

Summary of Guidance, Tips and Recommendations Related to Surveying the Age 21 Follow-up Population (Federal Fiscal Year 2021)

As states begin surveying youth in the age 21 follow-up population, we have prepared a brief to summarize federal guidance and recommendations related to identifying, locating and surveying youth aging out of foster care. Please note that this brief does not contain any new guidance. Instead, this document is provided as a technical assistance resource and is intended to be used as a helpful reference as states collect and report outcomes data from the age 21 follow-up population this year.

In this document:

We summarize the existing guidance and recommendations related to identifying and surveying youth in the follow-up population at age 21.

Target audience: Data managers, information technology managers, and independent living coordinators

Key words: Youth outcome survey, follow-up population

QUICK TIPS:

- **Preparation:** Always plan to use the full six month surveying period to locate and engage youth to participate in the survey.
- **Staff Training:** Ensure that staff are properly trained and have clear instructions on how to administer or assist youth in completing the NYTD survey.
- **Engagement:** Use youth input to develop youth-friendly survey designs and information to share with youth about your State's NYTD data and how their data will be used to improve child welfare services.
- **Surveying:** Confirm that your staff are using the correct NYTD questions for the follow-up cohort.

1. How can I identify the cohort of youth in my age 21 follow-up population?

Section 2.2.2 of [NYTD Technical Bulletin #5](#) lists and describes the inclusion criteria for youth to enter the follow-up population. To identify the specific list of youth in your state's age 21 follow-up population, run the "cohort management" report on the [NYTD Portal](#) (under the "reports" tab, select "Cohort 3" and then select "Follow-up Population Age 21").

Please note that a youth who participated in baseline outcomes data collection at age 17, but not at age 19 for a reason other than being deceased remains a part of the follow-up population at age 21 (73 FR 10342).

States that have opted to sample the follow-up population are not required to report the records of 21-year-olds who were not selected for the sample unless those youth received independent living services during the report period (see [NYTD Q&A #2.38](#)).

If you suspect that you have encountered errors in generating the records for your cohort, please email the NYTD Help Desk for assistance and instruction on how to make the necessary corrections.

2. What are the data collection requirements for the follow-up population? When must youth be surveyed at age 21 and in which report period do I need to include these data?

States are required to collect outcomes data from youth in the follow-up population during the report period in which the youth turns age 21 (45 CFR 1356.82(a)(3)). This means that states may administer the survey *before or after* the youth turns age 21 as long as the survey is administered during the six-month period (October 1 – March 31 or April 1 – September 30) that includes the youth's 21st birthday. The outcomes data must be included in the same report period file.

3. How should states locate youth to participate in the age 21 follow-up population survey?

The good news is that many states have entirely changed their services and practices since NYTD was launched. Many young adults are now continuously involved with the child welfare agency until age 21 or after. With states opting-in to provide extended federal foster care and/ or Chafee services to age 23, young adults are easier to locate to participate in the NYTD survey at follow-up because they are connected to services.

To locate youth who are no longer in foster care or involved with services, states report that they utilize all methods to determine what contact information is available to locate them. Contact information is often found in case files, past NYTD Surveys, administrative data, or can be obtained from former caseworkers or other service providers. For a subset of young adults this can include professional and online location services.

NYTD administrators and other professionals use addresses of past foster parents, relatives, and parents. Siblings still in foster care and peers can also be helpful in locating a young adult. Social media is a critical resource. While youth may change cell phones, physical addresses, or email addresses, they often keep the same social media accounts. Frequently used social media sites are: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

We encourage states to read more about lessons learned from the *Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs* related to locating youth in transition. In 2013, ACF released a brief documenting locating strategies found successful in this study: [Locating and Engaging Youth after They Leave Foster Care: Experiences Fielding the Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs](#).

4. Once located, how can states engage youth to participate in the age 21 follow-up population survey?

Once states have located a young adult, it is very important to have strategies to engage them in taking the survey. States report the survey administration process often involves determining the best individuals to engage young adults in a way to garner their participation in the survey (so youth do not decline). Example of individuals who can help encourage a young adult to take the NYTD survey include: caseworkers, independent living specialists, aftercare provider staff, Education and

Training Voucher (ETV) administrators, or housing providers. Other young adults with lived experience can also support outreach efforts to encourage young adults to take the NYTD Survey. CB developed a video that may be helpful in encouraging young adults to take the NYTD Survey, located here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RmlsaGQ7dw>.

When young adults know how your state is using NYTD Survey data to help elevate youth voice and provide crucial input into how the state supports youth, they may be more likely to take the survey. Encouraging youth participation in other Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) efforts is another important strategy as it helps young people better understand how NYTD data amplifies the youth voice and helps shape child welfare services and practices. For some youth, seeing how their input changes the child welfare system for others may help to garner their participation.

5. Which survey questions are to be used for the age 21 follow-up population?

States are required to use the relevant NYTD youth outcome survey questions specified in Appendix B of the [NYTD regulation](#) for the age 21 follow-up population. Most of these questions are identical to the questions posed to 17-year-old youth in foster care as part of the baseline population survey, with two exceptions. First, for the follow-up population, the survey questions related to homelessness (**element 49**), substance abuse referral (**element 50**), incarceration (**element 51**) and children (**element 52**) relate to the youth's experience *in the past two years* instead of the youth's lifetime experiences. Second, there are three additional survey questions that should *only* be asked of the follow-up population who are *no longer in foster care*: public financial assistance (**element 42**), public food assistance (**element 43**) and public housing assistance (**element 44**).

6. How should I administer the survey to the age 21 follow-up population?

States have the flexibility to determine which method(s) they will use to engage youth in outcomes data collection and to administer the NYTD youth outcome survey. Most states use every method possible to administer the survey: in person, over the phone, web survey, text messages, chat function over social media, and by mail (especially for youth who may be incarcerated).

7. Can Chafee funding be used for incentives to encourage youth to participate in the NYTD survey even if such youth are age 21 and no longer eligible for Chafee-funded services?

Yes. Incentives paid to encourage participation in the NYTD survey meet the purposes of the Chafee Program, as referenced in section 477(d)(1) of the Social Security Act. Consequently, states may use Chafee funds to provide these incentives to 21-year-olds regardless of whether they remain eligible for Chafee services. Most states offer some form of incentive across survey cohorts. Incentives compensate the young people for their expertise. It is important that the incentive reaches them in a timely manner and that is useful for them (gift cards, check, cash).

8. What is the participation rate states must meet for follow-up population youth?

We encourage states to strive for a 100% participation rate at follow-up but we know that is a hard standard to reach. NYTD establishes a threshold for participation rates; failure to meet those standards

results in a penalty being assessed. States must report outcome information on at least 80% of youth in the follow-up population who are in foster care on the date of outcomes data collection (45 CFR 1356.85(b)(3)(i)) and at least 60% of youth in the follow-up population who are not in foster care on the date of outcomes data collection (45 CFR 1356.85(b)(3)(ii)). As noted in [NYTD Q&A #5.4](#), the outcomes participation rate standards for youth in the follow-up population will be applied to each six-month reporting period. Further, as specified in Program Instruction [ACYF-CB-PI-10-11](#), a state agency that exercises the option to extend title IV-E foster care assistance to youth age 18 or older must consider youth receiving a title IV-E foster care maintenance payment as in foster care for the purposes of NYTD reporting (45 CFR 1356.81). Consequently, such a state must include youth age 18 and older when reporting outcomes information on at least 80 percent of youth in the follow-up population who are in foster care on the date of outcomes data collection (45 CFR 1356.85(b)(3)(i)) (see [NYTD Q&A #5.10](#)).

Finally, please note that ACF will exclude from the calculation of the participation rate any youth in the follow-up population who is reported as deceased, incapacitated or incarcerated in element 34 (outcomes reporting status) at the time information on the follow-up population is required (45 CFR 1356.85(b)(3)). However, as we emphasized in [NYTD Q&A #1.48](#), states must still attempt to collect outcomes data from youth in the follow-up population who are incarcerated and indicate "incarcerated" for data element 34 (outcomes reporting status) *if their attempt was unsuccessful*.

9. What other preparations should states make to assure the location and engagement of youth to participate in the survey?

States should be prepared to assist young adults who may indicate that they are in need of services. Some states have developed a process to provide youth, at a minimum, with a list of resources or hotline number. However, most states have a process in place to ensure the child welfare agency is responsive to the unmet needs of youth currently in crisis, including a point of contact who follows-up immediately with the young adult. This can also include referral to information about benefits the youth may be eligible for but is not currently receiving. States should also consider collecting updated contact information at the end of the survey in case the youth becomes eligible for additional services in the future.

For more information, please contact: NYTDhelp@acf.hhs.gov or visit <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/reporting-systems/nytd>

