

Serving Older Youth in Foster Care

Texas State Profile

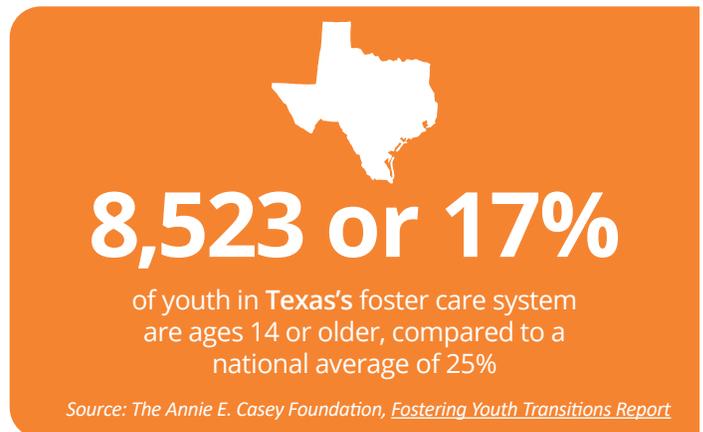
BY JERARD BROWN

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 Texas has adopted to better serve older youth in care, as well as additional strategies other states have implemented.

Foster Care in Texas

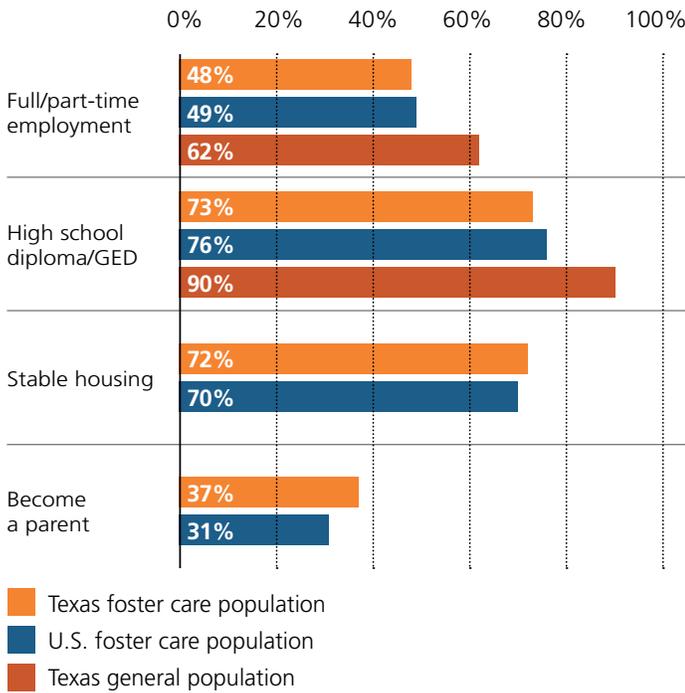
According to the National Center for Youth Law's [Foster Care Docket](#), at least 12 states are engaged in a class-action lawsuit involving their child welfare system and an additional seven jurisdictions are being monitored after reaching a settlement or agreement. In 2015, a federal judge [ruled](#) against the state of Texas in a class-action lawsuit filed on behalf of Texas foster children. The lawsuit alleged that the state had an insufficient number of foster care placements, youth experienced too much placement instability, and more. The state appealed the decision, and [modifications](#), including removing the limit on the number of youth permitted in a group home, were made. In November 2019, the federal judge found the state in contempt of court for failing to comply with some of her earlier orders in the wide-ranging lawsuit.

Meanwhile, in 2016 the Texas Legislature approved [additional funds](#) for the hiring of new caseworkers and to increase compensation for child protective services staff. The following year, the legislature passed a [package](#) of child welfare legislation, including [SB 11](#), requiring the Department of Family and Protective Services to implement



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.



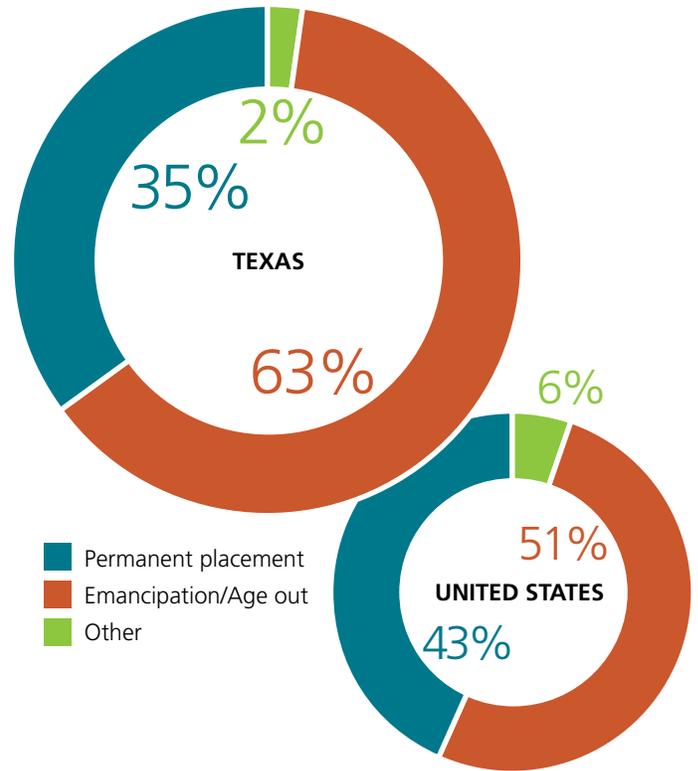
Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Fostering Youth Transitions Report*

a “community-based care system,” which involves contracting with a private organization to locate placements and provide services to youth in foster care. The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System reported that Texas had the second most youth in foster care in the country in 2018. In the same year, Texas had more than 8,500 youth in foster care who were 14 or older, which accounted for roughly 17% of the foster care population in the state.

EXTENDING FOSTER CARE BEYOND AGE 18

Texas youth have the option to remain in foster care until the end of the month of their 21st birthday, if they meet certain eligibility requirements. Youth 18 or older undergo a trial independence period of up to 12 months and continue to receive transitional living benefits, including Transitional Medicaid and education and training vouchers. Child Trends examined national data, finding that youth in states that have extended foster care past age 18 generally have access to independent living services, such as housing assistance and financial management, and better outcomes related to employment, high school diploma and GED completion, educational aid and homelessness.

Reasons for Leaving Foster Care



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

INCREASING PLACEMENT STABILITY

Sixty-three percent of youth in foster care in Texas experienced more than three placements during their most recent stay in foster care, which is 8% higher than the national average. Studies have shown that emotional and behavioral issues in childhood are reduced with stable placements. The Campbell Collaboration published a review of kinship care placements and concluded that “children in kinship care experience fewer placement disruptions and incidents of institutional abuse.” Texas has a Title IV-E Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP). Under this program, Texas kinship providers are eligible for up to \$2,000 in reimbursements for nonrecurring expenses.

The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges’ Enhanced Resource Guidelines recommends that courts be involved with overseeing child welfare agencies’ attempts to locate relatives for kinship placements. Looking across the country, California, Pennsylvania and other states explicitly require the courts to review their child welfare agency’s efforts to locate a relative before placing a youth in long-term foster care.



www.ncsl.org