

April 2018

**Successful Foster Care Transitions UPDATED:
Addressing Homelessness, Expanding MYOI and Improving Fostering Futures**

All young people face barriers to independence as they move into adulthood – studies show that most young adults are dependent on their parents until their late 20's. When young people leave foster care, many have not had the kind of experiences and successes that will help in their transition. Some have no one to help, resulting in discouraging outcomes including homelessness, early pregnancies, risk for human trafficking, involvement in the justice system, and fewer high school and college graduates.

Too many youth find themselves alone without support, sometimes fleeing bad situations at home with parents or other caregivers, sometimes identified by schools and others as needing some stability and assistance. State funding for homeless and runaway youth services has not increased since 2001, resulting in gaps in services around the state.

The Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative (MYOI) works with young people, ages 14-21, currently or formerly in foster care, to ease their transition into adulthood. Despite funding for staff and the success of local MYOI programs in leveraging public and private funding through philanthropy and local business, due to a lack of resources not all young people can take advantage of the following services through this program.

To try to mitigate the gaps in skill building beyond high school for these young people who are far less likely to begin or complete postsecondary training and credentials, there has been increasing federal and philanthropic investment in scholarship programs. Michigan's budget also supports the Fostering Futures Scholarship (FFS), which supports 400 students who have experienced foster care with undergraduate tuition, room and board, and books and supplies.

Current Situation: The Governor, House and Senate have maintained current year funding for MYOI and Fostering Futures in their FY19 budget proposals. The House recommended a \$750,000 increase for runaway and homeless youth organizations and an expansion of the Fostering Futures Scholarship use to cover expenses at career technical institutions. Neither of those changes was included in the Senate's version. In addition, the House included several pieces of the Governor's Marshall Plan for Talent that could assist youth experiencing foster care and/or homelessness.

Actions Needed:

1. Support the House recommendation to expand access to the Fostering Futures Scholarship to students attending career technical institutions. Thank legislators for maintaining funding, but urge further spending flexibility and increased spending to support expanded access.
2. Support the House recommendation to increase funding for runaway and homeless youth services, and urge funding the full recommendation of \$1.5 million.
3. Support the House recommendations to increase funding for competency based education, Talent Pledge Scholarships and other initiatives that support young people's high school and post-secondary credit accumulation.
4. Thank legislators for continuing funding for MYOI, but emphasize the need for investment increases to ensure access to full programming for every eligible young person around the state.