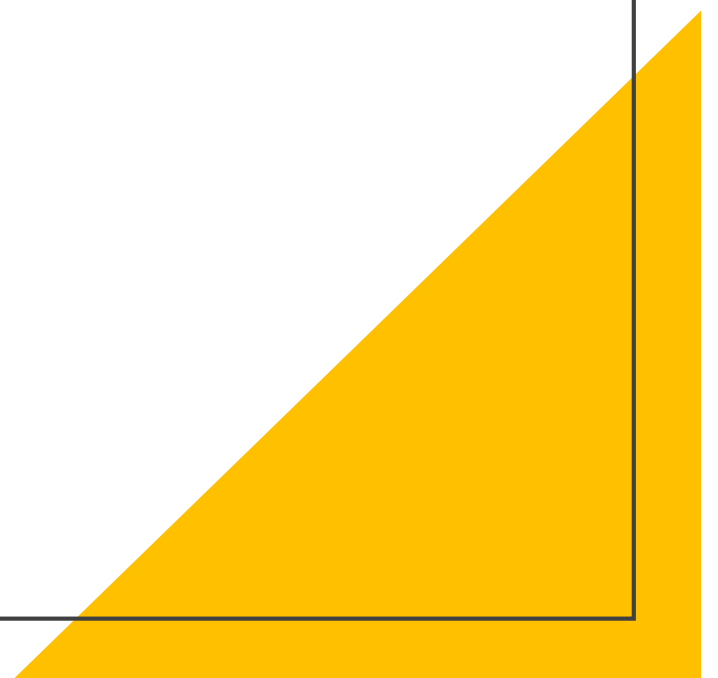


Building Effective Workforce Supports for Youth with Experience in Foster Care: A National Perspective

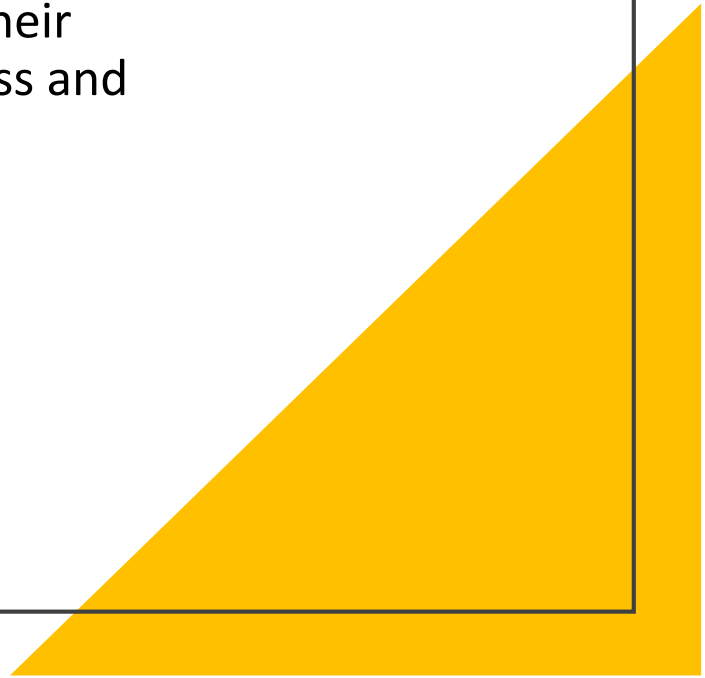
Jenny Pokempner, Youth Law Center

June 21, 2021




Background

- Youth and young adults with experience in foster care have the same aspirations for workforce participation and meaningful careers as their non-system involved peers, but often face multiple barriers to access and success that put them at a disadvantage.

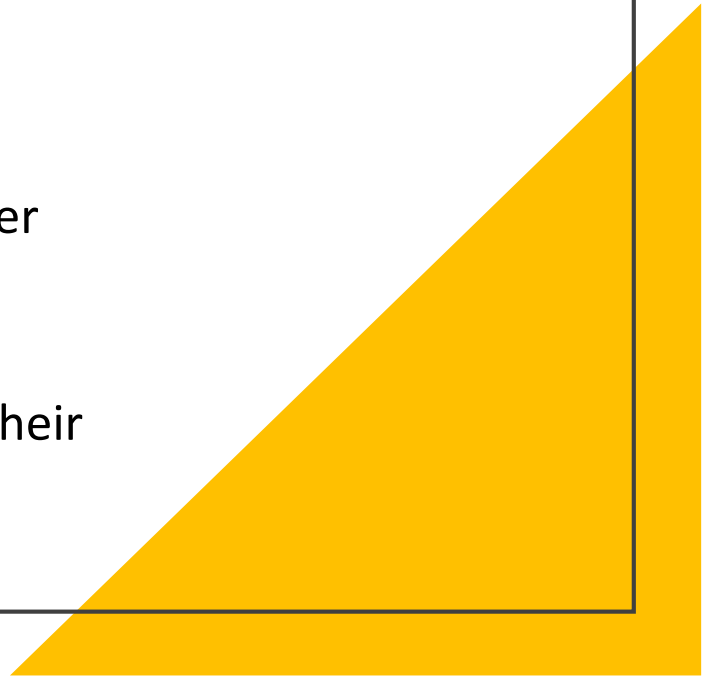


Common Barriers


- Lack of focus on education and employment by the foster care system.
 - Lack of access to informal and formal work experiences and opportunities
 - Lack of targeted support to address the ancillary needs that can prevent attachment to the workforce and career development
 - Placement instability
 - Lack of funds for concrete supports (transportation, uniforms, child care)
 - Lack of social and familial supports to be a buffer for challenges
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Factors that Lead to Positive Outcomes

- Access to a high quality and stable education that is supported and valued by the child welfare system (excellent child welfare transition and education planning),
- Connections to work experiences/opportunities early,
- Connections are consistently supported, explored, and nurtured over time,
- Access to tailored ancillary supports,
- Actively include young people in the designing of programs and in their individual cases

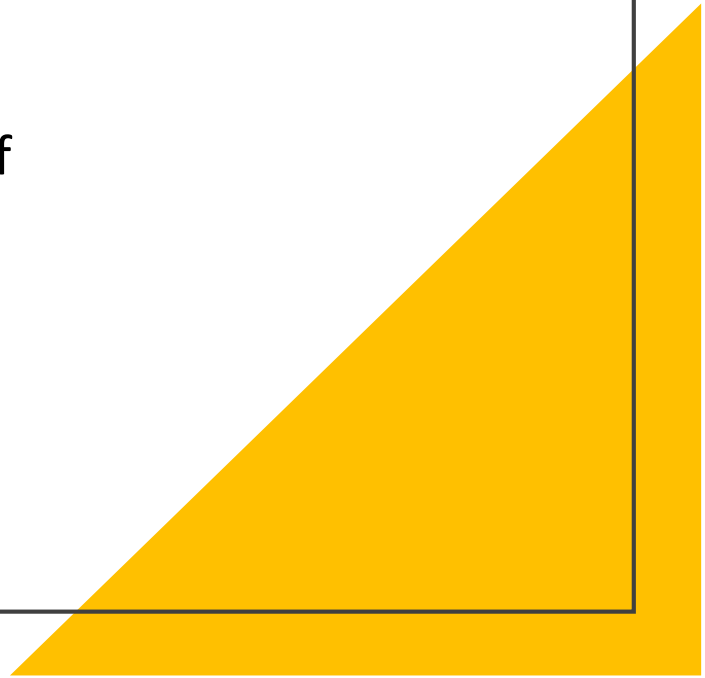


Examples of Key Federal Funding Streams for Youth Workforce Development

- [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\) Youth Programs,](#)
 - [Apprenticeship Program](#)
 - [Job Corps](#)
 - Americorps ([TAY Americorps](#))
 - [YouthBuild](#)
 - [Vocational Rehabilitation Services for Individuals with Disabilities](#)
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Challenges with Funding Streams

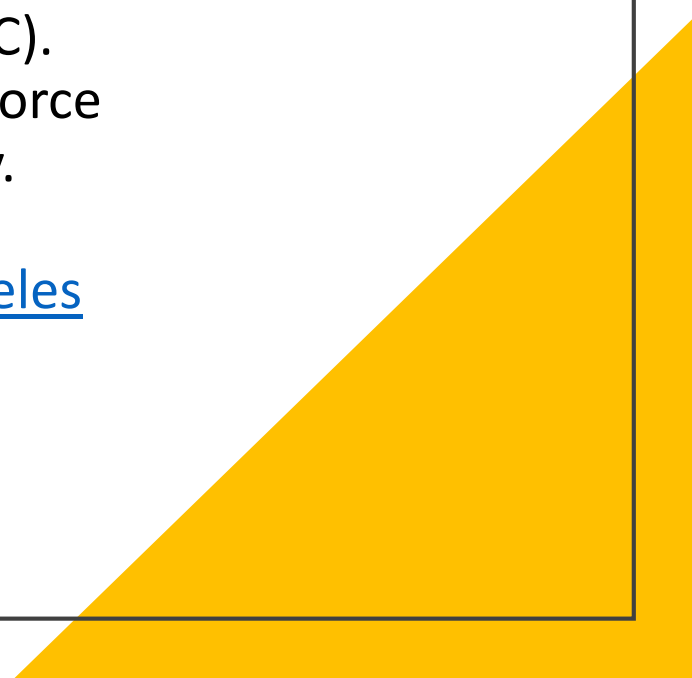
- Young people with experience in foster care lack knowledge of these programs and funds.
- Child welfare is not connecting youth with these programs.
- These programs are not tailored to meet the specific needs of youth with experience in foster care.
 - Programs assume family support
 - Eligibility criteria may screen youth out
 - Programs may not have funding for ancillary and tailored supports




Effective Responses: Enforce Existing Child Welfare Obligations

- Ensure existing requirements related to case planning for youth in foster care are rigorously enforced.
 - The child welfare agency must meet a youth's educational needs and provide transition to adulthood services
 - Planning and support for employment and education for transition aged youth must begin at age 14.
 - Youth are entitled to “normalcy,” including age appropriate experiences like internships and employment.

Effective Responses: Create Cross Systems Connections and Expertise

- Provide specialized education and employment casemanagement for youth in foster care (Treehouse in WA, Fair Futures in NYC).
 - Create a foster care and juvenile justice liaison in your workforce system and a workforce liaison in youth child welfare agency. (Ohio).
 - Develop a holistic program/system across agencies ([Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Collaborative](#))
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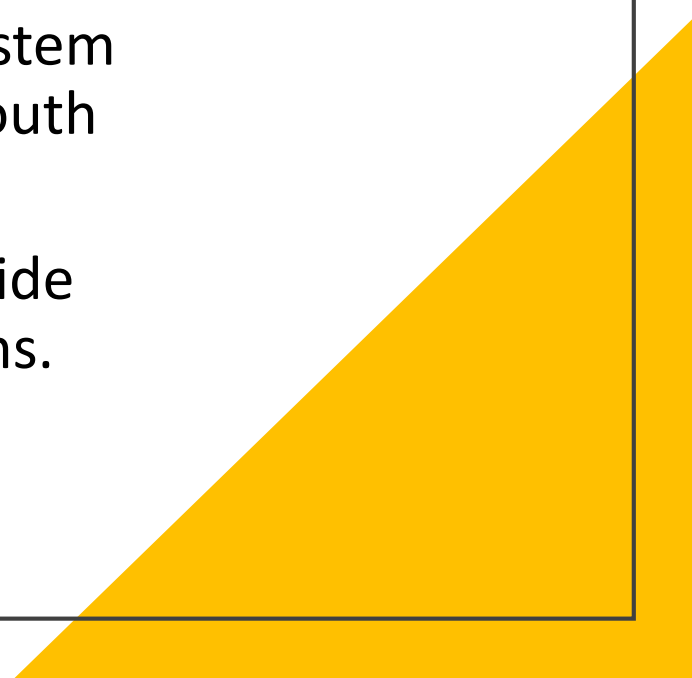
Effective Responses: Low Barrier Access and Addressing Basic Needs

- Make program access as easy as possible.
 - Reduce “red tape” and application barriers
 - Assist you with getting ID and documents that prevent access
 - Provide financial support as youth train and acquire work readiness skills.
 - Promote an attitude of valuing work and exploring careers.
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Effective Responses: Tailor Programs to Address Known Barriers

- Provide proactive outreach to youth in foster care.
- Prioritize system involved young people for programs.
- Connect youth with programs and provide ongoing support to ensure that connection is maintained and any barriers to success are addressed.
- Dedicate funds so that workforce programs can provide ancillary supports to reduce barriers to participation and retention:
 - Concrete supports: funds for car repair, bus pass, child-care, uniforms, equipment, food, emergency rent
 - Social supports: case management, skill development, peer support, mentoring
 - [SB 61](#) in California serves as a state model for this type of funding approach.)

Effective Responses: Meaningful Youth Engagement

- Require the development of a youth board that includes young people with lived experience in the foster care system to advise on the development and implementation of youth workforce programs.
 - Develop and compensate youth advisory boards to provide ongoing advice and support to youth workforce programs.
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Effective
Responses:
Engage and
Incentivize
Commitment
of Employers
to System
Involved Youth

- Provide tax credits.
- Provide training and support.
- Provide recognition.

Contact Information

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