NEWS RELEASE
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Arizona Youth Transitioning from Foster Care Need More Support
National Report Highlights the Benefits of Services Beyond Age 18

PHOENIX, AZ – A new brief from the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) finds more young people aging out of the foster care system could have an easier time transitioning into adulthood if they take advantage of services, such as extended foster care, once they reach the age of 18. The brief, titled Fostering Youth Transitions, is a first of its kind brief highlighting data from all states on how youth 14 and older fare during the transition to adulthood.

Young people living in foster care face tremendous disruption in their lives, often being moved from one group home or foster home to another, enrolled in different schools over a period of years and experiencing insecurity from the lack of a permanent family life. These negative experiences follow youth into adulthood, with challenges such as mental health issues, higher levels of unemployment and homelessness during adulthood.

All young people – regardless of race, ethnicity or ZIP code – need resources and opportunities to help them successfully transition from foster care to adulthood. Yet, the brief finds only 25% of youth aging out of foster care take advantage of services that can help them become successful adults.

"Ages 18-21 are chaotic for everyone, especially for kids in foster care," said Ben, an alumnus from foster care who sought help to deal with the transition to adulthood. “I was fortunate to have excellent help from some non-profit social service agencies to keep my goals on track through this crazy time in my life."

Children’s Action Alliance supports a current strategic goal of the Department of Child Safety that calls to increase successful transition to adulthood of all children 14 and older while in foster care, as well as a policy change that makes extended foster care at age 18 automatic (provided youth are working, in jobs training, need medical care or are going to school) unless youth opt out and choose to transition on their own.

Beth Rosenberg, Director of Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Policy at Children’s Action Alliance, notes that reaching this goal must include eliminating barriers to extended care so that more youth can get support to help them prepare and succeed in school and in their jobs, maintain stable housing and access to health care. “CAA calls on lawmakers and stakeholders to work together to achieve this goal to build a better, safer future for these vulnerable young people.”
The report finds the following about Arizona foster youth:

- More than 900 are in foster care on their 18th birthday and have not been reunited or connected to their family.
- Some 39% have experienced a group home or institutional placement, considered the least optimal place for youth.
- Many have been moved frequently: 43% of youth aged 14+ have experienced three or more placements.

A fact sheet about the foster care population in Arizona and the nation can be found here.