IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR FORMER FOSTER YOUTH

Each year, over 26,000 foster youth “age out” of the child welfare system in the United States. In Maryland, the majority of foster youth over the age of 14—a total of 4,100 at the end of FY 2012—will remain in care until they “age out” between the ages of 18 and 21. While some of these youth may transition to independence smoothly and successfully, many more face significant challenges finding and maintaining adequate housing.

HOMELESSNESS AMONG FOSTER YOUTH

Any youth can experience homelessness, but foster youth that have “aged out” of the child welfare system are particularly at risk.

EFFECTS OF HOMELESSNESS

Housing instability during foster youth’s transition to adulthood is particularly detrimental. It increases the likelihood of experiencing negative outcomes and compromises their ability to become self-sufficient.

- Intermittent schooling
- Physical abuse
- Sexual victimization
- Substance abuse
- Poor physical and mental health
- Unstable employment
- Little-to-no-access to health care
- Delayed independence

THE SOLUTION

Advocates for Children and Youth has identified several key strategies for reducing homelessness among former foster youth to help ensure that foster youth have safe, stable and affordable housing upon aging out of the child welfare system. In addition to providing a range of supports and services, including access to health care, after youth age out of care, it is especially important that transition planning and financial literacy training begin well before emancipation.

- Remove legal barriers to obtaining housing
- Identify immediate & long-term housing options
- Engage youth and make sure they are enrolled in Medicaid and understand how to access services

ROBUST TRANSITION PLANNING

FINANCIAL LITERACY TRAINING

CONTINUUM OF HOUSING SUPPORTS & SERVICES

INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

- Offer one-time housing & financial supports
- Create transitional housing programs
- Provide permanent housing options
- Seek public-private funders
- Collaborate with state authorities & housing agencies
- Enlist property managers and community providers

For more information, contact Leigh Cobb at lcobb@ACY.ORG or visit us online at www.acy.org.