

# Serving Older Youth in Foster Care

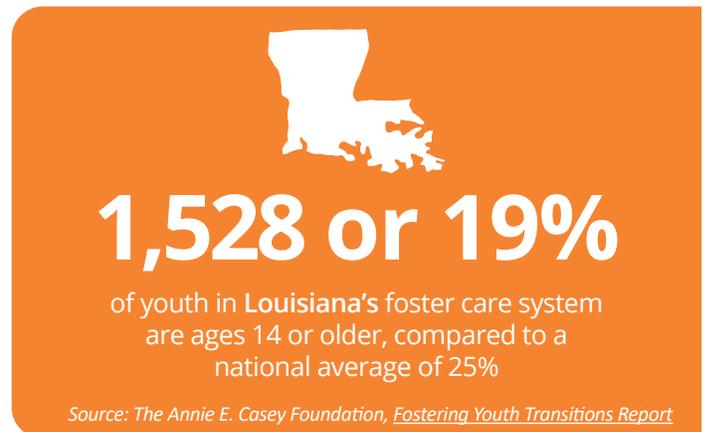
## Louisiana State Profile

BY JERARD BROWN

According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's [Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative](#), 20% of children exiting foster care will become homeless when they turn 18 and only half will attain gainful employment before age 24. Of females who age out of foster care, 71% will become pregnant before age 21. These statistics highlight the significant challenges many older youth face as they transition out of foster care. States have developed strategies to address these challenges, and NCSL has compiled a [50-state data map](#) that looks at eight policy areas related to older youth in foster care. Below is a summary of strategies Louisiana has adopted to better serve older youth in care, as well as additional strategies other states have implemented.

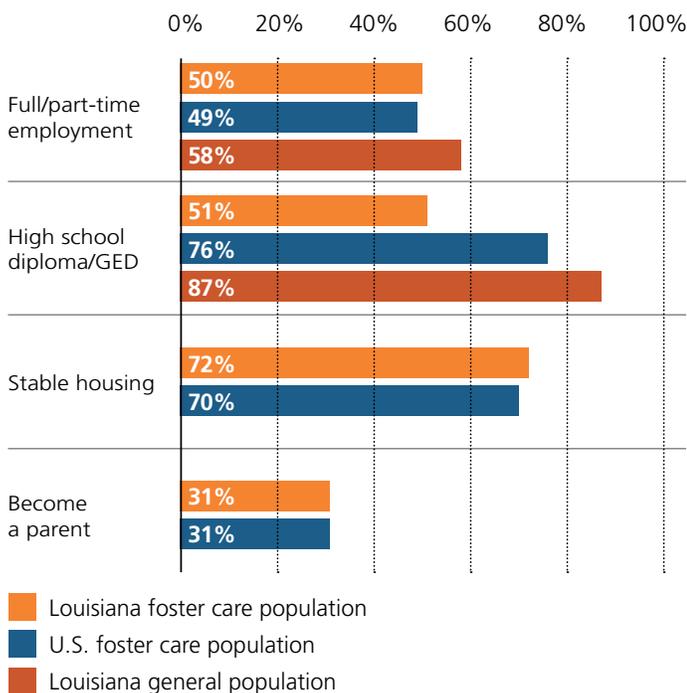
### Foster Care in Louisiana

More than 1,500 Louisiana youth in foster care were over the age of 14 in 2018. Louisiana's Department of Children and Family Services made older youth transitioning from foster care a [major priority in 2016](#). The department aimed to reduce the number of youth entering foster care and increase the number being placed in a permanent home. It also extended foster care beyond age 18. To achieve these goals, the department established specialized caseworkers for youth transitioning from care and partnered with Casey Family Programs to increase placements in permanent settings. It also implemented the [Open Table](#) model to ensure the voices of older youth in foster care are part of the placement decision-making process. During this time, the Louisiana Legislature passed legislation to enhance service delivery to youth involved in multiple systems (i.e., the juvenile justice, child welfare and behavioral health systems). Furthermore, the state requested a [study](#) to examine the impact of including 17-year-olds under the jurisdiction of the juvenile justice system. In doing so, the legislature emphasized the importance of giving youth the "opportunity to mature, learn, and rehabilitate themselves and transition into productive adults."



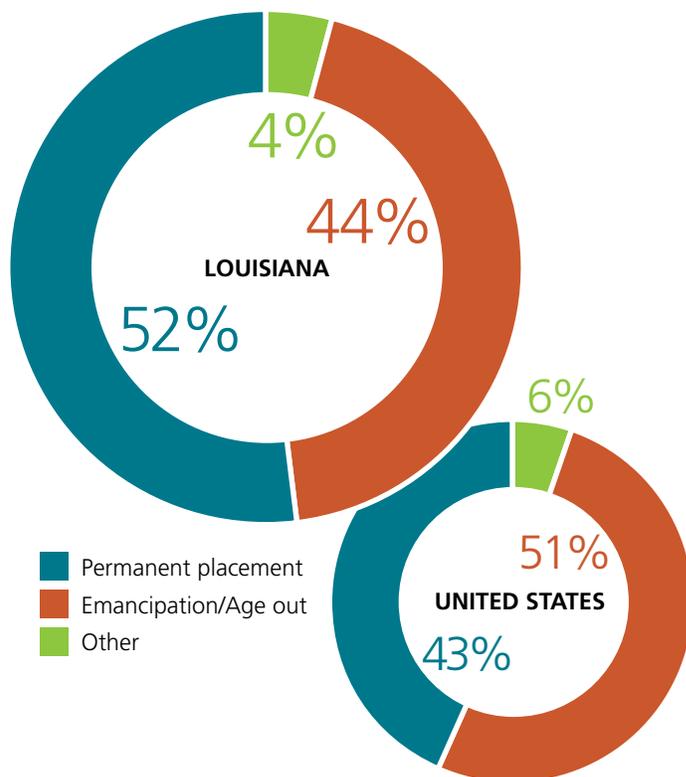
## Young Adult Outcomes by Age 21

Young adults who experience foster care tend to have worse outcomes than their peers in the general population across a variety of measures.



Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Fostering Youth Transitions Report*

## Reasons for Leaving Foster Care



Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Fostering Youth Transitions Report*

## EXTENDING FOSTER CARE BEYOND AGE 18

Louisiana’s Task Force on Youth Aging out of Foster Care released a [report in 2017](#), and one of its recommendations was to extend foster care to age 21. In 2018, the legislature passed [SB 129](#), which extended the age of foster care through high school graduation or until the age of 21, whichever came first. It also passed [SCR 10](#), which requested that the Department of Children and Family Services study the feasibility of extending the age to 21 for all children. In 2019, The Task Force on Extending the Age of Foster Care to 21 released a [report](#) recommending the state expand the eligibility of its extended foster care program to meet federal Title IV-E eligibility [requirements](#). In June of that year, the legislature followed through with [SB 109](#), which extends foster care in Louisiana up to age 21, providing the youth meet at least one of the following requirements: complete their secondary, postsecondary or vocational education; are employed for at least 80 hours a month; or are medically incapable of fulfilling any of the previous conditions.

## YOUTH INVOLVED WITH THE JUVENILE JUSTICE AND FOSTER CARE SYSTEMS

According to [Casey Family Programs](#), 47% of youth who experience maltreatment are more likely to become involved in delinquency than youth from the general population. In 2013, Louisiana passed [SB 107](#), which aims to lower recidivism, out-of-home placements and potential adult incarceration. SB 107 requires various departments to create an integrated case management system to increase collaboration and information sharing across all systems.

Developing alternative forms of processing is another way to promote collaboration and information sharing across systems. For example, in [California](#), youth receive certain considerations when they are under the supervision of a foster home, group home or other licensed facility that provides residential care for minors, and are referred to the juvenile justice system. Specifically, when making recommendations to the court, the county probation and child welfare departments are to consider whether the youth’s alleged conduct is related to a behavior for which the youth is being treated.



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