

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOR FOSTER CARE YOUTH

### STUDY PLAN

#### Study Mandate

- Youth aging out of foster care face significant challenges in navigating the labor market to obtaining meaningful employment.
  - The Virginia Commission on Youth shall convene an Advisory Group to include representatives from the Department of Social Services, Department of Education, Department of Labor, Department of Aging and Rehabilitation Services, the Virginia Employment Commission, One Stop Centers, local Workforce Investment Boards, the Virginia Community College System, local Departments of Social Services, advocacy groups, foster care youth and other relevant stakeholders. The Advisory Group shall review current policies, practices, and programs in Virginia that support youth aging out of foster care and make recommendations to improve workforce opportunities for youth in foster care.

#### Identified Issues

- Foster care provides services, substitute care, and supervision for children on a 24-hour basis, until a child or adolescent can either return to their family or become a permanent member of another family. Because foster care is intended to be a temporary response to address family concerns, caseworkers establish a permanency goal for each child to ensure that the child will have a safe and stable family with which to live.
- Youth who “age out” of the foster care system reach the age of 18 without achieving a permanent home environment. The difficulties facing youth who age out of care are well established in research literature. These youth often face lifetime challenges, including homelessness, incarceration, low educational attainment and barriers to obtaining meaningful employment.
- Virginia’s Fostering Futures Program is designed to support youth in the transition from foster care to adulthood. The program enables the extension of foster care financial and social support and services up to age 21 for youth who are in foster care when they reach age 18; and youth who were in foster care at the time of commitment to the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Virginia has received federal funds to allow youth currently enrolled in the program, who have turned 21, to remain in until September 2021.
- Youth who age out of foster care face many barriers to employment including: identifying employment opportunities, completing job applications, learning soft skills, and obtaining needed identification for employment. In addition, they may face other life obstacles including unstable housing, lack of transportation and child care.

**Study Activities**

- Identify state and national employment programs that support young people transitioning out of foster care and determine best practices.
- Review and analyze other policies, practices, and programs that support youth aging out of foster care.
- Explore the various programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) that assist youth and young adult job seekers up to age 24, with disabilities.
- Research laws on obtaining employment.
- Obtain and analyze employment outcomes for youth aging out of foster care.
- Conduct background and literature reviews:
  - Annie E. Casey
  - Fostering Futures
  - Great Expectations
  - Reconnecting Youth Project
  - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
  - Other national studies conducted on the topic
- Convene an Advisory Group of impacted stakeholders:
  - Department of Aging and Rehabilitation Services
  - Department of Education
  - Department of Labor and Industry
  - Department of Social Services
  - Foster Care Youth
  - Local Departments of Social Services
  - Local Workforce Investment Boards
  - One-Stop Centers
  - Virginia Community College System
  - Virginia Employment Commission
  - Youth Advocacy Groups
- Conduct roundtable discussions with foster care youth.
- Present findings and recommendations to the Commission on Youth.
- Receive public comment.
- Prepare final report.