

Highlights from State Reports to the National Youth in Transition Database, Federal Fiscal Year 2011

Background

In 1999, Public Law 106-169 established the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) to provide States with flexible funding to carry out programs that assist youth in making the transition from foster care to self-sufficiency. The law also required the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to develop a data collection system to track the independent living services States provide to youth and develop outcome measures that may be used to assess States' performance in operating their independent living programs. Between 2000 and 2008, ACF worked with States, child welfare advocates, youth in foster care and foster parents to develop, test and refine the data elements and data collection requirements necessary to meet the law's mandate. The final rule implementing this new data collection system, called the *National Youth in Transition Database*, or NYTD, was issued in February 2008 and required States to begin collecting data on October 1, 2010.¹ With the first year of data collection completed, the Children's Bureau is pleased to release the following highlights from Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2011 reporting (October 1, 2010 to September 30, 2011).²

In this data brief:

We present highlights from State NYTD reports submitted in FFY 2011, including information on independent living services paid for or provided to youth and the outcomes of youth in foster care at age 17.

For more information, please contact the Children's Bureau at NYTDinfo@acf.hhs.gov.



National Results

This brief highlights FFY 2011 data in two categories:

- Information on youth who received independent living services during FFY 2011 (the "served population") paid for or provided by State agencies that administer the CFCIP; and
- Information on the outcomes reported by the first cohort of 17-year-old youth in foster care surveyed by States during FFY 2011 (the "baseline population").

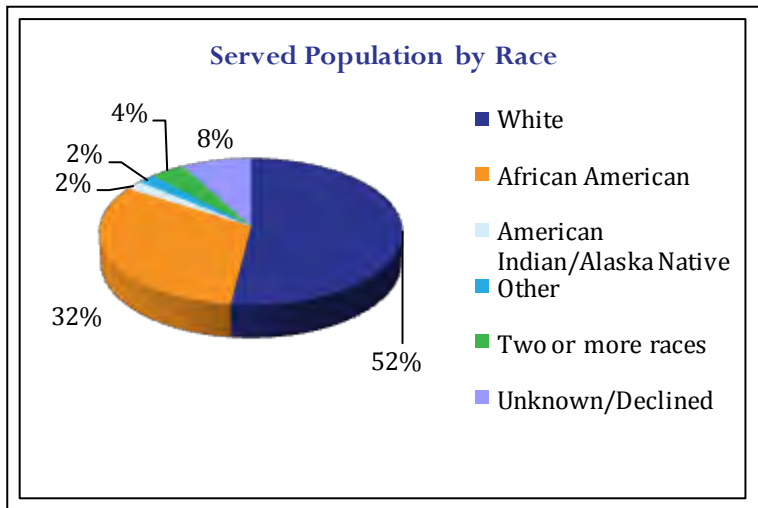
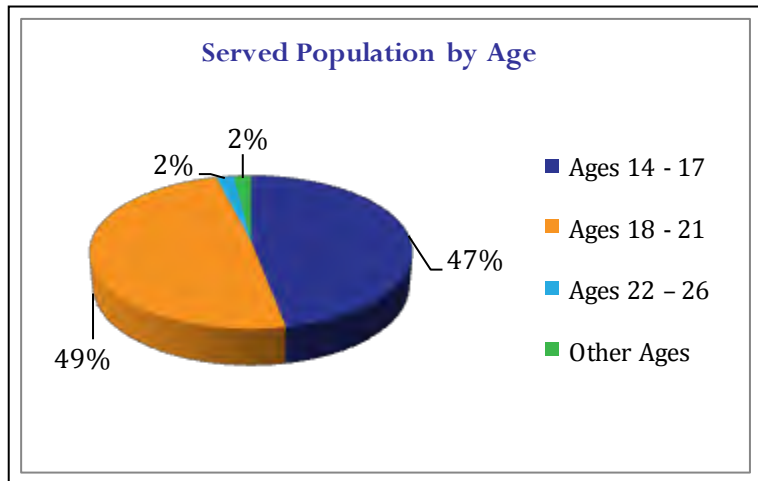
During FFY 2011, States reported information on 98,561 youth who received independent living services and 17,021 youth in foster care who participated in the NYTD survey.

Information on Youth Receiving Independent Living Services

NYTD provides the first national snapshot of service delivery efforts of State CFCIP agencies aimed at assisting youth in making the transition to adulthood. In FFY 2011, States reported that **98,561** youth and young adults received at least one independent living service.³ As shown in the highlights below, States are providing a broad array of services and supports to a diverse group of youth.

Demographics

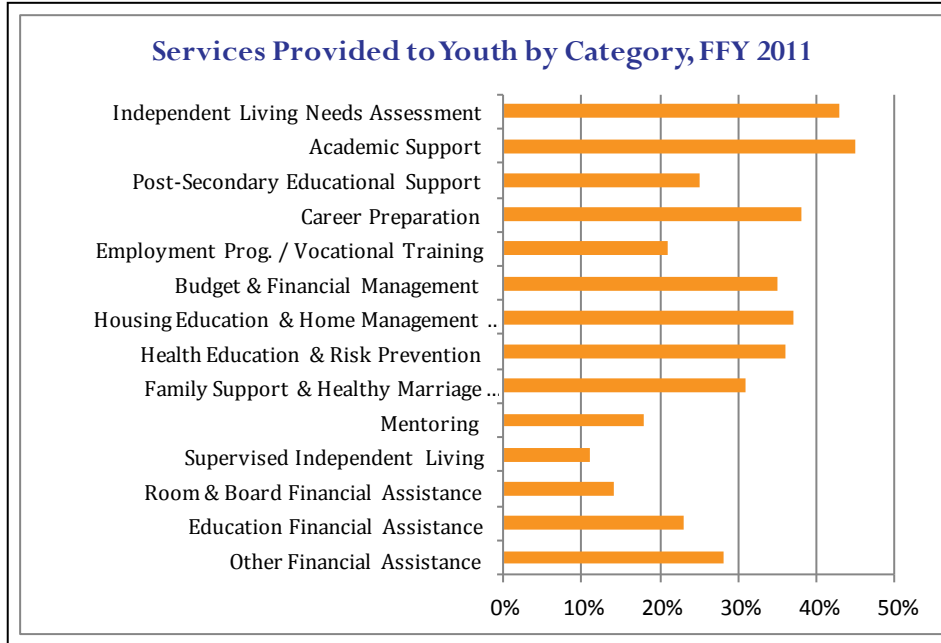
- About the same number of males (48 percent) and females (52 percent) received services.
- About half were between the ages of 18 and 21. Another 47 percent were between ages 14 and 17.
- The racial and ethnic backgrounds of youth receiving services were diverse. The majority were White and approximately one-third were African American⁴. Twenty percent were Hispanic.⁵
- Roughly 72 percent of youth receiving services were still in foster care during the report period in which they received services.
- Approximately 16 percent of youth receiving services were adjudicated delinquent.⁶
- Twenty percent of youth receiving services were also receiving special education instruction.⁷



Services Paid for or Provided to Youth

- Academic support, career preparation and other services targeting independent living skills were the most common types of services provided.

- Close to 70 percent of the youth had received at least one independent living life skills support service (e.g., budget and financial management, housing education and home management, supervised independent living, and independent living needs assessment).



- About half (53 percent) had received at least one educational support service (academic support and/or post-secondary educational support).
- Approximately forty-five percent had received a career preparation or employment training service.

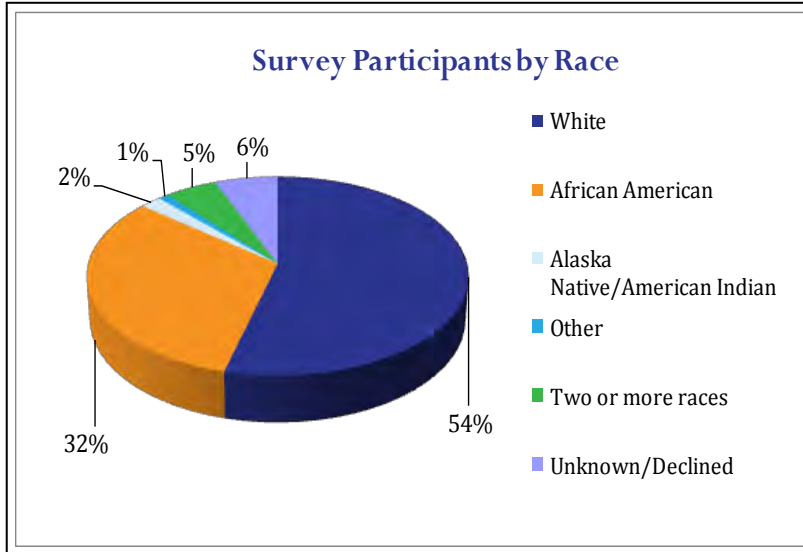
- Over half of the young adults received three or more services during FFY 2011.

Information on the Outcomes of Youth in Foster Care at Age 17

States identified **28,318** youth who turned age 17 during FFY 2011 and were eligible to take the NYTD survey.⁸ Of those eligible youth, **17,021** (or 60 percent) completed the survey. Twelve percent declined to participate and 5 percent were considered to be on runaway or missing status. In addition, 16 percent were reported to have been unable to be located or invited in time to meet the data collection deadline for the baseline survey.⁹ States also reported that a small number of youth were unable to participate in the survey due to their incarceration (2 percent), incapacitation (2 percent) or some other reason.¹⁰ Based on the data reported to NYTD, no demographic differences were found between those youth who took the survey and those who did not, suggesting there is no apparent bias in response rates.

Demographics

- There were roughly equal numbers of males (52 percent) and females (48 percent) who participated in the NYTD survey in FFY 2011.
- Survey participants were racially diverse¹¹. Eighteen percent were Hispanic.

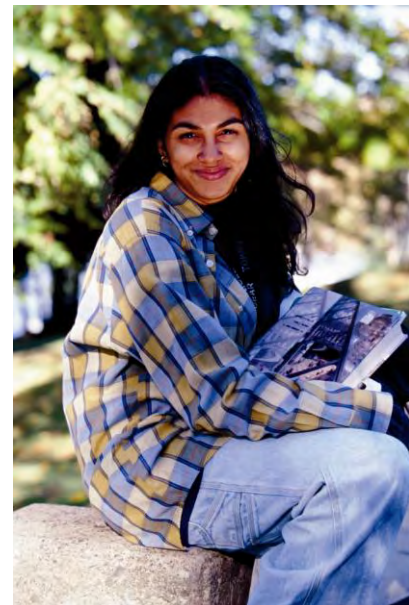


- Fifty-seven percent (9,771) of surveyed youth also received at least one independent living service from the State in FFY 2011. The most common services provided were independent living needs assessments (32 percent), academic supports (31 percent) and services designed to prepare youth for a career (30 percent). Only 12 percent received mentoring services.

Youth Outcomes at Age 17

Ensuring that young people leave the child welfare system prepared to live independently as productive members of their communities is a primary goal of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. To better understand youths' progress toward making a successful transition from foster care to living on their own, NYTD tracks the outcomes of young people in six areas through a short survey¹²:

- Financial self-sufficiency
- Educational attainment
- Connections with adults
- Homelessness
- High-risk behaviors
- Access to health insurance

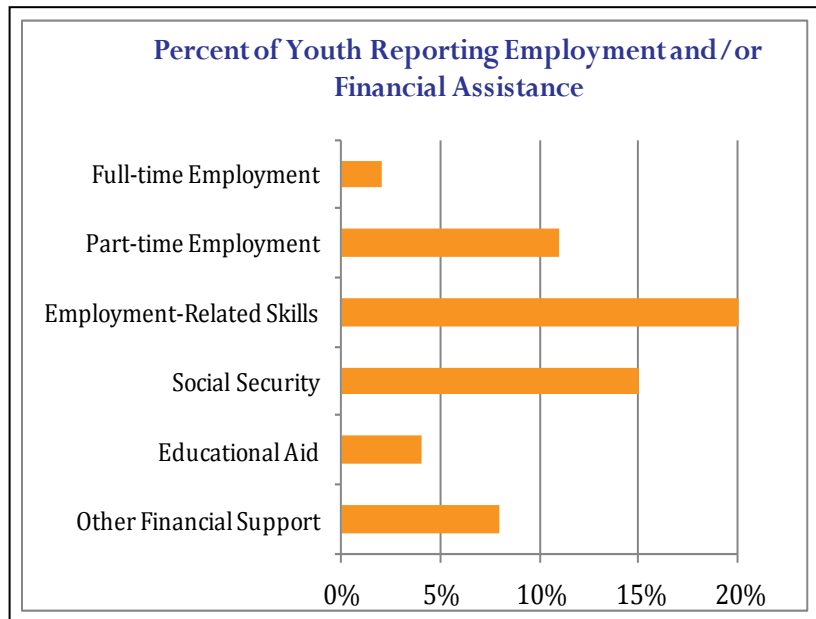


In FFY 2011, States collected baseline outcomes data on a cohort of 17-year-olds in foster care. Progress on these outcomes will be measured again when these youth turn ages 19 and 21. Highlights from the first baseline cohort survey are included below.

Outcome 1: Financial self-sufficiency

To better understand youth outcome experiences in the area of financial self-sufficiency, the NYTD survey poses questions to youth regarding their acquisition of skills necessary to enter the labor market and their access to financial resources to help meet their living expenses.

- Although the youth completing the survey were age 17 and still in foster care, 28 percent of them reported experiences in at least one employment-related category (full- or part-time employment; paid or unpaid apprenticeship, internship, or other on-the-job training). Eighteen percent reported receiving a form of financial assistance (Social Security, educational aid, or some other form of significant, periodic financial resource).



Outcome 2: Educational attainment

Achieving a high school degree can be considered a minimal requirement for self-sufficiency and can assist in establishing an educational foundation that will prepare youth for future educational pursuits. The NYTD survey asks young people to report their current enrollment status in an educational program and the highest educational certification received.

- While the majority (87 percent) of 17-year-old youth had not yet received any educational certificate (including high school degree or GED), an overwhelming majority (93 percent) of them indicated they were currently enrolled in and attending some type of educational programming.¹³ Eight percent reported already having earned a high school diploma or GED.



Outcome 3: Connections with adults

Establishing a positive, consistent and lasting relationship with at least one adult is a critical component in ensuring youth make a successful transition from foster care to adulthood.



The NYTD survey asks youth whether there is currently at least one adult in their life, other than a caseworker, to whom they can go for advice or emotional support.

- The vast majority (93 percent) of 17-year-olds reported currently having a positive connection to an adult.¹⁴

Outcome 4: Homelessness

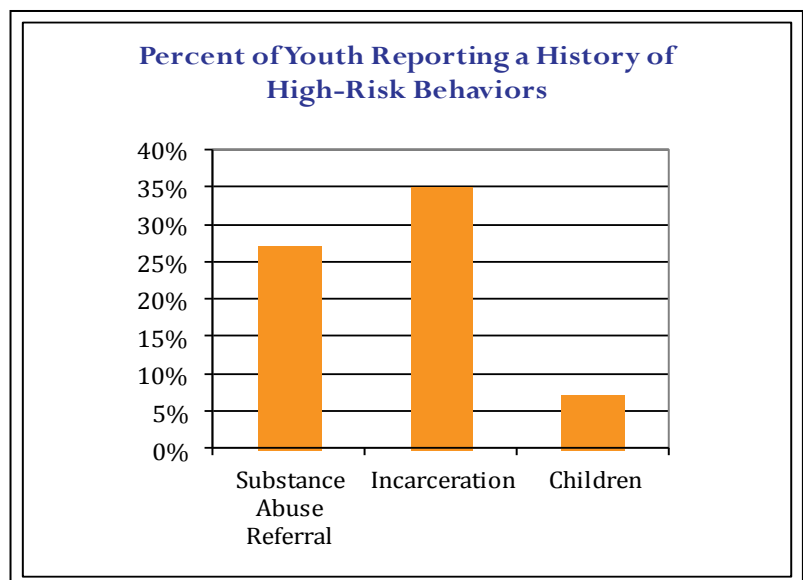
Permanent and adequate housing can protect against a number of negative outcomes. Youth who leave foster care unprepared to live on their own are at risk for becoming homeless soon after discharge. Youth who have a history of homelessness prior to entering care are especially at risk. In FFY 2011, the NYTD survey asked 17-year-olds in foster care if they had ever experienced homelessness.

- Sixteen percent of youth reported having been homeless at some point during their lives.

Outcome 5: High-risk behaviors

Many behaviors place youth in foster care at risk for a variety of negative outcomes. NYTD collects information on three key behaviors that have been associated with hindering successful transitions to adulthood among youth in foster care.¹⁵ Results from the baseline survey demonstrate that some 17-year-olds are entering young adulthood with a history of troubling challenges.

- Slightly over one-quarter (27 percent) of youth reported having been referred for substance abuse assessment or counseling at some point in their lives. Of these, 42 percent were females and 58 percent were males.
- Over one-third (35 percent) reported being incarcerated at some point in their lives; 34 percent of them were females and 66 percent were males.



- Seven percent of youth reported having given birth to or fathering children.
- Half of the youth reported having at least one risk factor listed above. Nearly one-third (31 percent) reported a single factor, one in six (17 percent) reported two factors, and 2 percent reported all three factors.

Outcome 6: Access to health insurance

Access to health care can help ensure youth receive the prevention and treatment services they need to remain healthy. Youth in title IV-E foster care are categorically eligible to receive Medicaid. The NYTD survey asks youth whether they are receiving Medicaid or some other type of health insurance coverage. Survey participants may also report “don’t know” to any of the questions regarding health insurance coverage.

- The majority of youth (81 percent) reported having Medicaid insurance coverage. Five percent of surveyed youth, however, reported not knowing if they had Medicaid coverage.
- Sixteen percent of youth reported having some other type of medical insurance.

Conclusion

The inaugural year of NYTD data collection provides some preliminary insights into the national picture of youth in transition. This information can be used by a variety of stakeholders (including States, the Federal government, youth, researchers and practitioners) to evaluate current practice, to generate meaningful dialogue with and about youth and to begin examining ways to target services to better meet the needs of transitioning youth. We also encourage States to use results from FFY 2011 NYTD reports to guide continuous quality improvement in NYTD data collection. For example, States may begin analyzing NYTD data to explore reasons why some youth declined to participate in the survey and adopt practices that will lead to higher participation rates. To assist with this important work, States may engage young people as partners in understanding NYTD data and improving NYTD data collection.

Endnotes

¹ All 50 States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico are required to collect and report NYTD data.

² Because some data on baseline population youth could be reported in the data file required to be submitted by May 15, 2012, we could not begin conducting analyses on the complete cohort of baseline population youth until this spring. The information in this brief comes from all data reports submitted by States as of June 18, 2012.

³ Two States did not provide information on independent living services paid for or provided to youth in FFY 2011.

⁴ States report all races that apply to a youth. The category “Other” (2%) includes youth who are reported to be Asian or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander.

⁵ Hispanic or Latino ethnicity is reported separately from race.

⁶ For NYTD purposes, “adjudicated delinquent” means that a State or Federal court of competent jurisdiction has adjudicated the youth as a delinquent. See 45 CFR Sec. 1356.83(g)(17).

⁷ For NYTD purposes, “special education” means specifically designed instruction, provided at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. See 45 CFR Sec. 1356.83(g)(19).

⁸ All 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico reported outcomes information for the baseline population. To be eligible to take the NYTD survey, a youth must have turned age 17 during FFY 2011 and have been in foster care at some point within 45 days of turning age 17 (the NYTD “baseline population”). States were required to collect outcomes information while the youth was still in foster care. The outcomes data presented in this brief come from responses provided by baseline population youth who were in foster care on the date they were surveyed during FFY 2011.

⁹ States were required to administer the baseline survey to youth in foster care within 45 days following the youth’s 17th birthday. See 45 CFR Sec. 1356.82(a)(2)(i).

¹⁰ Other reasons for non-participation reported by States included “parent declined” (<1%), “death” (<1%) or “not in sample” (<1%).

¹¹ States report all races that apply to a youth. The category “Other” (1%) includes a small number of youth who were reported to be Asian or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander.

¹² Refer to Appendix B of the NYTD regulation for a complete listing of the NYTD youth outcome survey questions and response options at 45 CFR Sec. 1356.80. Please note that a youth may decline to answer any specific survey question or may decline to participate in the survey all together.

¹³ A youth was asked whether or not she or he was currently attending any of the following: high school, GED classes, post-high school vocational training or college.

¹⁴ The definition of “adult” used here includes, but is not limited to, adult relatives, parents or foster parents. The definition excludes spouses/partners, boyfriends/girlfriends and current caseworkers. See 45 CFR Sec. 1356.83(g)(48).

¹⁵ Risk behaviors include a youth’s self-report of substance abuse assessment referral, incarceration, or having children. The NYTD survey also asks a youth if they were married at the time of the child’s birth. Only 1% of the 1,230 youth who have children were married at the time of the child’s birth.