age 21 (or up to 23) and entered a kinship guardianship or adoption arrangement from foster care at age 16 or older.
21. As of early December 2020, 21 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, and two tribes provided such support to age 23: CO, CT, DC, FL, IL, IN, IA, KY, MD, MA, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OR, PA, PR, UT, VT, VA, WA, and WV. The Prairie Band of Potawatomi and the Santee Sioux Nation has also taken this option. See Youth [Provisions of the Supporting Foster Youth and Families Through the Pandemic Act](#) (Div. X of P.L. 116-260) p. 13. (CRS Report April 21, 2020).
22. See Lynn Tiede & Kristina Rosinsky, Funding Supports and Services for Young People Transitioning from Foster Care 8 (Child Trends September 25, 2019) (internal citations omitted) (stating that “In FY 2016, approximately 112,000 young people received at least one independent living service from the state agency that administers the Chafee program. In that same year, states were allocated \$138 million under Chafee. Based on these figures, and including the required 20 percent state match, the current Chafee allocation provides, on average, \$1,536 per young person per year, covering both direct service and administrative costs.”)
23. [Child Welfare Stimulus Funds: Who Is Eligible in Your State?](#) (Annie. E. Casey Foundation 2021).
24. Id.
25. 42 U.S.C.A. 675 (8)(B).
26. Amy Dworsky et al., [Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth](#) (Chapin Hall, 2011); Mark Courtney et al., [The California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study: Impacts of Extended Care on Youth Outcomes Two Years after Foster Care Has Ended](#) 12 (Chapin Hall, 2021); Rachel Rosenberg et al, [Supporting Older Youth Beyond Age 18: Examining Data and Trends in Extended Foster Care](#) (ChildTrends July 2019),
27. In FosterClub’s second poll, 29% of respondents reported that the ability to remain in foster care prevented housing insecurity and homelessness. [Checking in on Young People from Foster Care as COVID-19 Continues: A National Poll](#) December 22, 2020
28. AL, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, FL, HI, IL, IN, LA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, NC, ND, NE, NH, NY, OH, OR, PA, RI, TN, TX, VA, WA, WI, and WV. The nine tribes are the Pascua Yaqui Tribe (AZ), Eastern Band of Cherokee (NC), Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (ND and SD), Navajo Nation (AZ, NM, UT), Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (MI), Penobscot Indian Nation (ME), Rosebud Sioux (SD), Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe (MA), and Tolowa Dee-ni’ Nation (CA).
29. These states are: Kentucky, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, and New Mexico.
30. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has developed public facing communications about Division X of the CAA. The website developed by ACF contains basic information about the law and a list of State Independent Living Coordinators, which administers the Chafee program. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/youthpandemicsupport/>.
31. [Open Letter to Governor Whitmer and Michigan’s State Legislators](#) (August 13, 2021).
32. States were concerned that Chafee funds would be counted as income for other vital means tested benefits. Only very recently has guidance been issued addressing this concern. In addition, the IRS has not issued guidance that Chafee funds are not taxable. As a result of this lack of clarity, some states are requiring documentation like W-9s when youth request aid. Requesting additional documentation has added barriers for young people.



Youth Law Center
832 Folsom Street, Suite 700
San Francisco, CA 94107

Contact Jennifer Pokempner
at: info@ylc.org

www.ylc.org



Think of Us
700 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20003

Contact Sixto Cancel
at: sixto@thinkof-us.org

www.thinkof-us.org