



## **Child Welfare League of America Independent Living Coordinator Questionnaire Results**

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### **Abstract:**

A phone survey was conducted with State Independent Living (IL) Coordinators in December 2003 through April 2004 to gather information regarding discharge policies, funding, and housing options available to youth aging out of the foster care system. A total of 38 State IL Coordinators (including the District of Columbia) participated in this project.

Although it is recognized that young people aging out of the foster care system confront many challenges upon discharge, this report is specifically focused on the issue of housing for young people transitioning out of the foster care system.

### **Introduction:**

Youth transitioning out of the foster care system are significantly impacted by the instability that accompanies long periods of out-of-home placement during childhood and adolescence. The life experiences of these young people place them at a higher risk for experiencing unemployment, poor educational outcomes, health issues, early parenthood, long-term dependency on public assistance, increased rates of incarceration, and homelessness. Confronting and overcoming these astounding obstacles without adequate life skills and support networks make it difficult for foster youth to successfully transition into adulthood.

Approximately 20,000 to 25,000 young people age out of the foster care system each year, without familial or economic support (Allen, M. & Nixon, R., 2000). According to the 2000 Census, nearly 4 million people between the ages of 25 and 34 live with their parents due to economic realities – jobs are scarce and housing is expensive (Healthy Workplaces, 2004). Alone, these young people are confronting the harsh reality of the gap between the wages they earn and the cost of housing (Child Welfare League of America, 2004). As a result, youth exiting the foster care system are becoming homeless at disconcerting rates. Young people transitioning out of the system are experiencing homelessness anywhere

from 12 to 36% (Cook, R., 1991; Courtney, M., & Piliavian, I., 1998; Reilly, T., 2003). It has been reported that as many as three in ten of the nation's homeless adults report foster care history (Roman, N.P. & Wolfe, P., 1995).

Along with the issues of homelessness, former foster youth are also experiencing poor educational outcomes, low wages and unemployment. A solid educational background is critical to a young person's ability to becoming an independent adult. Education increases a young person's ability to earn a living wage allowing him or her to afford basic needs such as food, clothing, housing, and health care. Unfortunately, studies report that between 50%-55% of former foster youth did not complete their high school education (Cook, R., 1991; Courtney, M., & Piliavian, I., 1998; Reilly, T., 2003). However, despite these bleak statistics as many as 75% of former foster youth expressed the desire to attend college (Reilly, T. 2003). In addition to poor educational outcomes, former foster youth are also experiencing unemployment. Studies have shown that only 38%-50% of former foster youth were employed 12 to 18 months post-discharge (Cook, R., 1991; Courtney, M., & Piliavian, I., 1998). Given their lack of education and economic security, it is not surprising that former foster youth are also more likely to depend on public assistance (Goodman, N., 2001).

Unfortunately, it has also been indicated that former foster youth are more likely to be involved with the criminal justice system. In Wisconsin, 18% of former foster youth experienced incarceration post-discharge while 41% of former foster youth in Clark County, Nevada reported spending at least one night in jail (Courtney, M., & Piliavian, I., 1998; Cook, R., 1991). It has also been reported that former foster youth often experience high rates of substance abuse (Goodman, N., 2001). All of the research indicates that young people aging out of public systems are confronted with critical service needs that if left unaddressed, have the potential to cause irreparable harm (Child Welfare League of America, 2004).

In an effort to assist youth in their transitions to adulthood, The Foster Care Independence Act (FCIA) of 1999 established the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (Chafee Program), allowing states more funding and flexibility to assist young people with their transitions to adulthood. States receive increased funding and are permitted to extend Medicaid eligibility to former foster children up to age 21. Additionally, the Chafee program allows states to use up to 30% of their federal funds to provide room and board services to former foster youth 18 to 21 years of age. This includes young people who move into independent living programs, age out and/or lose touch with the child

welfare agency and then return for assistance before reaching the age of 21 (National Foster Care Awareness Project, 2000).

### **Background and Overview of Study:**

The National Partnership to End Youth Homelessness (NPEYH), a national coalition that represents the fields of child welfare, juvenile justice, youth development, mental health, homelessness, and housing is committed to ending youth homelessness. NPEYH is currently working on a collaborative project aimed to improve the housing outcomes for youth aging out of the foster care system. A major component of this effort involves identifying and describing promising efforts designed to address the housing needs of young people aging out of the system.

As organizations committed to preventing and ending youth homelessness, the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH), National Foster Care Coalition (NFCC) and the National Network for Youth (NNY), four participating organizations of the National Partnership to End Youth Homelessness (NPEYH) are working together to gather information regarding each state's discharge policies, funding, and housing information relevant to young people aging out of the foster care system. This survey represents the principle strategy for synthesizing the aforementioned information.

### **Method**

#### *Key Informants*

Fifty-two State Independent Living Coordinators including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico were sent a letter requesting their participation in this project. Following written notification, each IL Coordinator was contacted to schedule a phone interview. Thirty-eight IL Coordinators agreed to participate in this survey. Fourteen of the remaining coordinators did not respond to phone messages or missed their scheduled interviews. The overall response rate was 73%.

Contact information for State IL Coordinators was obtained from the National Resource Center for Youth Development's website at:

[www.nrcys.ou.edu/nrcyd/ilcoord.htm](http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/nrcyd/ilcoord.htm)

#### *Survey Development*

A sixteen-question survey was developed by CWLA and NAEH to standardize the information obtained from the participants. The questionnaires were developed into a structured interview survey. The survey included questions regarding each state's political subdivisions, discharge policies, funding, and housing information.

### *Survey Implementation*

CWLA staff conducted structured interviews with State IL Coordinators. The interviews were conducted between December 2003 and April 2004. The interviews were approximately 35 minutes in length.

### *Limitations*

The most prevalent limitation included difficulty contacting State IL Coordinators. Several attempts were made to contact Coordinators via telephone and e-mail. Despite these efforts, 14 State IL Coordinators did not participate in survey. Four of the 14 State IL Coordinators missed their scheduled phone interviews. The remaining 10 State IL Coordinators did not respond to telephone or e-mail messages.

Many State IL Coordinators of State Supervised-County Administered and Regionally Administered political subdivisions reported limited information regarding specific programs or regulations in their states. States with these political subdivisions often have one IL Coordinator in each locality. As a result, limited information is available to the State IL Coordinator. Each locality is managed differently depending on the needs of the community.

Additionally, terminology such as “age out” needed to be clarified for State IL Coordinators due to the different uses of the term in each state. In some states for example, “age out” is defined as the time a youth turns 18 and exits the system completely or moves into an Independent Living Program. Others use the term “age out” when referring to a youth who is no longer receiving foster care services (i.e. 18 or 21). Also, it is important to note that some states use terms such as “transitioning out” or “emancipate.” For the purposes of this survey, the term “age out” refers to a youth who is no longer receiving foster care services.

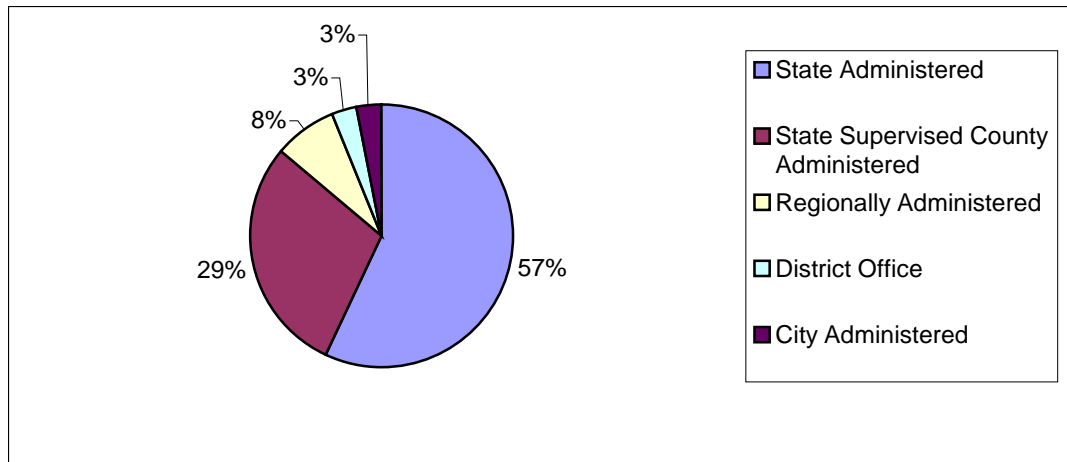
Lastly, the State IL Coordinators’ length of employment impacted the accuracy of information reported. At least five State IL Coordinators indicated less than two years in their position.

### Survey Findings:

This section presents the findings from a recent phone survey of 38 State Independent Living Coordinators including the District of Columbia.

### POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS

**Figure 1**



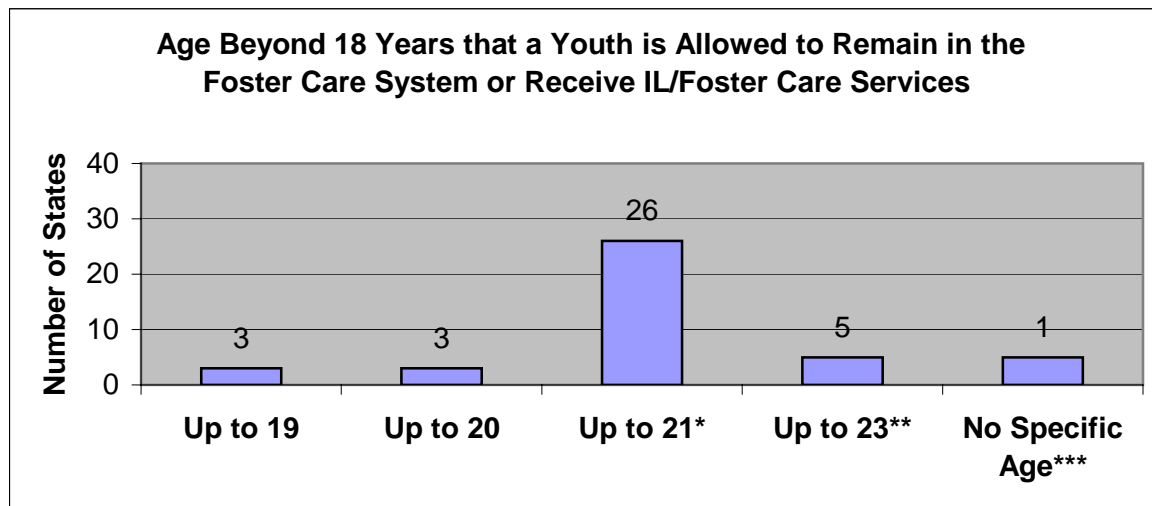
Of survey respondents, 22 states (57%) are State Administered, 11 states (29%) are State Supervised-County Administered and 3 states (8%) are Regionally Administered. The District of Columbia (3%) administers its independent living program through the city. One state (3%) administers its independent living program through a district office.

Each state administers its independent living program differently. A state with a State Administered political subdivision has one State Independent Living Coordinator. These states often contract out to independent living providers to provide services to youth aging out of the system. States that are State Supervised-County-Administered or Regionally Administered have one State IL Coordinator as well as additional IL Coordinators in each locality, making it difficult to get an accurate picture of services available to young people aging out of the system in that particular state.

It is important to note that State Supervised-County Administered and Regionally Administered States often have different protocol depending on the resources available in the community. For example, a rural county within a State Supervised-County Administered system may not retain a youth until 21 due to lack of resources (i.e., funding and staff) even though other counties within the same state have the capacity to do so.

## DISCHARGE INFORMATION

Figure 2



\* 2 out of 26 states indicated only in cases of special needs

\*\* 3 out of 5 states indicated the use of Educational Training Vouchers

\*\*\* State indicated maintaining youth in the system until the completion of his/her secondary education.

The majority of states provide foster care services to young people in the system beyond 18 years of age. Twenty-six states (68%) maintain youth up to the age of 21 however, two of these states indicated retaining youth up to 21 only in cases of special needs.

Five states (14%) reported allowing young people up to 23 years of age to remain in foster care or receive Independent Living/foster care services. Three out of these 5 states indicated the use of Educational Training Vouchers<sup>1</sup> (ETVs), a program for training and post-secondary education allowing states to provide foster care services until age 23. State IL Coordinators did not specify if young people are receiving full foster care services in addition to Educational Training Vouchers.

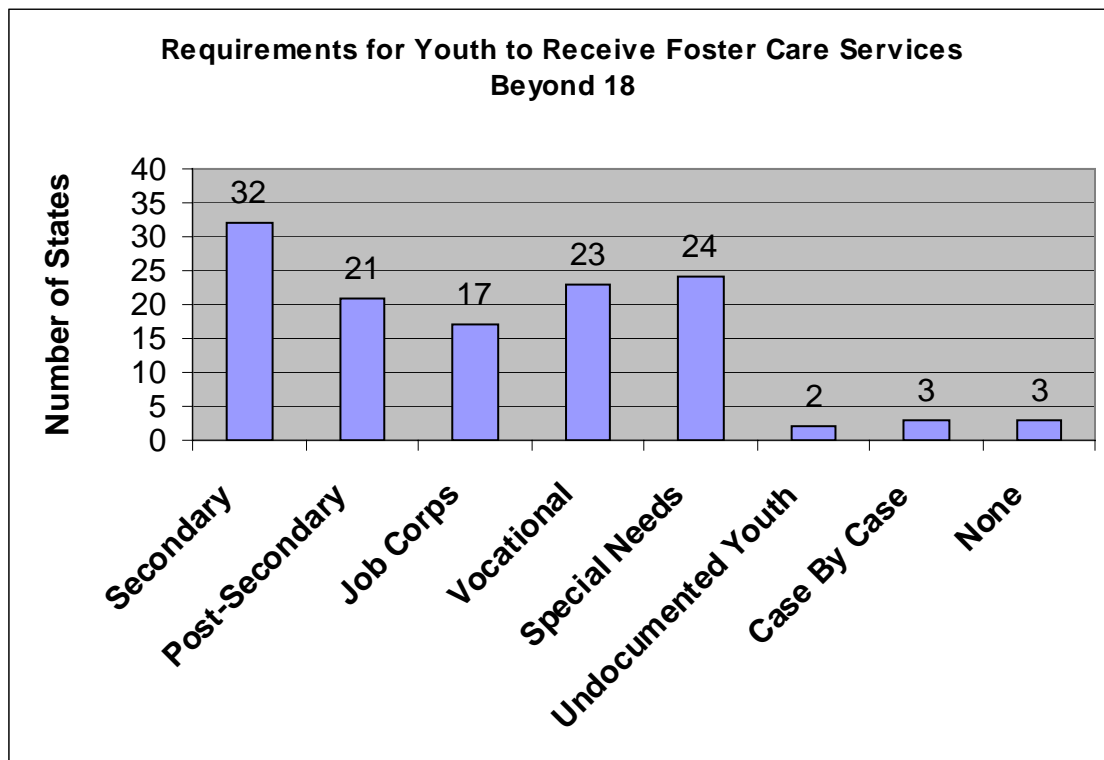
Three states (8%) indicated that they maintain youth in care up to the age of 19. Three states (8%) maintain youth in care up to the age 20. Lastly, one state (3%) did not report a specific age of discharge instead,

<sup>1</sup> States administering the Educational Training Vouchers (ETV) for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care are able to provide foster care services up to the age of the 23. ETV program adds a sixth purpose to the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP). ETVs provide resources to meet the education and training needs of young people in care. In addition to the existing authorization of the CFCIP program, the law authorizes \$60 million for payments to States for post-secondary educational and training vouchers for youth. In fiscal year 2005, a total of \$46.6 million was allocated to all 50 States, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. This program awards vouchers up to \$5,000 per year, per youth for post-secondary education and training to eligible youth. More information available: <http://www.cwla.org/advocacy/2005legagenda05.htm>

youth are released from foster care once they complete secondary education.

The availability of resources and needs of the community impact discharge age policies. Some State IL Coordinators indicated the inability to retain youth until the age of 21 due to a lack of resources (i.e., staff and funding) However, most states reported a willingness to serve youth beyond the designated discharge age based on special circumstances. In an effort to avoid a service gap, State IL Coordinators also reported retaining young people with special needs (emotional, physical, mental) until they are engaged in adult services.

**Figure 3**

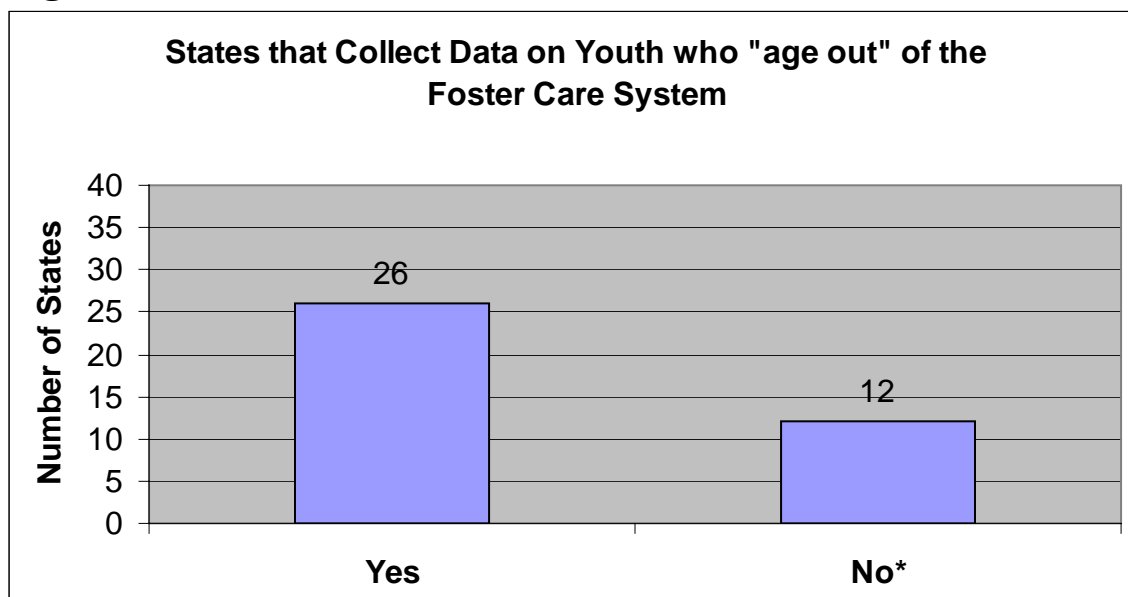


Most states generally require youth to be enrolled in a vocational or educational training program to remain in foster care beyond 18. Each state has different requirements for youth to continue to receive foster care or Independent Living services beyond the age of 18. Thirty-two states (84%) are committed to retaining youth in foster care until they complete high school or obtain a GED. Twenty-one states (55%) indicated post-secondary education as a requirement to continue services. Seventeen states (45%) reported job corps participation as a possible requirement and 23 states (61%) require vocational training. Twenty-four states (63%) reported retaining youth with special needs (mental, physical, and emotional) in the foster care system until they are linked with appropriate services. Two states (5%) reported serving

undocumented immigrant youth beyond the age of 18. Three states (8%) reported that continued foster care services are determined on a case-by-case basis and three states (8%) did not indicate specific requirements to allow continued foster care services.

When resources permit, most State IL Coordinators reported willingness to be flexible in continuing foster care services based on the circumstances of the youth. As mentioned above, State Supervised-County Administered and Regionally Administered states vary in the requirements for a youth to receive services depending on needs of the community and the resources available.

**Figure 4**



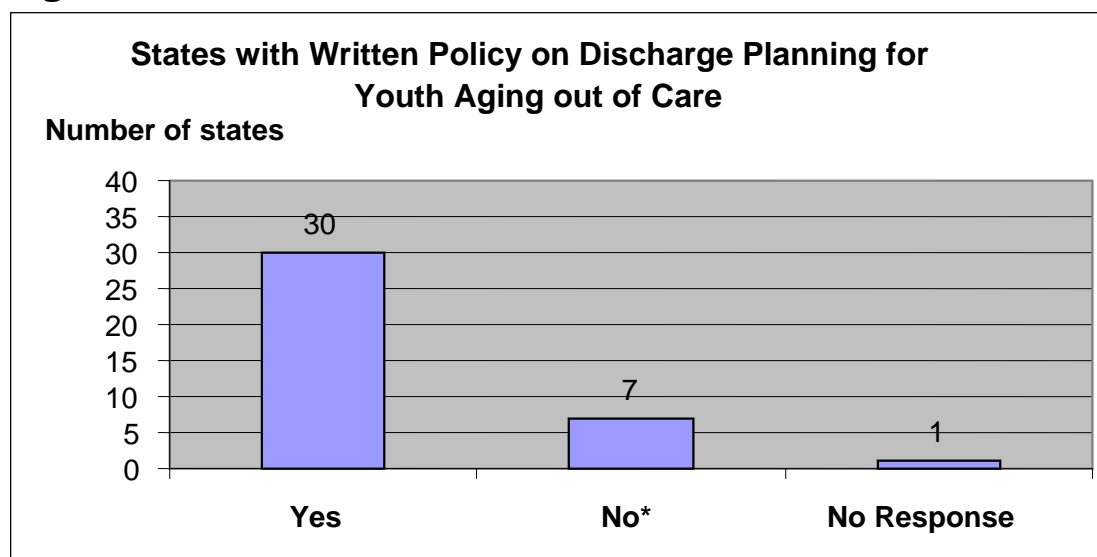
\* 3 of the 12 states reported current work on a system to collect data

For the purposes of this survey, the term “age out” refers to youth who have been discharged from the foster care system and are receiving limited or no foster care services. Twenty-six states (68%) reported that they do collect data on youth who age out of their system. Twelve states (32%) reported that they do not collect data. Three out of the 12 states that indicated “no” are currently in the process of developing a method for data collection. It is important to note that states do not have a uniform definition of data and collection methods.

Most State IL Coordinators recognized the importance of data collection however, limited resources (i.e., funding, staff) have made it difficult to put such system processes in place. States currently collecting data reported difficulty finding the youth once they leave care.



**Figure 5**



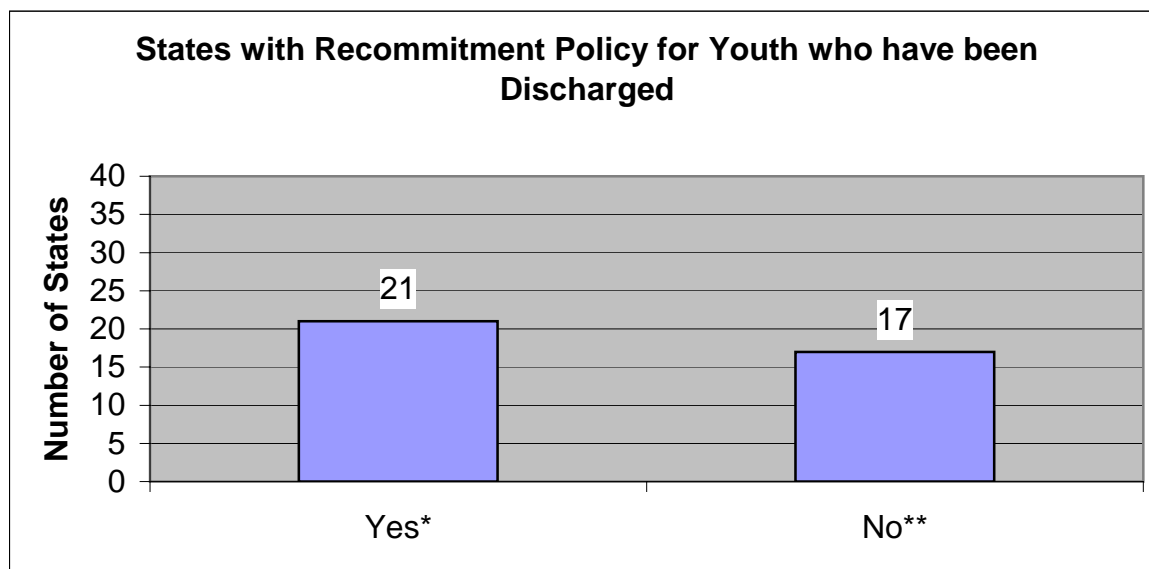
\* 2 out of the 7 states reported being in the process of creating a written discharge policy

An effective discharge plan ensures that a youth will have access to life skills instruction, a support network, healthcare services and coverage, education and employment, and safe, stable and affordable housing upon discharge. In an effort to minimize future risk, a comprehensive, effective discharge plan (developed with the youth) can support a youth's smooth transition out of the foster care system.

Thirty states (79%) reported having a written discharge policy specifying the process for discharging a youth from the foster care system. Seven states (18%) indicated the absence of a written discharge policy. In 2 out of these 7 states, State IL Coordinators reported being in the process of creating a written discharge policy. One state (3%) did not respond.

In order to fully implement an effective discharge plan, multiple agencies must collaborate to meet the needs of young people aging out of the system. Cross-system collaboration and coordination can facilitate and fill in service gaps for youth. For example, cross-system collaboration and coordination between the child welfare system, adult services, mental health and the housing authority can ensure that a youth with special needs is in a supportive housing program and linked to appropriate services upon discharge from the foster care system.

**Figure 6**



\* 11 of 21 states indicated that youth may return to foster care once discharged

\*\* 1 of 17 states indicated in the process of creating a recommitment policy

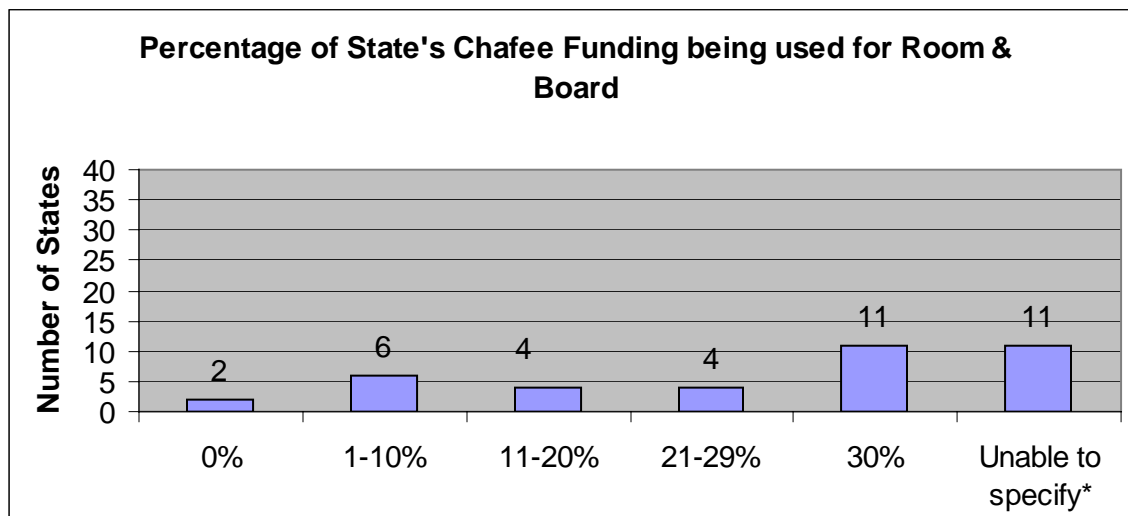
For the purposes of this survey, the term “recommitment policy” refers to a policy specifying a time limit (i.e. 3 months, 6 months) in which a youth is allowed to return for services once he or she has been discharged from foster care. This does not refer to eligibility for Chafee services.

Twenty-one states (55%) reported having a recommitment policy. Eleven of the 21 states indicated no time limit; a youth may return for foster care services anytime up to age 21 regardless of the time of discharge.

Seventeen states (45%) did not report a recommitment policy however, one of these states is in the process of creating such a policy. States that do not allow youth to return to the system for services reported they refer youth to other transitional living programs or housing assistance programs. It is important to note that youth also may be referred to the child welfare agencies’ aftercare program if available.

## FUNDING

**Figure 7**



\* 4 states "Unable to Determine"; 3 states "Exact Figure Not Available"; 3 states "Figure Not Provided"; 1 state did not respond to question

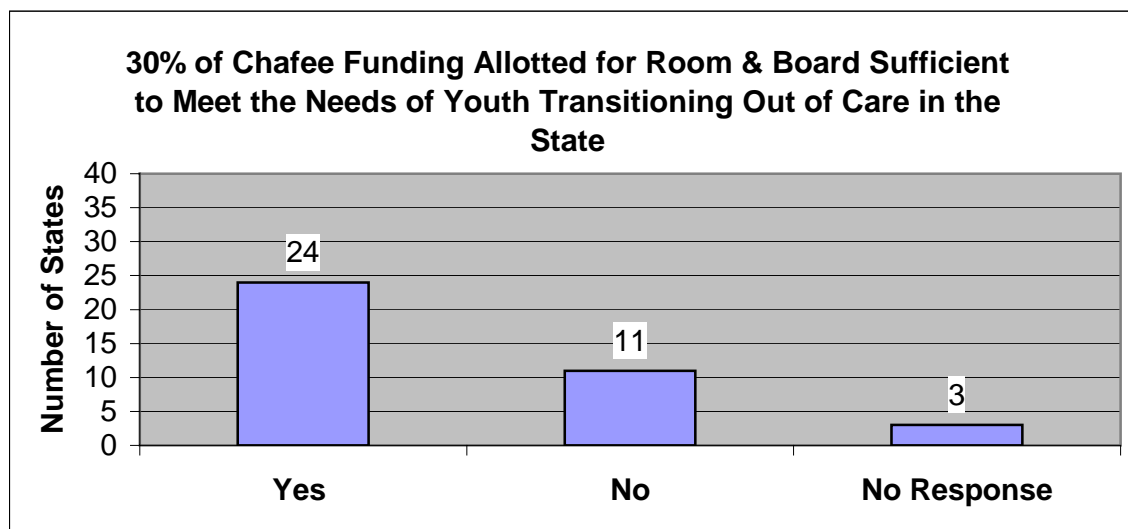
States can use up to 30% of their Chafee funds to provide room and board services to youth 18 to 21 years of age who have left foster care. This includes young people who move into independent living programs, post-discharge programs, age out, or lose contact with the foster care system and then return for services before the age of 21.

Eleven states (29%) reported using 30% of Chafee funds for room and board for youth 18 to 21 years of age. Four states (11%) reported the use of between 21% to 29% of Chafee dollars and 4 states (11%) indicated the use of 11% to 20% of Chafee funding for room and board services. Six states (16%) indicated using between 1% and 10% of funds. Two states, Connecticut and Maine reported using 0% of Chafee money for room and board services.

Eleven of the survey respondents (29%) did not specify the percentage of Chafee funding used for room and board services. Four of the 11 states indicated that they were "Unable to Determine" the percentage. Three of the 11 State IL Coordinators did not have "Exact Figure Available" at the time of the interview. Three of the 11 states did not provide the figure and 1 state did not respond to the question.

From the information gathered, it is evident that approximately 35 out of the 38 states are using some of their Chafee funds for room and board services for young people aging out of the foster care system.

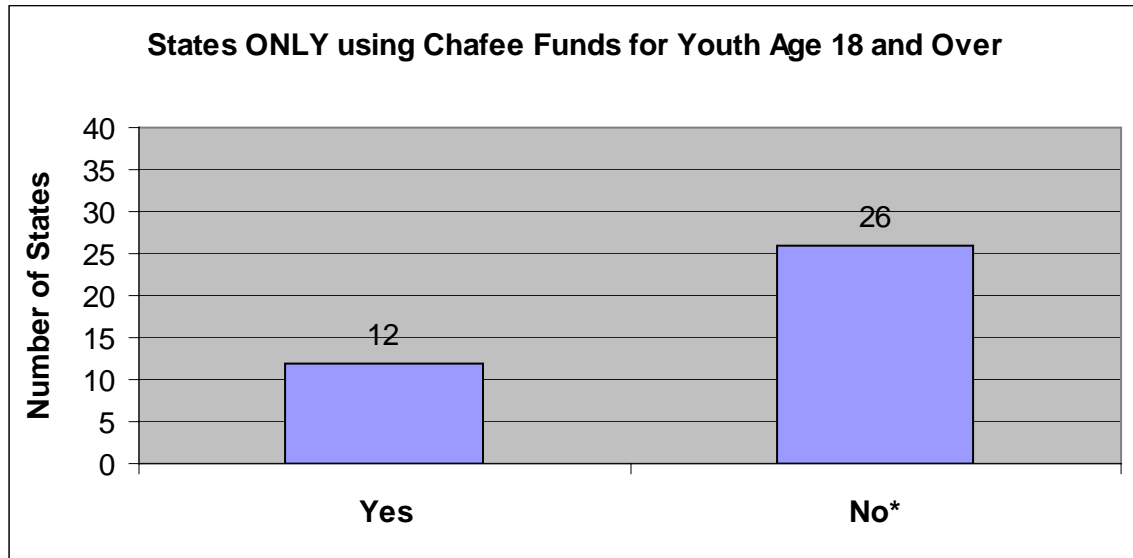
**Figure 8**



State IL Coordinators were asked if the 30% of Chafee funding allotted for room & board is sufficient to meet the needs of youth aging out of the foster care system. Most states (63%) report the 30% of Chafee funding available for room and board as sufficient. Eleven states (29%) indicated that 30% was not enough to provide room and board services to the young people aging out in their state. Three State IL Coordinators (8%) chose not to respond to the question. State IL Coordinators indicated that it was difficult to respond to this question because of the impact that their answer might have on funding of other programs.

Most State IL Coordinators reported that they would not want to go beyond the 30% use due to the effect it would have on the other components of the independent living services. Many State IL Coordinators reported a need for an overall increase in the funding available for the Chafee program.

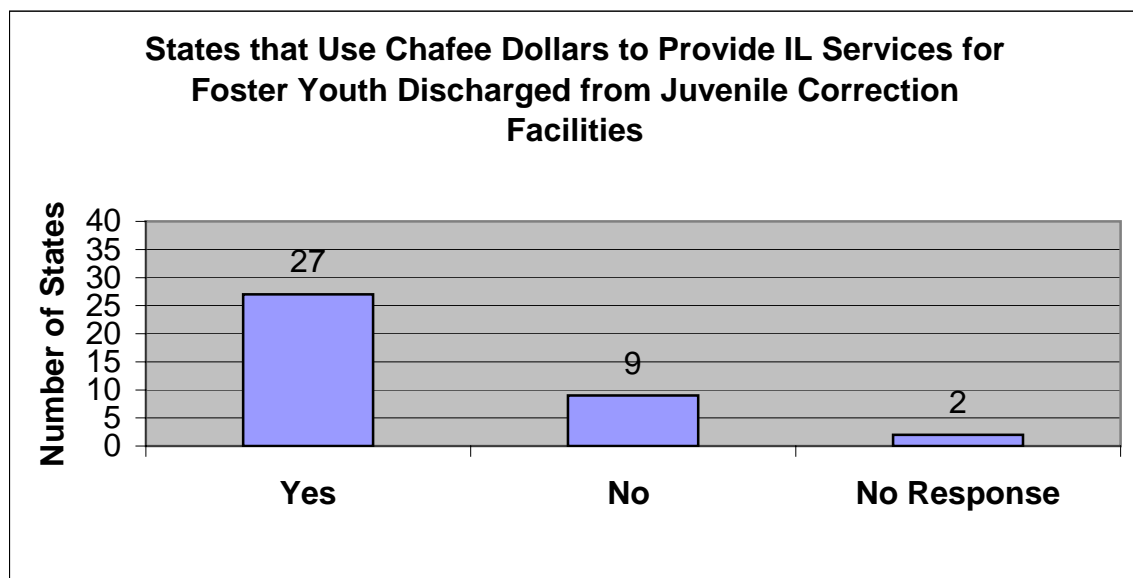
**Figure 9**



\* 19 of the 26 states indicated the use of State funds

Twenty-six of State IL Coordinators (68%) reported the use of other funding sources in addition to Chafee dollars to provide services to youth ages 18 and beyond. Nineteen of the 26 states indicated the use of State funds. States also reported the use of local funds, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds. State IL Coordinators also reported the use of Section 8 and the Family Unification Program to provide housing services for young people aging out of the system. Twelve states (32%) indicated that only Chafee funds are used to provide housing services for youth 18 and over.

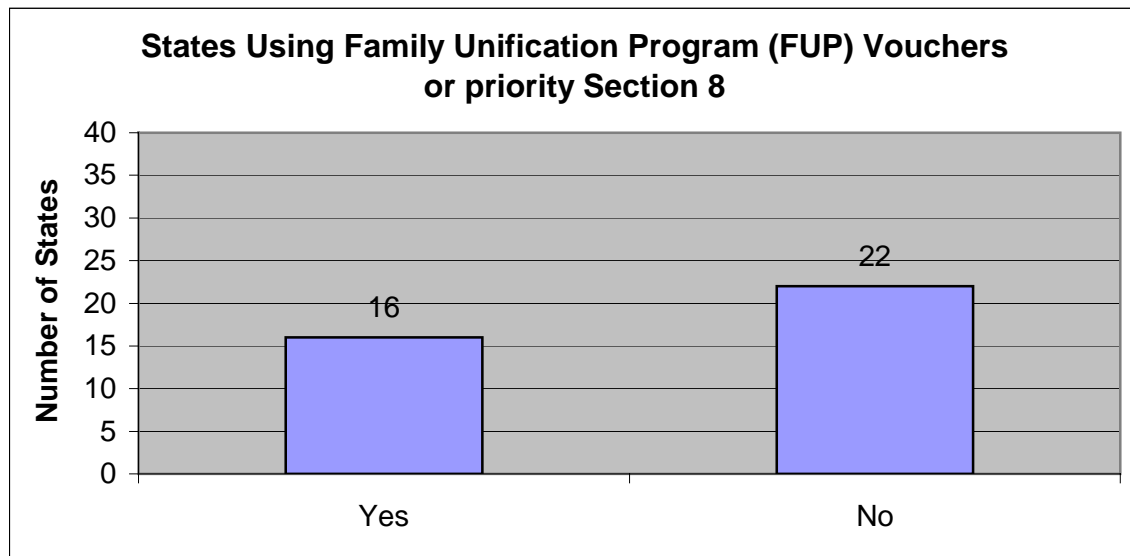
**Figure 10**



Studies reveal that there is a link between the populations served in the child welfare system and the youth that subsequently become involved in the juvenile justice system (Tuell, J., 2003). When asked if states use Chafee funds to provide independent living services for foster youth discharged from juvenile correction facilities, 27 states (71%) reported the use of Chafee dollars for this population. Nine states (24%) indicated that they do not use Chafee funds for this group of young people and 2 states (5%) did not respond to this question.

## HOUSING INFORMATION

**Figure 11**



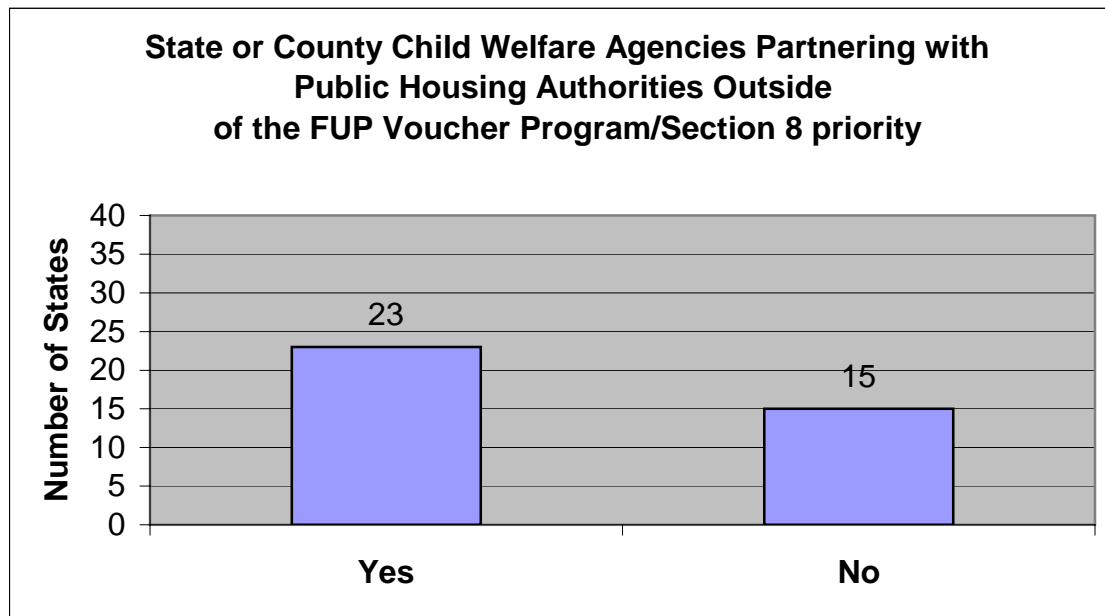
In an effort to ensure safe, stable and affordable housing for young people aging out of the foster care system, The Family Unification Program (FUP)<sup>2</sup> provides housing assistance and aftercare services to young people between the ages of 18 to 21 that have left the foster care system at age 16 or older. FUP is a collaboration between the child welfare systems, housing authorities and/or community based agencies to implement the use of time-limited (18 months) Section 8 vouchers for youth aging out of the foster care system. Many states that do not have these vouchers available have opted to follow the Family Unification Program model and prioritize Section 8 vouchers for young people aging out of care.

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<sup>2</sup> In October 2000, Congress passed a piece of legislation making youth leaving foster care eligible for housing under the Family Unification Program. This program was created for families involved with the child welfare system that due to a lack of adequate housing, were at risk of separation or unable to reunify. For more information go to: [www.cwla.org/programs/housing](http://www.cwla.org/programs/housing)

According to survey respondents, sixteen states (42%) are currently using FUP or priority Section 8 vouchers for young people who have aged out of the system. Twenty-two states (58%) indicated that they are not currently using FUP or priority Section 8 vouchers. However, 9 out of these 22 State IL Coordinators requested information on how to implement this program in their state. Since Family Unification Program partnerships are often implemented at the local level, it is important to note that State Supervised-County Administered and Regionally Administered states may not have knowledge of FUP partnerships at the local levels.

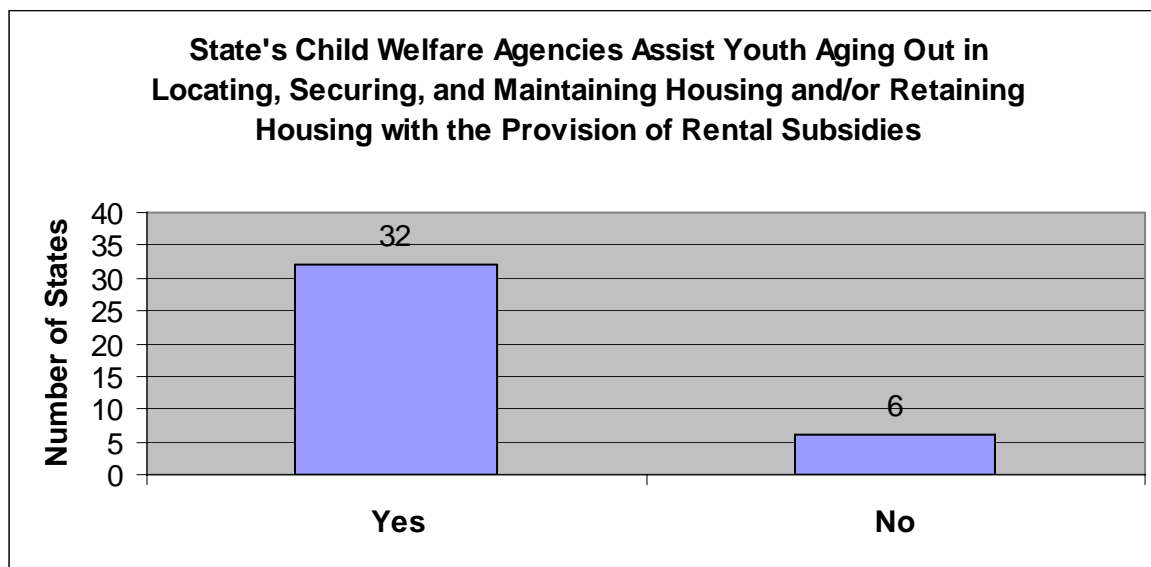
**Figure 12**



Fifteen State IL Coordinators (39%) did not have knowledge of existing partnerships with their housing authorities outside of the Family Unification Program. Twenty-three (61%) State IL Coordinators did report knowledge of such partnerships. Some of these partnerships have resulted in prioritizing youth discharged from foster care on standard Section 8 waiting lists, public housing slots, and supportive housing programs.

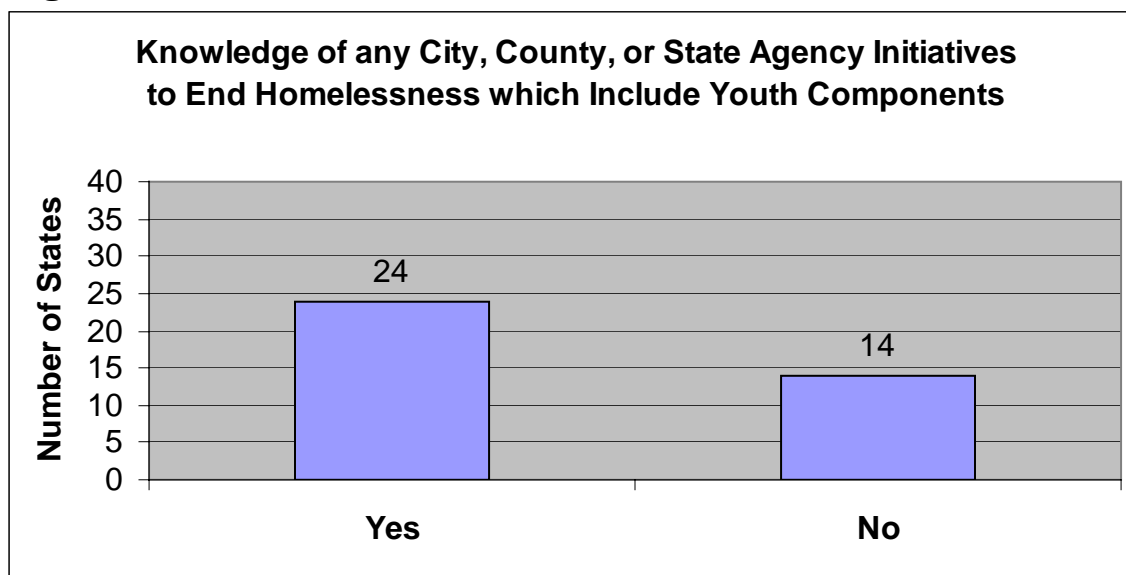
Other examples include partnerships between child welfare agencies, housing authorities and home finance mortgage agencies. To begin cross-system dialogue, child welfare agencies have begun to invite housing authority representatives to participate in committees and collaborations focused on youth housing. State Supervised-County Administered and Regionally Administered states reported that many of the partnerships with housing authorities are on a local level and on a case-by-case basis.

**Figure 13**



Thirty-two states (84%) report providing youth with financial assistance or other supports to obtain and maintain housing. State IL Coordinators indicated assisting youth through landlord recruitment and negotiations, rental subsidies, and assistance with security and utility deposits. Six (16%) states reported that they did not have a housing program in place to assist youth in locating and securing housing but do report providing emergency funds as needed. Please See *State Noteworthy Practices* section for additional discussion.

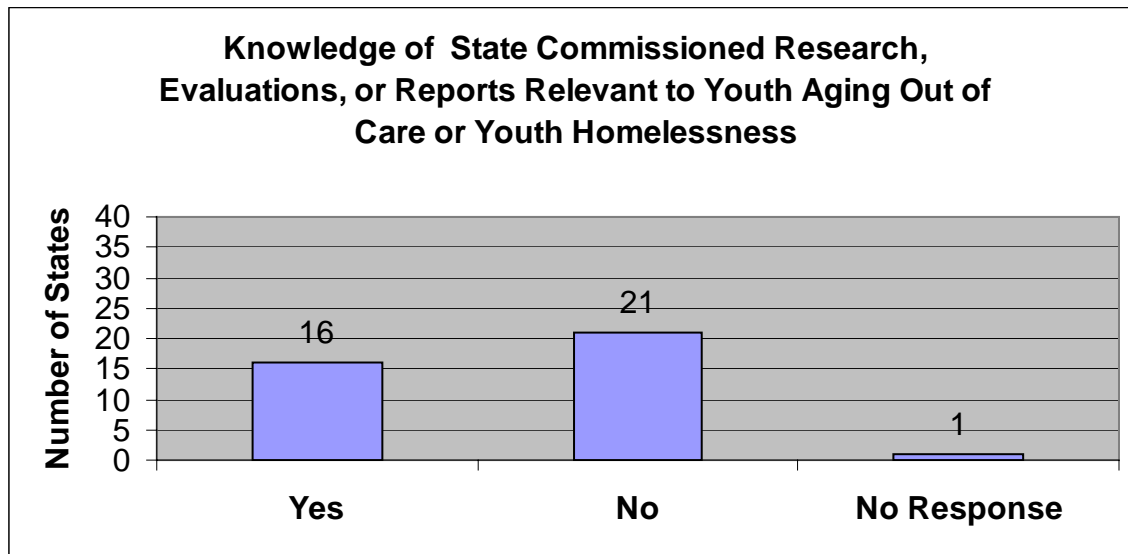
**Figure 14**





State IL Coordinators were asked if they were aware of or involved in any initiatives focused on ending youth homelessness. Twenty-four State IL Coordinators (63%) reported knowledge of city, county or state agency initiatives to end homelessness that include youth components. Many of these included specific plans to end homelessness and homeless/housing task forces. Fourteen State IL Coordinators (37%) did not have knowledge of such initiatives in their state. However, the response to this question does not imply that such initiatives do not exist in the state; it simply indicates that the State IL Coordinator is not involved.

**Figure 15**



State IL Coordinators were asked if they had any knowledge of research, evaluations, or reports relevant to youth homelessness in their state. Twenty-one State IL Coordinators (55%) reported no knowledge of research in their state. Sixteen (42%) State IL Coordinators reported past or current research relevant to youth homelessness. One (3%) state did not respond to the question.

The response to this question does not imply that such research, evaluations, or reports do not exist. State IL Coordinators may not be aware of such material relevant to youth homelessness or youth aging out of care in their state.

## CONCLUSION

This project provided a unique opportunity to gather information from State IL Coordinators regarding the discharge policies, use of funding and the housing assistance available for young people aging out of the foster care system.

Based on the findings of this survey, it is evident that youth aging out of the system are impacted by states' discharge policies and resource limitations. While State IL Coordinators are interested in improving housing options, limited funding impacts their ability to provide a broad continuum of housing options for youth aging out of care. Additionally, state discharge policies impact the length of time that a youth can remain in care and if a young person can return for foster care services once he/she has been discharged. Overall, State IL Coordinators provided significant information during interviews. Unfortunately, due to the different political subdivisions, some states were not able to provide detailed information regarding the housing options available at the local levels.

The findings of this survey indicate that further policies, services and housing supports are needed to assist youth aging out of the foster care system with making successful transitions to adulthood.

### *Recommendations*

To ensure that youth aging out of the foster care system successfully transition into adulthood, it is imperative that states:

- Ensure that youth are actively meaningfully engaged in developing an effective discharge plan with their caseworker.
- Be fully informed about the range of resources that exist to promote best practice in the fields of Transition, IL and Self Sufficiency services. (Please see *CWLA's Standards of Excellence for TILSS services*.)
- Have a written discharge policy to ensure that youth have access to life skills instruction, a support network, healthcare services and coverage, education and employment, and safe, stable, and affordable housing upon discharge. Ensure that ample time is allotted for discharge planning so that youth are adequately prepared to transition out of foster care.
- Allow young people to receive foster care and Chafee services up to age 21 regardless of discharge age. For more information about the

Foster Care Independence Act, go to:  
[http://216.198.222.116/NFCC/documents/faq\\_booklet.pdf](http://216.198.222.116/NFCC/documents/faq_booklet.pdf)

- Maintain youth with special needs in the foster care system until they are linked with adult services.
- Identify a continuum of state and local resources available.
- Fully utilize Chafee in combination with other resources to maximize housing assistance available to youth.
- Form collaborations to create cross-system dialogue between child welfare agencies and other community based agencies invested in young people.
- Develop partnerships with housing authorities to meet the housing needs of young people exiting the system.
- Develop housing programs that include landlord recruitment, transitional housing, and rental subsidies.

## **STATE NOTEWORTHY PRACTICES**

During phone interviews State IL Coordinators were asked to share information regarding housing programs in their states. The following are some examples of *State Noteworthy Practices*, programs implemented by public agencies that are successfully assisting youth aging out of the foster care system.

### **Colorado Department of Human Services and the Family Unification Program (FUP)**

In 2001, Colorado received 100 Family Unification Program (time-limited Section 8 vouchers) vouchers for youth aging out of the foster system specifically, youth ages 18 to 21 that have left the foster at age 16 or older. Colorado's Department of Human Services partnered with Supportive Housing & Homeless Programs to implement FUP. To meet the aftercare services requirement, Chafee funding is used to contract with Family Tree, Volunteers of America, and Urban Peak, non-profits who provide 18-month aftercare services to the young people in this program. Colorado has also developed a unique partnership with AmeriCorps for youth in transition. AmeriCorps members located at FUP agencies, support the development of local partnerships to assist youth between 16 and 21 in successfully transitioning to adulthood. Members provide comprehensive mentoring services and assist youth in obtaining employment and educational opportunities.

Colorado uses 30% of Chafee funds for room & board services to youth 18 and over.

For more information contact:

Valerie Jenkins, IL Coordinator  
Colorado Department of Human Services  
303-866-4539  
[valerie.jenkins@state.co.us](mailto:valerie.jenkins@state.co.us)

## **Connecticut Department of Children and Families Housing Continuum**

Connecticut's Department of Children and Families provides adolescents in foster care a broad continuum of housing options. Youth move from highly structured, supervised living arrangements to a transitional living program where support is provided while structure and restrictions is decreased.

Part of the Department's housing continuum includes a Community Housing Assistance Program (CHAPS). CHAPS provides youth with a subsidy to cover living expenses such as rent, food, utilities, telephone, transportation and clothing. Youth are required to complete the Department's life skills program, be employed, and be enrolled in an educational or vocational program. Youth are also required to contribute a portion of their income towards expenses and a savings account. The average length of stay in this program is two years.

Connecticut allows youth to remain in foster care up to 23 years of age if enrolled in post-secondary education.

Connecticut uses 0% of Chafee funds for room & board services for youth 18 and over.

For more information contact:

Bill Pinto, IL Coordinator  
Connecticut Department of Children & Families  
860-550-6471  
[william.pinto@po.state.ct.us](mailto:william.pinto@po.state.ct.us)

**Illinois Department of Children and Families**  
**Youth Housing Assistance Program**

Illinois' Youth Housing Assistance Program targets youth at risk of becoming homeless who have aged out or are preparing to exit from the foster care system. Youth receive the following services:

- 1) Housing advocacy services include assisting youth in obtaining and/or maintaining stable housing, providing consumer education and budget counseling and linking youth to community-based resources. Also included are follow up services for a minimum of three months after youth secures housing. Youth between ages of 17 ½ and less than 21 are eligible for these services.
- 2) Cash Assistance services are available to assist newly emancipated foster youth or former foster youth before their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday when in crisis. Cash assistance may be used for housing/utility deposits, emergency rental assistance, temporary rental subsidies and necessary furniture or appliances. Youth must be between the ages of 18 and 21 years of age.

There are 16 Housing Advocates throughout the state to assist youth in locating, securing and maintaining affordable housing.

Illinois uses 30% of their Chafee funding for room & board services for youth between the ages of 18 and 21.

For more information contact:

Ted Ernst, Youth Housing Assistance Coordinator  
Illinois Department of Children and Family Services  
312-814-5571  
[TErnst@idcfs.state.il.us](mailto:TErnst@idcfs.state.il.us)

**The New Jersey Community Housing Demonstration Program's  
(NJCHDP) Shared Living Residence Rental Housing  
Program (SLRRHP)**

The New Jersey Community Housing Demonstration Program (NJCHDP) is a partnership between the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the New Jersey Mortgage Finance Agency (NJHMFA). The NJCHDP Shared Living Residence Rental Housing Program provides financing to Not-For-Profit, For-Profit developers and or municipalities for the acquisition of land and building with the rehabilitation or new construction, or conversion of buildings as transitional or permanent rental units for persons with special needs. The entire community residence or a portion of the units (as determined by the appropriate division of the New Jersey Department of Human Services) will be set aside for these individuals. The purpose of this program is to assist persons with special needs to live independently within the communities of their choice by expanding the supply of affordable and quality housing.

Eligible clients include persons with special needs over the age of 18 and adolescents who are referred in writing by the New Jersey Department of Human Services or other DHS approved sponsors.

For more information contact:

Bruce Blumenthal  
New Jersey Mortgage Finance Agency  
609-278-7449  
[BBlumenthal@njhmf.state.nj.us](mailto:BBlumenthal@njhmf.state.nj.us)

## **New York City and the Section 8 Priority Code**

The Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and the Office of Housing Policy and Development (HPAD) in cooperation with the New York City Housing Authority has a Section 8 Priority Code for young people aging out of the foster care system. This program provides Section 8 vouchers or public housing units to all qualified current and former ACS Independent Living clients. As of December 2002, over 1700 youth have utilized this program.

ACS and HPAD, in conjunction with other private not-for-profit housing developers continue to support the development of supportive housing for young people aging out of the system. Currently, at least 25 ACS Independent Living clients reside in a permanent supportive housing program by utilizing their Section 8 vouchers accessed through the IL Priority Code Program. In February 2003, 5 units of permanent supportive housing were made available to former Independent Living clients with mental health needs.

Use of Chafee funds for room & board services is determined at the local level.

For more information contact:

Nancy Martinez, IL Coordinator  
NYS Office of Children & Family Services  
518-474-9586  
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## **North Carolina's Division of Social Services' LINKS Program**

North Carolina's diverse counties ranging from extremely rural and remote to highly urbanized led to the creation of the LINKS program. The LINKS program was designed to accommodate the individual needs of young people aging out of the system, regardless of their geographic location. The North Carolina LINKS program is designed to allow maximum flexibility in eligibility for services and access to additional funds to address the individual needs of the youth. In order to serve youth most efficiently, North Carolina has set aside funding that can be accessed directly to benefit eligible youth to meet their individual needs.

Caseworkers are required to evaluate the strengths and resources of youth, to explore other resources, and to use these funds to supplement existing resources as needed. The LINKS Special Funds Program is a resource for youth who are willing participate in planning and implementing solutions to problems.

There are four funds that youth may be eligible for:

- 1) The Trust Fund: These funds can be used for non-housing costs that might be barriers to a youth's transition into adulthood. Examples include: auto repair, insurance, computers, furniture, etc.
- 2) Transitional Housing Funds: Up to \$1500 per year is available to assist with room and board expenses. These funds might also be used to make repairs in homes that are owned or being purchased by youth. Youth who receive these funds must also retain Transitional Services to assure that all needs are addressed.
- 3) Extremely High Risk Funds: Up to \$1500 per year is available to any youth that has been determined at high risk. These funds must be spent on services, activities or purchases that can reduce defined risk. Determination of risk is made by each county.
- 4) Scholarship/Conference Funds: These funds may be used towards conference attendance involving foster youth or as educational incentives to encourage youth to remain in school or to purchase school materials.

For more information contact:

Joan McAllister, IL Coordinator  
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
919-733-2537  
[joan.mcallister@ncmail.net](mailto:joan.mcallister@ncmail.net)

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