

Six Ways to Ensure Transition Aged Youth Leverage Federal Support During and Post-Pandemic

A few things you can do to help transition aged youth with experience in the foster care system benefit from the vital aid that was intended for them, but that many are not receiving.

The Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act became law as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (CAA) and provided flexibilities and new funds to meet the needs of transition aged youth. The CARES Act and American Rescue Plan also provided funds and benefits that transition aged youth may be eligible for and could help them through the pandemic. Here are six things you can do to help transition aged youth benefit from the vital aid that was intended for them, but that many are not receiving. The need to support young people in transition planning is an urgent one as some of the provisions of the CAA, like the moratorium on aging out and the ability to serve youth through age 27, end on September 30, 2021. Many young people will not access the funds available to them without your support so your advocacy can make a significant difference.

- 1. Make sure eligible youth are taking advantage of the moratorium on aging out and re-entry provisions of the CAA, which last until September 30, 2021.** Even if your state does not allow continued court jurisdiction, the child welfare agency is obligated to provide continued support, including placement/housing, case management, and services to young people even if they have reached age 21. Your advocacy is even more important if there is no continued court oversight in your jurisdiction. Here are template forms you can use [to request continued foster care or re-entry](#).
- 2. Partner with youth to advocate that your state or county child welfare agency provide direct financial assistance using their increased Chafee allocations.** States were provided an additional \$400 million in Chafee funds that are to be used for the needs of young people with experience in foster care, including young people up to age 27 who were in foster care at any time after age 14. Chafee funds are flexible and can be used for many purposes, including providing housing as well as direct financial assistance to young people. You can find out how much your state received and how Chafee funds can be used [here](#).
- 3. Make requests for Chafee funds from the child welfare agency or Independent Living Director in your state with a special focus on youth ages 21–27, who may lose Chafee eligibility on September 30, 2021.** If your state has not yet formally implemented a financial assistance program with their Chafee allocation, help young people make individual requests for funds to meet their needs. Many of the flexibilities of the law end on September 30, 2021, so providing this help to the older cohort of young people as soon as possible is important. [Here](#) is a template request you can use.

4. **Advocate that your state take the option to extend Chafee eligibility to age 23.** The option that the Family First Prevention Services Act provided to states that have federally or state funded extended foster care is available to states. The [Children's Bureau has encouraged](#) states to take this option as a way to respond to the needs of young people during the pandemic. States simply complete [this certification](#) and submit it to the Children's Bureau to take this option. While some of the flexibilities of the law end on September 30, 2021, states have until September 30, 2022, to spend their increased Chafee allocation under the CAA. Extending the age of Chafee eligibility means that on September 30, 2021, states who have taken this option will still be able to serve youth up until age 23 as opposed to going back to age 21.
5. **Help identify and outreach to young people who are least connected to services or who may not be aware that they are eligible for funds and support under the CAA.** The [Annie E. Casey Foundation estimates](#) that approximately 880,967 young people are Chafee eligible under the CAA, with 85 percent being out of foster care. Many of these young people do not know they are eligible for assistance and are not connected to services. For example, some young people who are currently in the juvenile justice system or criminal justice system are Chafee eligible and therefore can access financial assistance and services offered as part of the implementation of the CAA. Defenders, CASAs, judges and other advocates can help identify these young people and help them access funds and assistance. In addition, partnering with providers of services and organizations that work with young people with disabilities, who are mobile or unstably housed will help in ensuring that more Chafee eligible youth have access to the benefits of the CAA.
6. **Help youth access non-child welfare specific pandemic benefits for which they are eligible.** Transition aged youth are eligible for many pandemic benefits and funds but may not be aware or have the assistance they need to complete the applications. For example, many young adults, including those in foster care, the juvenile justice system, and those who are homeless, are eligible for federal Economic Impact Payments (stimulus checks), the Child Tax Credit, and the Earned Income Tax Credit. Young people can access these funds—for some what may amount to several thousand dollars—by filing their taxes and it is not too late to do so. Your support to young people in filing their taxes or connecting them with the help to file or use the IRS non-filer portal is crucial as many young people have not had the experience of filing and may be reluctant to do so without support. Young people may also be eligible for emergency housing vouchers, rental assistance, and funds through their college or training program. You can find more information about the federal funds and benefits that may help transition aged youth and how to access them in the Youth Law Center's [TAY Pandemic Funding Maximization Matrix Leveraging COVID-19 Aid for Transition-Aged Youth](#). You should also identify if there are any state pandemic benefits for which young people may be eligible. For example, some states have their own earned income tax, child tax credits, and housing and rental assistance programs.

For more information on the older youth provisions of the CAA, check out the [resources collected](#) by FosterClub. This website includes summaries of the law, an FAQ, a webinar series on

implementation that includes many state examples, as well as tools to help with implementation of the law. For resources on how to get the word out about direct financial assistance available to current or former foster youth, take a look at the materials developed by Think of Us for the [Check for Us Campaign](#).

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This article, written by Youth Law Center's Policy Director, Jenny Pokempner, originally appeared on the [American Bar Association's Practice Points](#) series on August 25th, 2021. You can view it [here](#).