Time for Reform:

Aging Out and On Their Own

MORE TEENS LEAVING FOSTER CARE
WITHOUT A PERMANENT FAMILY

KIDS ARE WAITING
Fix Foster Care Now

JIM CASEY
YOUTH
OPPORTUNITIES
INITIATIVE
222 South Central, Suite 305, St. Louis, MO 63105

Time for Reform:
Aging Out and On Their Own

MORE TEENS LEAVING FOSTER CARE WITHOUT A PERMANENT FAMILY

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Pew Charitable Trusts would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their assistance: Gary Stangler and Carla Owens of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (JCYOI) and Kathleen Holt Whyte of Success Strategies and Initiative who organized five focus groups of youth currently and formerly in foster care at the JCYOI's partner sites in San Diego, California; Denver, Colorado; Detroit, Michigan; Des Moines, Iowa; and Bangor, Maine; the JCYOI Grantee Site Coordinators: Mark Nanzer-San Diego; Kippi Clausen-Denver; Paula Young and Susan Kelly-Detroit; Lori Rinehart and Carol Behrer, Des Moines, and Marty Zanghi and Esther Attean, Maine; the 54 youth currently or formerly in foster care who participated in the focus groups and shared their experiences and insights; and Dr. Amy Jordan, Dr. Jennifer Horner and Robin Stevens, of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania, who conducted the focus groups and analyzed the findings.

In addition, Pew would like to thank Dr. Elliot Smith, Holly Larrabee-Warner and Michael Dineen, from the National Data Archive for Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN), for completing and verifying the new data analyses included within; and the following child welfare professionals who provided their expertise in the development of this report: Dr. Peter Pecora, Casey Family Programs; Rita Powell, consultant to the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative; Dr. Mark Courtney, Dr. Gina Samuels, and Dr. Fred Wulczyn, Chapin Hall Center for Children, University of Chicago; Sarah Greenblatt, Casey Family Services; Robin Nixon, National Foster Care Coalition; Dorothy Ansell, University of Oklahoma, National Resource Center for Youth Development; and Gary Stangler, JCYOI.

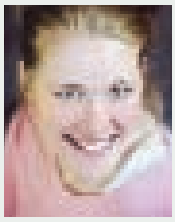
Last but not least, Pew thanks the following individuals for their review and comments: Dr. Amy Jordan, University of Pennsylvania, David Simmons, National Indian Child Welfare Association; Sue Badeau, Philadelphia Children's Commission; Mary Boo and Joe Kroll, North American Council on Adoptable Children; Pamela Davidson, Tom Atwood, National Council for Adoption; Crystal Ward Allen, Public Children Services Association of Ohio; F. Scott McCown, Center for Public Policy Priorities; Jaia Peterson Lent, Generations United; Gina Russo, Kids Are Waiting campaign: Sharon Appel, communications consultant: and Celeste Bodner and Kathi Crowe, FosterClub.

The views expressed here represent those of the Trusts and not necessarily of the individuals acknowledged above.

The report was designed by Freedom by Design, Inc. The child pictured on the cover is a model and the photo is being used for illustrative purposes only. The image is licensed from Getty Images. The images contained within were provided by FosterClub and by Erin Fogarty Owen (erin@fogartyphotography.com)

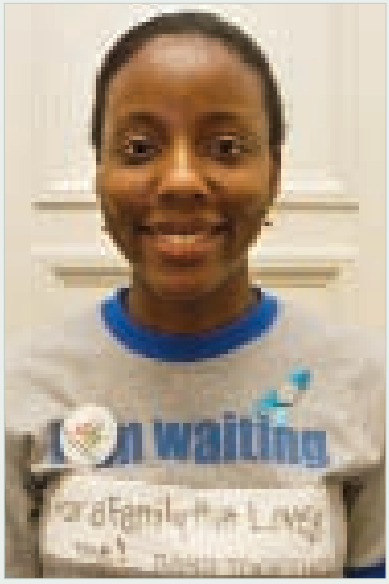
Madelyn Freundlich, Excal Consulting and staff from The Pew Charitable Trusts were responsible for the research and writing of this report.

Former foster youth pictured here and throughout the report have joined the Kids Are Waiting campaign in urging foster care financing reform



"I turned 18 a month before I graduated from high school. The day after graduation, I was kicked out of my foster home, where I had been living for two years. I was 18, a high school graduate on my way to college in the fall, and I was homeless."

NICOLE, *former foster youth, Oregon*



JULIA, *former foster youth, North Carolina*

INTRODUCTION

While the total number of children in foster care nationally has been decreasing, the number of youth who leave foster care because of their age—a situation referred to as "aging out"—has been increasing. In 2005, more than 24,000 youth left foster care at the age of 18* without a family of their own—a 41 percent increase since 1998. On average, those who age out of foster care will have spent nearly 5 years in the system at the time they "emancipate" (the technical term) without ever having been placed with a safe, permanent family of their own. In total, more than 165,000 youth aged out of the system between 1998 and 2005. (State-by-state data in Appendix A.)

TABLE 1 NUMBER OF YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE NATIONALLY (1998-2005)[1]

Year	Number of Youth Who Aged Out	Total Number in Foster Care	% of those in foster care who age out
1998	17,310	559,000	3.1
1999	18,964	567,000	3.3
2000	20,172	552,000	3.7
2001	19,039	545,000	3.5
2002	20,358	533,000	3.8
2003	22,432	520,000	4.3
2004	23,121	517,000	4.5
2005	24,407	513,000	4.9

Many studies have documented that the outlook for foster youth who age out is often grim:

- One in four will be incarcerated within the first two years after they leave the system.[2]
- Over one-fifth will become homeless at some time after age 18.[3]
- Approximately 58 percent had a high school degree at age 19, compared to 87 percent of a national comparison group of non-foster youth.[4]
- Of youth who aged out of foster care and are over the age of 25, less than 3 percent earned their college degrees[5], compared with 28 percent of the general population.[6]

* In some states, the age limit for foster care services is older than 18, and it can be up to age 21.

"They were like, 'You're 16. You're going to go off to college in a couple of years, why do you want a family?' It's about my entire life, it's not just about my childhood. I want to know that I'm going to have a place to come home to during Christmas breaks. I want to know that I'm going to have a dad to walk me down the aisle. That I'm going to have grandparents for my children."

MARY, *Former foster youth, Tennessee*

LUPE, *former foster youth, Arizona*

Drawing on findings from focus groups conducted with youth who aged out or expect to age out of foster care,** research studies and interviews, this report describes how the current foster care system fails to provide a permanent family for every child and the difficulty children have staying connected to family and friends while in foster care. The report also presents the latest state-by-state data on the number of youth who have aged out of foster care, and, in the words of former and current foster youth, describes the problems young adults have when they have to face the future without a permanent family to support them. The report briefly discusses the history of permanency in child welfare policy and why one never grows too old to want and need a permanent family. The report concludes with recommendations for public policy reforms that could decrease the number of youth who age out of care each year by improving the federal foster care financing system.

As one youth participant from the Colorado focus group said, "It's not like they [social workers and others in the foster care system] are people purposefully trying to make your life hell. It's just that nobody's bothered to change it yet. So there's people like us, sitting around the table, on tape, telling whoever is listening, change it. Change it!"

IN URGENT NEED OF REFORM: A FOSTER CARE SYSTEM THAT FAILS TO PROVIDE A PERMANENT FAMILY FOR EVERY CHILD

"I don't think they (people) understand how it feels not being able to say mom and dad. … (G)oing through foster care, you don't get to say that, you know, that often. And if you do trust somebody enough to say that, who knows how long they'll stick around."

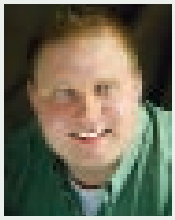
Former foster youth, Iowa

More than 500,000 children are currently in foster care, waiting for safe, permanent families. Some are waiting to be reunified with their families, some are waiting to be adopted, and others are waiting to leave the system to live with relatives or legal guardians. Those who leave care to the stability and permanency of a family will wait on average 2.5 years. Youth who age out of foster care spend twice as long—an average of 5 years—having waited for a family, only to be denied that outcome.

"I was lucky enough to find an adoptive family at my age, so that experience (from foster family to adoptive family) for me was really amazing, especially for the fact that with everything I went through they weren't clued into it when I moved in, with all my past abuse and everything like that, and my rages and how I acted out, and they still kept me, which is more than any other of the other foster homes ever did."

Former foster youth, Iowa

** See Appendix B for focus group methodology.



"I knew even before I was adopted that [my foster parents] were my parents because of our bond. ... That is what permanency is for me, the feeling I get knowing that no matter what I do, I will always be able to get a hug."

AARON, *former foster youth, Nebraska*

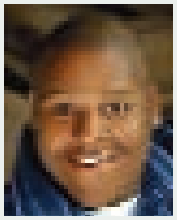
DARYLE, *former foster youth, Colorado*

The average length of stay in foster care for youth aging out varies widely from state to state, with youth in Nebraska staying about 2.5 years and young people in Illinois spending approximately 9 years in care on average.[7] Some children and youth exit and reenter foster care a number of times. Many variables contribute to longer lengths of stay. Longer average stays in foster care in some states may be a result of a state having increased opportunities for permanent families for some of their foster care population—such as placing younger youth in reunited, kin, adoptive, guardianship, or families—and thus changing the composition of the remaining caseload. In addition, some states have extended foster care benefits to age 19, 20 or 21, which can contribute to a longer average stay, but actually reflects an improved system to help young people better transition to adulthood. For example, Illinois currently covers young people to age 21.[8] Appendix C contains state-by-state data on the length of stay in foster care for youth who age out.

Foster care was created to be a necessary and important safety net for abused and neglected children. It was never intended to be a long-term living arrangement. When reunification with birth families is not possible, federal law directs that the system work to find an alternate permanent family for a child, whether through adoption or placement with a legal guardian. When a young person is faced with leaving foster care's safety net without a permanent family, it is because the system has failed a critical part of its responsibilities for that child.

A troubling aspect of today's foster care system is that thousands of youth currently in foster care have been assigned the goals of "emancipation" or "long-term foster care"—goals that are commonly referred to as "independent living." These so-called "permanency" goals indicate that child welfare officials are no longer pursuing families to care for and support the youth. In FY 2005, close to 32,000 youth had a goal of "emancipation," and more than 37,000 youth had a goal of "long term foster care."[9] Absent significant changes in how child welfare systems serve youth in foster care, these 69,000 youth—and even more young people in the future—are on a path to leave foster care without a permanent family they can count on. As a result, many will attempt to transition from foster care to live independently, but have limited support to do so.

Foster youth are no more ready for "independence" at age 18 than their non-foster care peers. In a 2003 study by the National Opinion Research Center, most Americans stated that they did not consider a person an adult until age 26 or until he/she had finished school, landed a full-time job, and begun to raise a family.[10] Increasingly, there is recognition that youth in their late teens and early twenties are entering "emerging adulthood" but are far from ready to fully assume adult roles.[11] In monetary terms alone, parents, on average, spend $44,500 on their children after they reach the age of 18.[12] Like other youth preparing to launch into adult roles, youth in foster care deserve the long-term benefits of a permanent family—a safe place to come home to,



"It is the end of my first term in college. All the students here talked about how they went home and spent time with their families during Christmas break. When they asked me what I did, I said I slept and wished that my family would come back to me. All I ever wanted was to be able to spend time with my family. I wanted to have someone tell me 'I love you' so much and 'I believe in you.'"

JOSH, *former foster youth, Oregon*

SCHYLAR, *former foster youth, Montana*

if necessary, but also someone to turn to for guidance on major decisions, for emotional support in times of stress or celebration, or for other needs such as health insurance, co-signing a loan for a car, or a myriad of other typical life tasks. In addition to the physical and financial support, these youth lack the emotional support of having a family—they often have no one to be grandparents to their grandchildren or provide a home to come to for the holidays.

Of course, some youth who age out continue to maintain close bonds with the foster families who had taken them in. One participant described her foster parents' continued support, even after they were no longer receiving financial reimbursement from the foster care system:

"My foster family was still there, even when I lived on my own and the foster care system kicked me out. And, I didn't get adopted by them when I aged out, and I can still call them. I call my foster family mom and dad. I never had nobody like that in my life, so I'm really appreciative of them to stay by my side, even when they're not getting paid. They're just loving me for me."

Former foster youth, Iowa

Although many foster parents provide this ongoing emotional support, foster home licensing policies often make it impossible for them to continue to provide a physical home for the young person once they leave care. Also, some committed foster parents may host many children over many years and cannot provide long-term support to all. Additionally, because many youth are served by group homes and other residential placements, when they reach the limit for receiving foster care services (typically age 18), they are not living with any family at all, and regulations often prohibit contact with young people after they leave a group or residential setting.

For youth without any ongoing support, the outcomes are not positive. The Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth and the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study conducted in-depth interviews with youth who had been placed in foster care as a result of abuse and neglect and who subsequently exited foster care to live on their own. Both studies found that these youth often struggle to complete their education, have significant physical and mental health problems but few resources to obtain health care, are unemployed or underemployed and face poverty, experience homelessness, and in some cases come into contact with the criminal justice system.[13] More detailed information on the findings of these studies can be found in Appendix D.

"In my opinion, foster care destroyed our whole sense of family in the end. We can't sit down together and feel like we are siblings. It becomes more like, 'Oh, I know that person' but it's not like, 'Oh, he's my brother.'"

MICHAEL, *former foster youth, West Virginia*

JACKIE, *former foster youth, Iowa*

BEING IN FOSTER CARE: UPROOTED AND LONGING FOR CONNECTIONS

"I felt like, you know, parents were torn away from us but it was even more hurtful for me to be torn away from my brothers and sisters. It wasn't my fault or their fault. It was out of our control. And we shouldn't have had to be separated like that."

Former foster youth, California

Although children are removed from their homes because of abuse or neglect, the removal itself is also a deeply traumatic experience for children. Many of the focus group participants reported being uprooted from all that was familiar. Youth recounted how being placed in foster care meant separation not only from their parents, but often from other family members and friends. Some lost connections to friends, teachers and mentors and were placed in different communities or even states. Although children are often considered to be highly adaptable, stability and consistency are important for young people to grow and thrive, as many of the focus group participants noted.

"If you jump from foster home to foster home to foster home, if they just randomly move you, … like they did us, it's just like, it throws you completely off balance and then like if you were feeling secure then you are completely insecure because you don't know where you are at or who you are with."

Former foster youth, Colorado

Since connections to family and friends contribute to feelings of security for most children and adults, it is not surprising to hear youth describe how disruptive and difficult it is to be removed from these support networks. They expressed longing for these relationships and individuals—particularly their siblings—and were frustrated that they were not able to maintain strong connections to the important people in their lives.

Approximately 70 percent of children in foster care have siblings who are also in care.[14] By some estimates, 75 percent of siblings are separated from at least one of their siblings while in foster care. As one former foster youth said, "I got separated from my little brother and he was like the only thing I had in the world." Some states place a high priority on placing siblings together. For example, in New York City, 85 percent of siblings who enter foster care together are placed together.[15]

The removal itself was also a source of pain for some of the focus group participants in Michigan, who described the arrival of child welfare officials at school to take them into custody:

YOUTH 1	When you are taken to the system, at least allow us to go home and get some clothes. Because they came and got us from school. When they come to pick you up and take you.
YOUTH 2	They just take you …
YOUTH 3	Like a raid.
YOUTH 1	Goodbye! [mimes classmates] We going to see you? Like, two years.

The desire to stay connected to family and friends, and the anguish of being separated from those relationships, was shared by youth from each of the five focus groups. The youth attributed some of the challenges in maintaining family relationships to the fact that the child welfare system seemed unable or unwilling to keep track of their families and did not appear to have the resources to find them. A Colorado participant said, "I wasn't able to talk to my little brother for like 5 or 6 years." Another participant in Colorado described feeling "disconnected" from a family member, and how he had to build a new relationship with that person as a result.

In a recent interview with the *West Virginia Herald-Dispatch*, Michael from West Virginia described how he left the system at age 18 with just a $25 check and a bag. During his six years in foster care, Michael had been placed with 16 different foster families and institutions and separated from his brothers. Four years after aging out of the system, he remains estranged from his brothers. He wishes the system would have tried harder to place him and his three younger brothers with relatives who would have protected their sibling bond. "I felt that the system failed me," he told the *West Virginia Herald-Dispatch*. "The only way left to fix it is to go in and build a system that hurt me into one that helps (kids)."

ANTHONY, *former foster youth, Georgia*

Rules and practices within foster care sometimes made it difficult to maintain connections in other ways as well. Some focus group participants explained that contact with family, particularly siblings, had been contingent on their behavior: if they behaved well, they were allowed to visit with siblings, and, if they behaved badly, visits were cancelled as a punishment. The Colorado focus group discussed this in some detail:

MODERATOR	How do you stay connected to people who are outside of the home or the facility?
MULTIPLE YOUTH	You don't.
YOUTH	Sometimes, you can earn phone privileges but you can barely call. You only have certain people you can call in some places.
MODERATOR	And who decides that?
MULTIPLE YOUTH	Everyone but you.

"If you call on your siblings in traditional families, you can talk to them. … In the system, it's like you have to argue and debate why it's necessary."

Former foster youth, California

Some youth participants reported they were able to maintain connections with family and friends, though the ability to do so seemed to depend largely on the placement setting, the situation under which a child was placed in foster care, and the people ultimately responsible for provision of care.

"I was lucky because I had only one foster home the whole time I was in care, when I was 12, and I was lucky because I had my younger brother and sister with me too, and my foster parents never tried to take the place of my biological parents. They encouraged me to stay in contact with them, and . . . they're still there for me now, they're my family."

Former foster youth, Iowa

NICOLE, *former foster youth, Oregon*

WHO ARE THE YOUTH WHO AGE OUT OF FOSTER CARE?

"We are normal kids in abnormal circumstances."

Former foster youth, Maine

Young people in foster care are much like any other youth: they go to school, enjoy hanging out with their friends, use cell phones and instant messenger on the Internet, and look to the future with a mixture of optimism and anxiety. What is different for most of these youth, however, is the absence of a stable foundation from which they can spring into adulthood—they lack a permanent family of their own to help guide them into the future.

States vary widely in the proportion of youth who age out of foster care each year without permanent families. For example, in Alabama and Connecticut, less than 2 percent of all children exiting foster care in 2004 aged out of the system. The percentages are much higher in Maine and Virginia, where more than 20 percent of those who exited foster care in 2004 did so because they aged out. Table 2 shows the 15 states with the highest percentage of youth aging out of foster care. However, it is worth noting that many factors may contribute to this variation. For example, the high percentage of youth aging out in some states may partly reflect a change in the composition of children in care as a state decreases the total number of children in foster care. To shed more light on some of these dynamics, Table 2 includes a column indicating

TABLE 2 15 STATES WITH LARGEST PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH WHO AGED OUT OF FOSTER CARE WITHOUT A PERMANENT FAMILY IN 2004[16]

State Rank	State	Youth who aged out of foster care		Total foster care population percentage increase or decrease (2000–2004)
		#	%	
1	Virginia	586	21	↑ 1.2%
2	Maine	196	20	↓ 19.0%
3	Illinois	1,020	16	↓ 32.6%
4	Tennessee	735	15	↓ 5.5%
5	Vermont	108	14	↑ 3.1%
6	West Virginia	152	12	↑ 17.8%
7	Kansas	259	12	↓ 7.7%
8	District of Columbia	118	12	↓ 14.6%
9	Massachusetts	731	12	↑ 8.1%
10	New Hampshire	60	12	↓ 5.7%
11	Maryland	361	11	↓ 15.3%
12	South Carolina	333	11	↑ 7.3%
13	California	4,535	11	↓ 18.1%
14	Louisiana	265	10	↓ 18.7%
15	Ohio	1,293	10	↓ 11.6%
	National	**22,741**	**8**	

Source: AFCARS 2004. Percentage calculated: number who aged out divided by total number who exited care in 2004.

BREGETTA, *former foster youth, Wisconsin*

whether the total number of children in foster care increased or decreased between 2000 and 2004. Data for all the states can be found in Appendix B.

FACING THE FUTURE: ALONE, UNCERTAIN AND LONGING TO BE PART OF A FAMILY

For many youth living with foster families, when they reach age 18 (or older), they must leave their foster families' homes and take care of themselves. Similarly, youth living in group homes often find themselves with no connection to reliable adults and few supports when they are forced to exit foster care.

Youth who age out of foster care without the support of a permanent family are quickly confronted with the realities of life on their own. As a youth from California said, "If I don't have my car payment this month, that's it; it's not like I can ask anyone for money. We don't have much to fall back on."

These youth have few, if any, resources or family relationships to support them, and many worry about how to make their way in the world. They report feeling scared, uncertain and alone, and largely unprepared to handle everyday life. Not surprisingly, some of the youth participants reported that they needed help with certain important life skills. For example, one participant wished someone had taught her how to act in a job interview. In many states, foster youth are not allowed to drive so they emerge from the system without a driver's license—which may limit employment options to jobs near public transportation lines. Many youth worry about money for things like rent, college, or even food. Several participants noted that the system could do a better job preparing them for living on their own. "I mean … I didn't meet with anybody about what was going to happen when I aged out, and I didn't know what programs would be available to me, I didn't know what I was going to have to do, what I was going to lose," said a former foster youth from Iowa.

One participant reported a need to focus on the present while in foster care, a coping mechanism that follows many into adulthood. "You're trying to get through the day, and you don't even have time to think about the future. You're so worried about 'Am I going to have a place to live?' Am I going to get kicked out?"

"Seems I talk about the future, don't nobody listen. Seems I can talk about the future for hours, she just go to sleep. No really, the person I'm talking to? Nobody, really. I just deal with it myself."

Former foster youth, Michigan

"I wish I had someone with me, you know, like a mentor, for my entire life. I mean, I'm fine with all the changes in my social worker but … I never really met someone in the system or someone, (a) mentor, that was with me my entire life."

Former foster youth, California

JOSH, *former foster youth, Tennessee*

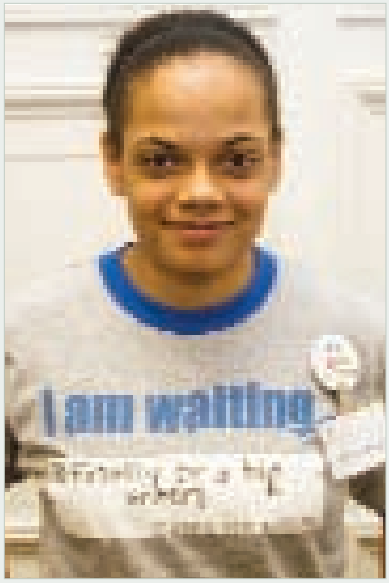
Some youth report positive experiences in the system that helped prepare them for life after foster care, including interactions with dedicated case workers, caring individuals at group homes, and foster parents who provided guidance. One young adult in Maine described her experience with her independent living coordinator by saying, "I love him to pieces. He's such a great guy. . . . He actually cares. He comes up to you and talks to you …" As one young person from Iowa said, "Luckily I had good foster parents that helped me out and put me in the right direction, helped tell me where I've got to go, what's available to me."

However, focus group participants from California noted that negative effects from being in foster care will likely stay with them for the rest of their lives.

YOUTH 1	It depends on the individual. If you came out of foster care with dependencies and issues, unresolved issues that you carry around into your adulthood … It depends on the individual, but a lot of foster kids, they have the same baggage. Foster care tends to …
YOUTH 2	Takes your childhood.
YOUTH 3	I don't want to get attached to anything. Things maybe, because I know that's fine. But like people? No. People that I've been attached to, it takes awhile, I have to know them. Because it's like you're affected. You don't know if you say something that might upset them and they stop calling. Or they change your case for some other one. Know what I mean? It's things like that. That's the baggage that I'll carry around forever.

"Having family helps with identity formation, a sense of belonging, and the security of knowing that no matter what, you will always have a place to go. Having family to care about them can be the single most healing experience for many youth in foster care."

SARAH GREENBLATT, *Casey Family Services*



SHARDE, *former foster youth, Indiana*

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PERMANENCY AND FEDERAL CHILD WELFARE POLICY

Federal child welfare policy has evolved in such a way that federal financial structures can work at cross-purpose with federally-stated permanency objectives. The federal government's role in setting child welfare policy began with the Social Security Act of 1935, which authorized small federal grants to states for child welfare services. The Social Security Act also established the Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) program to help states provide assistance to needy dependent children. In 1961, amendments to ADC created ADC-Foster Care, which provided states with federal matching funds for foster care payments made on behalf of children removed from their homes. Though the

Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program (as it was renamed in 1962) was eliminated in 1996, current eligibility for foster care remains tied to AFDC rules.[17]

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), the first major federal legislation addressing child abuse and neglect, was passed in 1974. The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) was passed in 1978 to help reduce the high numbers of Native American children being removed from their families and placed outside of their communities.[18]

Congress enacted sweeping federal child welfare legislation in 1980. In fact, today's child welfare system is founded on the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (Public Law 96-272) which moved AFDC-Foster Care funds to a new Title IV-E in the Social Security Act. This landmark legislation established a major federal role in the administration and oversight of child welfare services for the first time. Key aspects of the Act were requirements that states make "reasonable efforts" to keep families together by providing both prevention and family reunification services; the creation of an adoption assistance program (Title IV-E Adoption Assistance); and the creation of the first significant role for the court system by requiring courts to review child welfare cases on a regular basis.[19]

In 1993, the Family Preservation and Family Support Services Program amended Title IV-B of the Social Security Act to add Subpart 2, which was intended to encourage and enable states and tribes to develop and operate family preservation and community-based family support services.[20]

Then, in 1997, Congress again enacted significant changes to child welfare policy through the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA). ASFA contained provisions to ensure that child safety, permanency, and well-being are of paramount concern in any child welfare decision; to encourage states to expedite permanency decisions for children in foster care; to promote and to increase the number of adoptions of children in foster care; and to establish performance standards and a state accountability system whereby states face financial penalties for failure to demonstrate improvements in child outcomes. ASFA also updated the Family Preservation and Family Support Services Program from 1993, continuing federal funding for family support and family preservation services and expanding the program to support time-limited family reunification services and adoption promotion and support activities.[21]

Title IV-E provides federal funding to states to support foster care for children and youth. As amended by ASFA, Title IV-E places a greater emphasis on finding a permanent family for children and youth in foster care; however, other than administrative support, it does not fund services to achieve permanency through reunification with birth parents, adoption or guardianship. Title IV-E adoption assistance does provide post-adoption funding for subsidies

JJ, *former foster youth, Michigan*

for some children adopted from foster care, but funds are not provided under Title IV-E to support efforts to safely return children and youth to their families, to support guardianships with relatives and other caregivers, or to work intensively with youth to identify key adults in their lives who could provide permanent families for them. Some states have received a federal waiver to use Title IV-E to support guardianship.[22] Furthermore, Indian tribes are not eligible to receive Title IV-E funds for children under their jurisdiction.[23] Because of constraints on how Title IV-E funds can be used, it does not provide states with needed resources to ensure that each child and youth in foster care leaves care with a permanent family.

It should be noted that Congress has recognized that the government has an obligation to help those youth who will leave foster care without a permanent family. In 1986, as part of the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, Congress authorized the Independent Living Program to assist adolescents who age out of the foster care system in transitioning from foster care to living on their own. It was replaced by the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program created by the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999. This new program expanded funding and services up to age 21 for adolescents making the transition from foster care to self-sufficiency and for former foster youth.[24] The Chafee Act recognizes the importance of permanence for youth in foster care and includes language that says that permanency planning for adoption for older children and independent living services can be provided "concurrently."

However, according to some experts interviewed for this report, the Chafee Act also created some disincentives to helping establish permanent family relationships for youth. Foster youth who leave care because they are reunited with their families, adopted or placed with guardians before the age of 16 lose access to education and training benefits. Some youth describe this situation as having to choose between a family and an education.

"I was lucky to be adopted, but now there's nothing available to me because I was adopted. And I didn't age out. And now there's very few scholarships that I can apply to, that I know of now."

Former foster youth, Iowa

"I'm smart and very good with money. If my aunt adopted me, I would lose my benefits. I mean adoption is great and everything, but you sacrifice a lot. It is crazy the way the system works."

SHEILA, *former foster youth, Maryland*

ELIJAH, *former foster youth, Hawaii*

NEVER TOO OLD FOR A PERMANENT FAMILY

For older youth in foster care, child welfare agencies have historically seen their role as preparing the youth for "independence"—life on their own—when they leave foster care. Frequently, youth are placed on an "independent living" track when they reach a certain age, often 14 or 15, at which time the agency may discontinue efforts to return the youth to parents or extended family or find a new family for the youth through adoption or guardianship. Through independent living programs, states provide an array of services focusing on education (tutoring), every day activities (such as driving) and employment (career mentoring and interning), among other kinds of services that are designed to help youth live successfully on their own after aging out of foster care. For example, programs help youth obtain high school diplomas, teach budgeting and money management and provide counseling as well as providing many other services.[25] These independent living services should be continued in concert with permanency planning for every youth.

"The quality of a youth's support system is the greatest predictor of how well a young person will do. Our obligation is to help youth maintain relationships, reconnect youth with important people in their lives, and help them develop new relationships."

DOROTHY ANSELL, *University of Oklahoma, National Resource Center for Youth Services*

"When you have a family, you have everything. You are lucky to have parents and you should always remember that. When I won the Youth Spirit Award, it was exciting. And I have won many awards and things at school, too. But every time I walked up to receive my award, there was no family there to see me get it. Other kids had a mom or a dad to watch them get their award. It should have been a happy occasion. But for me … I wish I had a family there for me."

ANNA MARIA, *former foster youth, Connecticut*

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REFORM

A permanent and loving family is important for children to grow and flourish, but the need for a family doesn't end when a child turns 18. Aging out of foster care without a permanent family means no one to walk you down the aisle when you get married, no one to cheer you on during your successes or comfort you during hard times, no one to be a grandparent to your children or celebrate the holidays with. The youth stories shared here, as well as academic studies, document the many harmful long-term effects that aging out of foster care has on a growing number of youth each year. We can do better.

"I have come to believe that the drive for family is hard-wired in us. These young people know there is no substitute for that unconditional support family provides. Just like all of us, they need someone to write home to, and our foster care system should be helping them find that family."

GARY STANGLER, *Executive Director, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative and member of the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care*

DAN, *former foster youth, New York*

As the youth interviewed in the focus groups so poignantly point out, they deserve what every other child has: a permanent, safe, loving family on whom they can count in their adult years. Much more needs to be done to improve the system so that all children in foster care achieve permanency with families, and to ensure that proper support is in place for those who may age out of the system without a permanent family.

There have been numerous policies identified to better serve youth who age out of foster care, including: extending foster care and Medicaid eligibility up to age 21 for all youth and providing services under the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act to all youth who leave care, not just youth aging out between the ages of 18 and 21.[26]

Additionally, there is widespread recognition among leading child welfare organizations about the need for fundamental reforms to the federal foster care financing system to improve permanency outcomes for children and reverse the growing trend of youth aging out of foster care. Today, the majority of federal child welfare funds are restricted to supporting children in out-of-home foster care placements, and few incentives are in place to prevent the need for foster care in the first place, help reconnect youth with family, or find new families through adoption or guardianship.

The national, non-partisan Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care recommended a reliable federal financing system with both increased flexibility and accountability as a means to prevent children from languishing in foster care. A broad spectrum of other child welfare organizations also advocate for changes to the way the federal government's child welfare system finances services for children in foster care. New federal financing policies, combined with recently enacted state court improvements,[27] would provide professionals who serve children and families with better tools to help more families stay together, ensure children in foster care exit the system for safe, permanent families, and reduce the number of youth who age out each year.

Specifically, the following policy options would address the problem of growing numbers of youth aging out of our foster care each year:

1. **Establish a federal foster care financing system that states can rely on to be sufficient and flexible.** Today's federal IV-E financing incentives favor foster care over other services that could keep families together, reunify them quickly and safely, and, when that is not possible, help children leave foster care to join safe, permanent families through adoption or guardianship. Addressing the inflexibility of current federal IV-E funding is critical to ensuring that case workers and other professionals can deliver services that are tailored to meet the needs of each child and family they serve. For example, services such as family counseling or referrals for drug treatment programs can both prevent the need for foster care or help some children reunify with their families.

With more flexible funds, states and tribes could help find more children permanent families through activities like increased foster or adoptive parent recruiting or help new permanent families be successful when reunification is not possible by providing more post-placement supports.

2. **Help more children leave foster care by supporting federal guardianships for relatives and other caregivers.** In most states, relatives and others who become permanent, legal guardians for a child in foster care lose federal financial assistance and services once the child exits foster care (some adoptions receive federal support). Although some relatives decide to adopt their kin, adoption is not a viable option for others. For example, it may not be appropriate to terminate parental rights for a parent with significant disabilities who physically cannot parent, but wants to remain in the lives of the children who love her. Or an older youth who maintains close ties with his or her birth parents may not want those parental rights terminated. An estimated 20,000 children living in long-term arrangements with relatives today could leave foster care if federal foster care funds could be used to support guardianship.

3. **Reward states for reducing the number of children in foster care and achieving all forms of permanence.** States should be rewarded for reducing the number of children in foster care, rather than punished by losing federal funds for case workers. Under the current system, states lose money for caseworkers when the caseload declines. States should be allowed to reinvest savings from safely reducing their foster care case loads into their child welfare programs.

4. **Make all children eligible for federal foster care support.** The link between eligibility for federal foster care support under Title IV-E to eligibility for the now-defunct Aid to Families with Dependent Children program should be removed.[28] Social workers should be focused on helping children find safe, permanent families, rather than wasting hours chasing down paperwork related to a parent's eligibility for a program that hasn't existed for 10 years. Native American children under the jurisdiction of a tribal government are also not eligible to receive the benefits of Title IV-E, since tribes are not eligible to apply for this federal program. Tribal governments should be allowed to apply for Title IV-E funds directly and operate the program for children under their care.

Every day we wait for financing reform, 67 more children age out of the system, on their own, because we have failed to find them families they can count on.

SETH, *former foster youth, Oregon*

APPENDIX A
NUMBER AND PERCENT OF YOUTH AGING OUT BY STATE (2000–2004)[29]

	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004	
State	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
AK	48	5.3%	33	3.3%	26	3.1%	27	3.5%	30	4.2%
AL	103	4.4%	110	4.8%	115	4.3%	177	6.3%	58	1.9%
AR	172	4.7%	166	5.1%	223	7.0%	195	5.7%	199	6.1%
AZ	450	8.9%	363	7.7%	400	8.4%	412	8.6%	453	8.9%
CA	4,489	9.0%	4,046	9.2%	4,011	8.8%	4,486	10.1%	4,535	10.5%
CO	252	4.6%	297	5.7%	329	5.2%	436	6.0%	399	5.3%
CT	53	2.2%	32	1.6%	32	1.1%	46	2.1%	34	1.6%
DC	25	7.9%	49	12.6%	54	13.6%	71	9.4%	118	11.5%
DE	46	5.2%	50	5.5%	70	7.5%	67	8.3%	63	8.4%
FL	900	5.8%	828	4.9%	939	5.4%	1,594	7.4%	1,332	6.3%
GA	56	1.2%	112	1.5%	318	3.4%	402	4.0%	621	5.6%
HI	121	7.2%	139	7.2%	138	6.6%	120	5.7%	147	6.7%
IA	249	4.6%	269	4.7%	286	5.1%	291	5.1%	319	5.8%
ID	44	4.4%	58	5.4%	71	6.8%	66	6.0%	77	5.8%
IL	1,350	13.1%	1,131	13.5%	1,250	15.7%	1,238	17.7%	1,020	15.8%
IN	294	5.7%	260	5.5%	257	5.6%	254	5.2%	312	5.7%
KS	149	8.3%	160	8.9%	195	11.4%	233	10.2%	259	11.7%
KY	232	6.9%	303	7.2%	353	8.0%	413	8.3%	472	9.3%
LA	298	9.5%	311	9.8%	291	9.7%	279	9.7%	265	9.9%
MA	557	8.7%	542	8.2%	726	13.1%	759	12.4%	731	11.5%
MD	230	7.4%	231	7.5%	384	11.1%	295	9.6%	361	11.1%
ME	15	2.1%	24	3.4%	33	4.5%	209	22.4%	196	20.3%
MI	564	7.2%	485	5.8%	607	6.2%	664	7.4%	667	7.2%
MN	527	5.3%	520	5.6%	561	5.8%	607	7.2%	624	8.1%
MO	600	10.9%	676	11.9%	275	4.3%	337	5.1%	329	5.4%
MS	62	3.6%	62	3.7%	89	5.9%	62	4.1%	116	7.4%
MT	90	6.8%	99	6.6%	82	6.4%	76	7.0%	92	9.3%
NC	277	6.2%	302	5.8%	328	6.1%	387	7.6%	389	7.5%
ND	43	5.1%	46	5.6%	58	6.7%	60	6.8%	62	7.1%
NE	2	0.1%	0	0.0%	83	2.6%	86	2.7%	101	3.2%
NH	57	11.6%	54	11.5%	56	10.9%	71	11.6%	60	11.5%
NJ	307	7.5%	289	6.3%	290	5.4%	330	6.0%	418	5.9%
NM	26	1.5%	13	0.7%	11	0.7%	22	1.5%	41	2.2%
NV	2	0.5%	40	1.3%	42	1.4%	99	3.1%	103	2.9%
NY	1,568	7.7%	1,324	7.1%	1,498	8.3%	1,471	8.7%	1,481	9.2%
OH	1,028	7.3%	1,013	7.2%	1,161	8.1%	1,211	8.4%	1,293	9.5%
OK	54	1.0%	280	4.8%	340	5.4%	283	4.9%	315	6.2%
OR	147	3.2%	159	3.5%	157	3.4%	195	4.6%	183	4.2%
PA	688	5.8%	692	5.6%	742	6.2%	844	7.0%	1,025	8.1%
RI	82	6.1%	77	6.3%	62	4.5%	85	6.3%	82	5.6%
SC	271	8.6%	214	6.9%	250	7.3%	311	9.6%	333	10.6%
SD	23	2.2%	42	3.6%	41	3.6%	58	5.6%	62	5.5%
TN	596	13.6%	581	11.4%	488	9.0%	658	15.3%	735	15.1%
TX	365	4.6%	259	2.9%	288	3.2%	297	2.9%	325	3.0%
UT	172	7.6%	163	8.1%	170	8.0%	146	8.0%	162	9.0%
VA	542	29.7%	556	26.5%	510	22.1%	587	23.9%	586	21.1%
VT	105	14.9%	52	9.0%	89	13.5%	119	15.7%	108	14.2%
WA	333	4.7%	327	5.1%	327	5.1%	338	5.4%	357	5.9%
WV	87	3.9%	81	3.5%	99	4.0%	137	10.8%	152	11.8%
WI	254	6.3%	336	7.7%	334	6.4%	238	4.1%	475	8.4%
WY	36	4.9%	45	6.5%	62	8.5%	61	7.6%	41	4.6%
PR	8	0.8%	8	0.8%	13	0.5%	25	1.0%	23	1.2%

NOTE: AGING OUT PERCENT CALCULATED WITH DENOMINATOR OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH WHO EXITED FOSTER CARE.

APPENDIX B
CHARACTERISTICS OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS AND METHODOLOGY

The 54 youth focus group participants were 15- to 24-year-olds (mean age = 18). Youth were recruited by the liaisons at the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities sites, where the focus groups were conducted. Two-thirds of the participants (68.5%) were female. Almost half of the participants were white (46.3%), 18.5% were Latino/a, 13% were African American, and 18.5% were mixed race. One respondent was Native American, and one respondent did not report race.

The respondents reported a variety of living experiences in foster care. During the pencil and paper demographic survey they filled out prior to the discussion, many were hard pressed to know how to define their current living situation. We asked youth to classify themselves as "in care" or "out of care." Several of the youth in Bangor had "V-9s", a plan for living that kept them semi-independent and semi-connected to "the system." Several participants in Denver and Detroit had been brought to the site from juvenile correction facilities, and were understandably unclear about whether they should indicate that they lived in a "group home" or "other." In addition, given the research interest in youths' feelings of permanency, several had difficulty knowing how to indicate the fluid nature of their status—moving from family-based foster care to group home and back again, or living long-term with a foster family but deciding against permanency solely on the basis of financial reasons. With these limitations in mind, 59.3% indicated that they were "out of care" and 40.7% indicated that they were "in care." The largest number of participants reported they were living alone (29.6%), and the next most common living situation was living with a foster family (24.1%). Eleven percent said they lived with a relative, and a comparable number lived with a friend or significant other. 5.6% lived in a group home. 16.7% lived in an "other" situation (including a correctional facility and a homeless shelter). Two (sisters) had been reunited with their birth mother.

Youth were asked by site liaisons to attend a 60-90 minute focus group discussion at a facility in their city. The groups were held in the evenings (6pm-8pm) between March 5th and March 9th. A moderator led each group in a discussion (average length of time, 90 minutes) which focused on three primary topics: (1) identifying "important people" in their lives and defining their characteristics; (2) describing their feelings about being "in care" and "out of care" and the process of (or expectations for) transitioning to adulthood; and (3) brainstorming about ways in which foster care might be "fixed," with a focus on ways of strengthening relationship bonds.

Youth were provided dinner and a monetary compensation for their voluntary participation in the research. Consent forms were obtained for minors and assent forms were obtained for all participants (in addition to written assent, participants were verbally told of their rights as research participants). Participants were told they would receive copies of the final report, and were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality except in the situation where they may be presently at risk.

APPENDIX C
2004 NUMBER OF FOSTER YOUTH AGING OUT AND LENGTH OF STAY BY STATE[30]

STATE RANK	STATE	Number of Youth Who Age Out	Average Stay for Youth Who Age Out (months)	Average Stay for Youth Who Age Out (years)	Percent Who Age Out	Total Number of Children Who Exited Foster Care	Average Stay (months)	Average Stay (years)
44	AK	30	48.6	4.05	4.2%	715	24.0	2.0
50	AL	58	70.2	5.85	1.9%	3,042	17.3	1.4
32	AR	199	40.7	3.39	6.1%	3,264	9.7	0.8
20	AZ	453	46.1	3.84	8.9%	5,108	13.9	1.2
13	CA	4,535	72.5	6.04	10.5%	43,170	25.6	2.1
42	CO	399	45.6	3.80	5.3%	7,577	12.6	1.0
51	CT	34	78.9	6.58	1.6%	2,119	19.6	1.6
8	DC	118	81.1	6.76	11.5%	1,024	46.5	3.9
21	DE	63	35.3	2.94	8.4%	749	10.6	0.9
30	FL	1,332	47.0	3.91	6.3%	21,097	18.7	1.6
38	GA	621	57.9	4.82	5.6%	11,094	15.6	1.3
29	HI	147	36.0	3.00	6.7%	2,199	13.9	1.2
35	IA	319	37.7	3.14	5.8%	5,484	10.4	0.9
36	ID	77	36.2	3.02	5.8%	1,337	11.8	1.0
3	IL	1,020	107.6	8.96	15.8%	6,472	47.5	4.0
37	IN	312	54.6	4.55	5.7%	5,470	17.5	1.5
7	KS	259	42.5	3.54	11.7%	2,216	25.4	2.1
16	KY	472	38.2	3.18	9.3%	5,095	15.4	1.3
14	LA	265	70.1	5.84	9.9%	2,671	22.0	1.8
9	MA	731	51.7	4.31	11.5%	6,347	22.4	1.9
11	MD	361	83.8	6.98	11.1%	3,265	35.1	2.9
2	ME	196	62.6	5.21	20.3%	967	34.6	2.9
27	MI	667	59.0	4.91	7.2%	9,234	26.2	2.2
23	MN	624	56.0	4.67	8.1%	7,718	11.8	1.0
41	MO	329	65.9	5.49	5.4%	6,047	21.8	1.8
26	MS	116	64.7	5.39	7.4%	1,560	22.6	1.9
17	MT	92	54.7	4.56	9.3%	992	18.8	1.6
25	NC	389	48.7	4.06	7.5%	5,194	20.1	1.7
28	ND	62	41.9	3.49	7.1%	874	14.4	1.2
46	NE	101	29.5	2.46	3.2%	3,118	20.5	1.7
10	NH	60	56.8	4.74	11.5%	523	26.6	2.2
33	NJ	418	44.9	3.74	5.9%	7,101	21.7	1.8
49	NM	41	54.2	4.52	2.2%	1,841	9.4	0.8
48	NV	103	68.8	5.74	2.9%	3,575	11.5	1.0
18	NY	1,481	83.3	6.94	9.2%	16,085	37.3	3.1
15	OH	1,293	48.4	4.03	9.5%	13,574	17.1	1.4
31	OK	315	45.7	3.80	6.2%	5,063	17.8	1.5
45	OR	183	71.7	5.97	4.2%	4,340	22.3	1.9
24	PA	1,025	53.2	4.43	8.1%	12,625	21.0	1.7
39	RI	82	65.9	5.49	5.6%	1,462	17.1	1.4
12	SC	333	68.0	5.67	10.6%	3,150	18.4	1.5
40	SD	62	40.5	3.37	5.5%	1,125	11.9	1.0
4	TN	735	37.9	3.16	15.1%	4,877	20.5	1.7
47	TX	325	58.7	4.89	3.0%	10,842	21.7	1.8
19	UT	162	34.5	2.87	9.0%	1,791	11.9	1.0
1	VA	586	43.6	3.63	21.1%	2,772	25.0	2.1
5	VT	108	50.1	4.18	14.2%	763	23.5	2.0
34	WA	357	48.2	4.01	5.9%	6,082	16.7	1.4
22	WI	475	54.0	4.50	8.4%	5,682	21.6	1.8
6	WV	152	65.8	5.48	11.8%	1,283	26.5	2.2
43	WY	41	32.6	2.71	4.6%	885	11.0	0.9
52	PR	23	69.8	5.82	1.2%	1,937	20.4	1.7
Totals		22,741				282,597		

THE STATES ARE RANKED ACCORDING TO PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH WHO AGED OUT WITH 1 BEING THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE.

APPENDIX D
COMPARISON OF OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH WHO AGE OUT OF FOSTER CARE: THE MIDWEST EVALUATION AND THE NORTHWEST ALUMNI STUDY[31]

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES	Over 33% of study participants had not received a high school diploma or GED, compared to 10 % in the national sample. Study participants remaining in care were twice as likely to be enrolled in an educational program as those discharged.	Over 85% of alumni had completed high school, with 28% obtaining a GED. The rate of study participants completing a bachelor's or higher degree was approximately 2%, compared with a national rate of 24%.
HEALTH/MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES	Over 75% of young adults reported good health, although participants were more likely to report limiting health conditions than the national sample. 33% of young adults reported mental health issues, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), major depression, and alcohol and substance abuse. Study participants were twice as likely as same-age peers in the national sample to have a child.	33% of study participants had no health insurance, double the national rate. More than half of study participants reported clinical levels of at least one mental health issue in the last month, with 20% reporting three or more mental health issues. PTSD was prevalent, with 25% of alumni experiencing PTSD symptoms in the prior year.
EMPLOYMENT/INCOME OUTCOMES	Employment of study participants was found to be "sporadic," with 90% earning less than $10,000 over the past year. Over 25% of study participants were categorized as food-insecure. Discharged young adults were twice as likely as those remaining in care to be unemployed and out of school and three times more likely than the national sample.	The employment rate for study participants was 80%, compared to 95% for same-aged members of the general population. 33% of study participants had incomes at or below the poverty level, a figure three times that of the national poverty rate.
LIVING ARRANGEMENTS	Almost 30% of young adults discharged from care lived with their biological parents or other relatives, with 10% continuing to live with their foster parents. 29% of young adults reported living in their "own place." One in seven reported experiencing homelessness at least once since discharge.	More than one in five alumni reported experiencing homelessness since discharge from foster care.
CONTACT WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM	28% of study participants reported having been arrested and almost 20% had been incarcerated since the first interview.	Not addressed.

ENDNOTES

[1] Kids Are Waiting analysis from data on the US Department of Health and Human Services' website. Data can be accessed at: www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/index.htm.

[2] Mark E. Courtney, Amy Dworsky, Sherri Terao, Noel Bost, Gretchen Ruth Cusick, Thomas Keller, and Judy Havlicek. "Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 19," Chapin Hall, 2005.

[3] Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study, Casey Family Programs, 1998.

[4] Courtney, M.E. & Dworsky, A. (2005). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 19.* Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children.

[5] Pecora, P.J., Kessler, R.C., Williams, J., O'Brien, K., Downs, A.C., English, D., White, J., Hiripi, E., White, C.R., Wiggins, T., and Holmes, K. (2005). *Improving family foster care: Findings from the Northwest foster care alumni study.* Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs.

[6] National Census Bureau. "Educational Attainment in the United States: 2004." Accessed April 12, 2007: http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/04eductableA.xls

[7] National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect. (2006). Available at: http://www.ndacan.cornell.edu/NDACAN/Datasets/Abstracts/DatasetAbstract_AFCARS_General.html . Unless otherwise noted, data and analyses contained within this report were produced by Dr. Elliott Smith or Michael Dineen, National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect, and are based on the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System data from 1998-2004.

[8] National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. (2007). Issue Brief: State policies to help youth transition out of foster care. Washington, DC.

[9] US Department of Health and Human Services. (2006a). The AFCARS Report. The AFCARS Report. Preliminary FY 2005 Estimates as of September 2006. http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report13.htm (accessed April 2, 2007).

[10] Arnett, J. J. (2006). Emerging adulthood: Understanding the new way of coming of age. In J. J. Arnett & J. L. Tanner (Eds.), *Emerging Adults in America Coming of Age in the 21st Century.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association; Tanner, J. L. (2006). Recentering during emerging adulthood: A critical turning point in life span human development. In J. J. Arnett & J. L. Tanner (Eds.), *Emerging Adults in America Coming of Age in the 21st Century.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

[11] Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of the development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist,* 55, 469-480.

[12] Children's Advocacy Institute. (2007). Expanding transitional services for emancipated foster youth: An investment in California's tomorrow. San Diego: University of San Diego School of Law.

[13] The Midwest Study, a longitudinal study conducted in three stages, involves interviews with youth from Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin. In 2005, The Midwest Study published data from the second phase of interviews administered in 2004, when study participants were nineteen years old. At the time of interview, approximately half of the 603 participants in the study had not been discharged from foster care (Illinois courts allow young adults to remain under state agency supervision until the age of 21). Courtney, M.E. & Dworsky, A. (2005). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 19.* Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children.

[14] Child Welfare Information Gateway (2006). *Sibling Issues in Foster Care and Adoption Bulletin for Professionals.* Accessed 5/2/2007

[15] Camp to Belong; http://www.camptobelong.org/home.htm (Accessed: May 4, 2007.) Child Welfare Watch, *Uninvited Guests: Teens in the New York City Foster Care System.* Fall, 2002. Available on-line at: http://www.citylimits.org/images_pdfs/pdfs/CWW%20Teens%20Fall%202002.pdf (accessed May 15, 2007).

[16] See Appendix B for all states. National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect. (2006). Op Cit.

[17] Murray, K.O. & Gesiriech, S. (n.d.). A brief legislative history of the child welfare system. Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care. http://pewfostercare.org/research/docs/Legislative.pdf (accessed May 1, 2007).

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] "Family Preservation and Family Support Services." National Resource Center for Respite and Crisis Care Services, ARCH National Respite Network, Factsheet Number 37. http://www.archrespite.org/archfs37.htm (accessed April 27, 2007).

[21] Murray, K.O. & Gesiriech, S. (n.d.). Op cit.

[22] US Children's Bureau. (2004/2005). Children find permanence in subsidized guardianship. Children's Bureau Express. http://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/articles.cfm?issue_id=2004-12&article_id=895 (accessed May 1, 2007).

[23] US Children's Bureau. (2004). Evaluating the effectiveness of tribal/State Title IV-E agreements. Children's Bureau Express. http://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/articles.cfm?section_id=2&issue_id=2004-10 (accessed May 1, 2007).

[24] Murray, K.O. & Gesiriech, S. (n.d.). Op cit.

[25] These services can be provided with federal funds through the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. National Foster Care Coalition. (2000). *Frequently Asked Questions: About the Foster Care Independence Act and the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program.* http://www.casey.org/NR/rdonlyres/E8E5EC9B-2C0B-496B-A165-5A55D2F793A5/459/ChafeeFAQI1.pdf (accessed February 19, 2007).

[26] Massinga, R. & Pecora, P.J. (2004). Providing better opportunities for older children in the child welfare system. *The Future of Children: Children, Families, and Foster Care,* 14(1), http://www.futureofchildren.org/usr_doc/9-hussings.pdf (accessed April 27, 2007); Courtney, M. (2005). Youth aging out of foster care. *Network of Transitions to Adulthood Policy Brief,* 19, http://www.transad.pop.upenn.edu/downloads/courtney--foster%20care.pdf (accessed April 27, 2007); Shirk, M. & Stangler, G. (2004). *On their own: What happens to kids when they age out of the foster care system.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

[27] These were enacted through the Strengthening Courts Amendments of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005.

[28] *Fix the Foster Care Lookback (2007).* Kids Are Waiting: Fix Foster Care Now, a project of The Pew Charitable Trusts.

[29] National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect. (2006). Op cit.

[30] National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect. (2006). Op cit.

[31] Courtney, M.E. & Dworsky, A. (2005). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 19.* Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children; Pecora, P.J., Kessler, R.C., Williams, J., O'Brien, K., Downs, A.C., English, D., White, J., Hiripi, E., White, C.R., Wiggins, T., and Holmes, K. (2005). *Improving family foster care: Findings from the Northwest foster care alumni study.* Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs.

For more information, visit:

KIDS ARE WAITING: FIX FOSTER CARE NOW
www.kidsarewaiting.org

The Pew Charitable Trusts is driven by the power of knowledge to solve today's most challenging problems. Pew applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public and stimulate civic life. We partner with a diverse range of donors, public and private organizations and concerned citizens who share our commitment to fact-based solutions and goal-driven investments to improve society.

An independent nonprofit, the Trusts is the sole beneficiary of seven individual charitable funds established between 1948 and 1979 by two sons and two daughters of Sun Oil Company founder Joseph N. Pew and his wife, Mary Anderson Pew.

THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS
2005 Market Street, Suite 1700
Philadelphia, PA 19103-7077
215.575.9050

1025 F Street NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20004-1409
202.552.2000
www.pewtrusts.org

www.pewtrusts.org

THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS

KIDS ARE WAITING
Fix Foster Care Now

www.kidsarewaiting.org
info@kidsarewaiting.org