



HEY Statistics: Health and Disabilities

Statistics about Current and Former Foster Youth

Emancipated Foster Youth and Health

Emancipated Foster Youth continue to experience disproportionate rates of health problems after leaving care.

- Once they emancipate, or leave care, foster care alumni are more likely to have mental health problems. In fact - 54.4% of foster care alumni have mental health problem as compared to 22.1% of general population.⁸
- After leaving care, foster youth experience disproportionate rates of trauma. 25.2% of former foster youth have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This rate is 6 times higher than war veterans and 8 times higher than the general population.⁹
- 33% of all former foster youth have no form of health insurance.¹⁰

If we applied these statistics to foster youth in San Francisco...

- In San Francisco, in mid-2008 there were about 450 foster youth in care over 16.¹¹
- If the majority of these youth will emancipate by age 18, at least 249 youth with some type of mental health issue will emancipate to independence within the next two years.
- Of those 249 youth, at least 113 of them will have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Introduction

Foster youth and emancipated foster youth experience disproportionately high mental health and physical health needs, compared to youth who have never been in the system. Youth who have physical or mental disabilities, have experienced trauma, or have other health problems are more likely to enter the foster care system, more likely to develop health problems in care and more likely to experience health problems after emancipation.

Youth with Health Problems Enter Foster Care at High Rates

- Youth with disabilities are more likely to be abused and therefore, more likely to enter the foster care system. In fact, they are between 1.6 and 3.4 times more likely to be abused, compared to youth without disabilities.¹
- Youth with developmental disabilities or delays are more likely to enter the foster care system. Between 20-60% of children entering foster care have developmental disabilities or delays, compared with about 10% of the general population.²
- 35-85% of children entering foster care have significant mental health problems.³

Youth in Care Experience Higher Rates of Health Problems

- Youth in foster care are more likely than other youth to experience developmental delays. Foster care youth experience an overall developmental delay more than 6 times greater than the general population.⁴
- More than 80% of children in foster care have developmental, emotional, or behavioral problems.⁵
- Nearly 50% of foster children and youth suffer from chronic health conditions, and about 40-72% require ongoing medical treatment.⁶
- 21% of children in the child welfare system had a history of learning disabilities, 14% exhibited emotional disturbances, and 12% had speech impairment.⁷



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What are HEY Statistics?

- HEY Statistics offer relevant information for any person interested in foster care, emancipation and transitional age youth in the Bay Area.
- HEY Statistics shows the most current statistics regarding foster youth in the Bay Area in many subject areas. This sheet focuses on their mental and physical health and well-being.

What is HEY?

Honoring Emancipated Youth (HEY), a community project of United Way of the Bay Area, is dedicated to strengthening and connecting San Francisco's systems of support so that Bay Area youth emancipating, or "aging out" of the foster care system can enjoy a healthy transition to adulthood.

HEY identifies and raises awareness around challenges affecting local emancipating or emancipated foster youth by bringing together a diversity of voices and experiences, including those of former foster youth, service providers, and other supporters, in finding solutions.

HEY's core work includes:

1. **Focused research on local practices** that affect transition aged current and former foster youth
2. **Skill building and information sharing opportunities** for youth and direct service providers through trainings and convenings
3. **An information hub** of issues and challenges affecting local transition aged current and former foster care youth

As a result, supporters of foster youth are linked and informed about the challenges faced by former foster youth and gain access to hard data and expert review of policies and practices so that they can help improve the lives of former foster youth.

Works Cited

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- ⁴ Leslie, L.K. et al. (2004) *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*.
- ⁵ HHS. (1999). *Helping Families Achieve Self-Sufficiency: A Guide to Funding Services for Children and Families Through the TANF Program*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Online at www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ofa/funds2.htm.
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- ⁷ Ringeisen, Heather, RTI International and the University of Illinois. 2008. *Special Health Care Needs Among Children in the Child Welfare System*. *Pediatrics*. Vol. 122 No. 1 July 2008, pp. e232-e241
- ⁸ Center for Social Law and Policy. 2007. *Financing Reform: How Can We Help Youth Aging Out of Care?*. National Association of Counties Task Force on Youth Aging Out of Foster Care.
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- ¹⁰ Pecora, Peter. (2005). *Improving Family Foster Care, Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study*. Seattle: The Northwest Foster Care Alumni Studies, Casey Family Programs.
- ¹¹ CWS/CMS http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/PIT.aspx for April 2008 (accessed 12/03/08)