



Interagency Commitments to Advance Equity and Opportunity for Children and Families in Child Welfare

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The U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Justice, Education, Housing and Urban Development, and Labor announce three new initiatives to advance justice for children, youth, and families in child welfare.

Protecting the Civil Rights of Families: The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and Office for Civil Rights (OCR) issue a joint policy letter reinforcing the responsibilities of state child welfare agencies and court systems to protect the civil rights of children and families. This letter outlines the legal obligation of child welfare agencies and courts to ensure equal access to services for all families regardless of their race, color, or national origin, as outlined in the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI). The letter will also make clear that this responsibility includes ensuring all families can participate fully in programs, processes, and services and are not denied such opportunities based on limited ability to speak English, their immigration status, or the color of their skin. After releasing this policy document, DOJ and ACF will work together to create tools and resources to help child welfare agencies ensure equal access to services and protect children and families from discrimination based on race, color and national origin.

Improving Educational and Employment Outcomes for Foster Youth & Alumni: The U.S. Departments of Education (ED), Labor (DOL), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Health & Human Services (HHS) are pleased to announce a partnership aimed at improving the educational and employment outcomes of current and former foster youth by exploring ways in which agencies can improve wraparound services and employment opportunities that better connect youth to the educational system, and address their housing and social and emotional needs. The goal of the interagency collaboration is to increase opportunities for foster youth by coordinating services between the child welfare system and other public systems and to establish close working relationships between the agencies. ED, DOL, HUD, and HHS are committed to better aligning and leveraging existing educational and workforce training resources available to foster youth.

Housing for Youth Aging-out of Foster Care: The Department of Housing and Urban Development announces new opportunities to help prevent and end youth homelessness through the Family Unification Program (FUP). The FUP offers communities the opportunity to form partnerships between local public housing agencies and child welfare agencies to address the housing and service needs of families and youth who are involved or have been involved in the child welfare system and are facing housing insecurity. The passage of the Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act of 2016 lifts the maximum eligibility age from 21 to 24 years old, increases the length of housing and services to youth from 18 to 36 months, and rather than having to leave foster care to be eligible, youth are now eligible if they are within 90 days of leaving foster care and are currently homeless or at risk of homelessness. This provides a critical safety net for youth aging-out of foster care and prevents homelessness from occurring in the first place. Additionally, the youth-focused FUP and Family Self Sufficiency Demonstration will soon be available in more than 50 communities, providing access to additional education and employment supports and extending the time on the voucher from 36 months to the duration of the FSS contract, which is typically 5 years.