



Citizen Review Panel

District of Columbia

Youth Aging Out (YAO) Workgroup Proposal

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YAO Workgroup

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Overview and Purpose

A comprehensive approach to services for Youth Aging Out of foster care (hereinafter to as YAO) must be interdependent and collectively contribute to the overall well-being and stability of the youth. The Citizen Review Panel YAO work group acknowledges that success in one area, such as housing, is often closely tied to success in other areas like education, mental health, and community integration. Recognizing the CRP's capacity as a volunteer organization and the need to focus on a manageable project, the YAO work group will specifically study factors related to homelessness that impact the District's YAO.

The work group plans to determine national best practices utilized by other jurisdictions to prevent homelessness among youth aging out of foster care and to examine the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA's) approach to homeless prevention services for YAO as it relates to those best practices. The work group is aware that data available to them relates only to youth still in care and therefore the study cannot look at longitudinal outcomes regarding homelessness. Thus, research will be focused on youth ages 18-21 and will compare the identification of the programs offered by CFSA with the extent to which these programs are known by the older youth community being served as well as by their resource parents and community providers.

Scope of the Problem

Young people exiting foster care are at a high risk of homelessness - between 25% and 50% of them experience homelessness within four years, according to national studies. Across the U.S., people leaving care are less likely to have resources or support networks to lean on than peers who didn't spend time in care. In an annual census, 13% of people experiencing homelessness in DC reported having spent time in the child welfare system.¹

According to a meeting with representatives from CFSA in March 2024, the reality of making it through the DC leasing process can be grim. Some youth receive vouchers but cannot use them, due to rising costs of housing in the District, high deposits as well as landlords who won't give them a chance in a competitive market.

Given the housing and other challenges youth face as they age out of care in DC, it is essential that CFSA provide every possible service to help YAO secure housing or have a housing plan while they are still under its care. Furthermore, it is crucial to address any barriers to the participation of YAO in services and programs to give them the strongest possible foundation for facing the significant challenges ahead.

Topic to be investigated and Issue/concern

The study will investigate whether DC's efforts to prevent homelessness for youth transitioning out of foster care can be strengthened by more awareness and participation, as well as any recommendations for increased services that could decrease the potential for homelessness after exiting care.

Research Questions

The YAO workgroup project will research these questions:

1. Among national homeless prevention best practices for YAO, which programs are currently being implemented by CFSA?
2. What are some service gaps that are not currently being offered by CFSA?
3. Of the current programs being implemented in (#1), what is the level of awareness among YAO and their resource/ parents/caregivers regarding their knowledge of these programs?
4. What are the challenges to participation and recommendations to resolve those challenges?
5. For YAO currently preparing to age out of DC care, what is their awareness of the mandate in the POKETT ACT that CFSA have a housing plan for every youth??

6. For YAO currently preparing to age out of DC care, what is their level of awareness of the increased availability of housing vouchers and the mandate in the POKETT ACT that CFSA consider each young person leaving foster care for a voucher?

Methodology

The YAO work group will review national homeless prevention best practice services for YAO of foster care. Simultaneously, the workgroup will request to meet with representatives from CFSA who work directly with YAO of care to develop a comprehensive list of which programs CFSA offers that relate to homeless prevention of YAO.

The YAO workgroup will compare national homeless prevention best practice services for YAO and those provided by CFSA for this population.

Surveys will be administered to Youth ages 18-21, resource parents/caregivers and community organizations to examine the level of awareness of youth about these services and any challenges to participation. Surveys to youth will be administered in multiple ways: in person through attending events for youth at CFSA and at non-profit partner organizations serving DC's youth in foster care as well as electronically when preferred. Surveys to resource parents/caregivers and community organizations will be sent electronically. Subsequently, statistical analysis will be conducted on the collected data. Anticipated data collection, analysis and reporting will be within one year.

Data requested from CFSA

- Percentage of housing plans that have been developed for youth currently closest to aging out (time frame will be defined in partnership with CFSA)
- As known, data on how many youth have successfully utilized housing vouchers (time period will be defined in partnership with CFSA) and any data on the challenges to successful utilization
- Number of youth closest to aging out who have/have not viable housing plans
- CFSA services offered to YAO related to Housing and Independent Living. (Affordable housing options and assistance in developing independent living skills to ensure that YAO , including those with special needs, have access to housing once they age out of foster care).
- Education: Range of service offerings to support youth from high achievers to individuals with special needs, including services in tutoring, mentoring, educational resources, college and GED prep, vocational training, and individualized educational

program (IEP) development, and monitoring.

- Career and Employment- Career options, job search, pre-vocational and vocational training opportunities, internships, apprenticeships, and mentoring etc. to enhance older youth career and employment prospects.
- Other data may be requested as needs progress

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent and strict ethical guidelines will be followed.

¹ <https://thedcline.org/2023/09/19/recent-reforms-are-helping-dc-distribute-unused-vouchers-for-foster-youth/>