

Ohio Fostering Connections:

Expanding supports for foster youth through age 21



Key Facts

- 1,000 Ohio youth “age out” of foster care each year at age 18
- As many as 3,000 former foster youth in Ohio could be eligible for extended support under the Ohio Fostering Connections Act
- Independent research shows that supporting Ohio foster youth through age 21 will: 1) improve educational attainment and earnings outcomes and 2) produce a net economic gain to Ohio taxpayers

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What is Ohio Fostering Connections?

Each year, more than 1,000 Ohio youth "age out" of foster care at age 18. Research tells us that these young people are at high risk of homelessness, unemployment, insufficient education, dependence on public assistance, human trafficking and other obstacles to success.

Ohio Fostering Connections is a collaborative of local experts in the field of foster care and adolescent development with one objective: to advance Ohio's development and implementation of supportive services, including housing and case management, to youth aging out of foster care through age 21. The expansion would support young people in foster care as they avoid risks and build a strong foundation for successful adulthood.

The Fostering Connection to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 provides federal matching funds to help states support foster youth through age 21. Prior to enactment of this law, states cut off foster care services at age 18. Since 2008, 26 states and the District of Columbia have created, or are in the process of creating, state-level legislation to extend supports to foster youth through age 21. Although Ohio has not yet passed its legislation, we have identified best practices from around the country that will enable Ohio to build the best program in the country for former foster youth.

In January 2014, Ohio Fostering Connections kicked off a yearlong effort 1) to conduct independent research and analysis of the need for and cost-benefit of expanding supports for young people in foster care and 2) to educate decision-makers and stakeholders. In January 2015, Ohio Fostering Connections will continue its work to educate the public and will launch a campaign for state-level legislation to extend supportive services for foster youth to age 21. The legislation will include a package of programs to help young people prepare for college and career. (See page 14 for *timeline*.)

Each year, successful implementation of the project would impact up to 3,000 young people, ages 18-21, who would be eligible to enroll in the statewide program.

Table of Contents

Ohio Fostering Connections
Overview
PAGE 2

Need for Extended Support
PAGE 3

Cost-Benefit Analysis
PAGE 4

Eligibility
Recommendations
PAGE 9

Housing
Recommendations
PAGE 11

Case Management
Recommendations
PAGE 12

Administrative Review
Recommendations
PAGE 13

Timeline
PAGE 14

Get involved
PAGE 15



Why do Ohio's youth aging out of foster care need extended support?

Ohio foster youth outcomes at age 19:

- 14% had a child
- 16% received financial assistance
- 24% worked part-time; 12% worked full-time
- 26% experienced homelessness within the last two years
- 36% were incarcerated
- 53% had not completed high school/GED

Source: *National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD), 2013 Ohio Data*

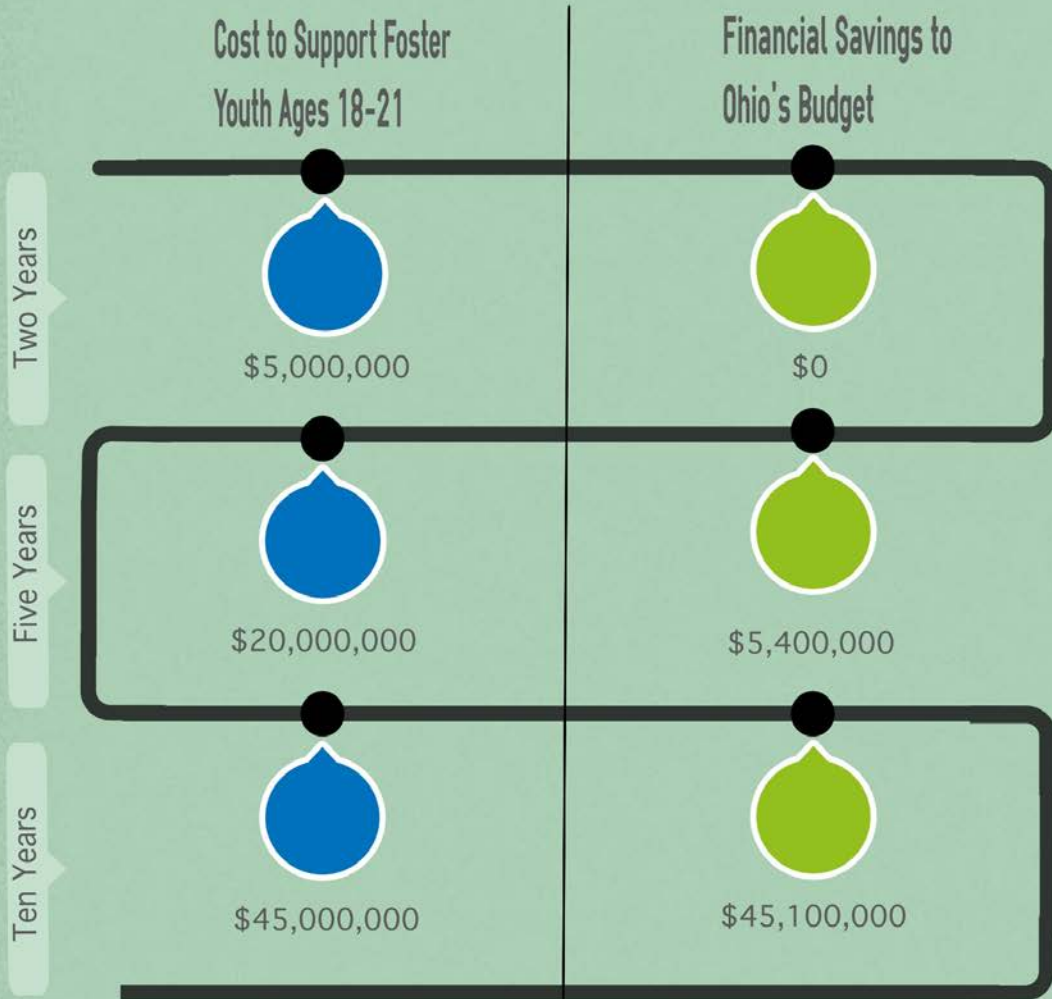
What are the benefits of implementing Ohio Fostering Connections?

- Access millions of additional federal funds to offer supportive services for young people (see pages 4-8 for a cost-benefit analysis)
- Decrease negative outcomes for young people, such as homelessness, incarceration and unemployment
- Engage young people as partners in establishing a foundation for successful adulthood
- Increase educational attainment
- Increase lifetime earnings potential due to increased educational attainment and employment stability



OHIO FOSTERING CONNECTIONS COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Ten Year Outlook



After 10 years, the expenses of the program will be fully offset by the increased revenues due to youths' improved outcomes.

See next page for a description of the cost-benefit analysis.

Ohio Fostering Connections Cost-Benefit Analysis

The federal Fostering Connections and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 extends federal financial support to states that elect to provide supportive services to youth through their 19th, 20th, or 21st birthdays.

The cost of supporting foster youth during their transition to adulthood now has the potential to be matched with federal "Title IV-E" funds of the U.S. Social Security Act.

Extending the state's responsibility of supporting foster children through their 21st birthday has the potential to improve social, career, health, and educational outcomes, as well as produce cost-savings to Ohio taxpayers.

Ohio Fostering Connections commissioned Alvin S. Mares, PhD, MSW, LSW, Assistant Professor of Social Work at The Ohio State University, to conduct independent research on the outcomes, costs, and benefits of supporting young people who emancipate from foster care through their 21st birthday. Here are the key findings of that research.

Key Findings

Utilizing a conservative and evidence-driven approach, research revealed that:

- over a ten-year period, Ohio will benefit dollar-for-dollar by providing supportive services to young people who age out of foster care and to those who were adopted from foster care at age 16 or later.
- by year six of the program's statewide implementation, Ohio will benefit \$1.06 for every \$1.00 spent.
- by year 10, the benefit will rise to \$1.81 for every \$1.00 spent, surpassing net costs.



“Over a ten-year period, Ohio will benefit dollar-for-dollar by providing supportive services to young adults who age out of foster care”

Cost of core program services per cohort

Ohio Fostering Connections' legislative proposal includes four core program services, required under the Federal Fostering Connections Act: (1) Housing, (2) Case Management, (3) Administrative Review and (4) Extended Adoption Assistance.

Four Core Program Services	Formula for Cost of Core Program Services	Cost of Core Program Services per Cohort
(1) Housing	\$1,472 average foster care cost at age 18 x 350 youth x 18 months average length of stay in program	\$9,273,600
(2) Case Management	12 caseworkers x 3 years x \$53,326 = \$1,919,736 and 2 supervisors x 3 years x \$67,952 = \$407,712	\$2,327,448
(3) Administrative Review	\$800 per review x 350 youth x 1.5 years	\$420,000
(4) Extended Adoption Assistance	5 percent of combined cost of housing, case management and administrative review	\$601,052
Total Cost per Cohort (ages 18-21, years 1-3)		\$12,622,100
Federal Share of Total Cost (60%)		\$7,573,260
Ohio Share of Total Cost (40%)		\$5,048,840

Core program services would cost \$12,622,100 for one cohort over three years, with \$7,573,260 (60%) covered by federal matching funds and \$5,048,840 (40%) covered by Ohio.

See pages 11 to 13 for program recommendations for core services.

Cost of optional supportive services per cohort

If the State of Ohio chooses to offer supportive services beyond the four core services required in the federal Act, we recommend the following, which would cost \$6,695,830 per cohort.

Optional Supportive Service	Formula for Cost of Optional Supportive Service	Cost of Optional Supportive Service
(1) Community College for Accelerated Youth	Average cost of attending 2-year, public Associate of Arts Degree program (\$9,302 x 2 years x 126 youth)	\$2,344,104
(2) Employment Training for Emerging Adults	Average cost of 1-year public certification program (\$9,555 x 1 year x 74 youth)	\$707,070
(3) Parenting Support for Struggling Parents	Average annual cost of raising 1 child (\$10,256 x 2 years x 88 youth)	\$1,805,056
(4) Community-Based Corrections Program for Troubled Young People	Average daily community-based corrections facility (\$80 x 365-day average length of stay x 63 youth)	\$1,839,600
Total Cost per Cohort		\$6,695,830

The analysis in the table above is based on a Chapin Hall* study that identifies four groups of former foster youth as they transition into adulthood:

- 1) **Accelerated youth:** “living independently, beginning to raise children, completing their secondary education;”
- 2) **Emerging adults:** delaying some key adulthood benchmarks, such as living on their own, having children or completing school, while avoiding hardship;
- 3) **Struggling parents:** their reliance on public assistance and insufficient education is related to parenting; and
- 4) **Troubled/troubling:** most likely to be incarcerated, institutionalized, homeless or unemployed.

*Source: http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/publications/Midwest_IB4_Latent_Class_2.pdf

As illustrated in the graph on the previous page, these four groups of former foster youth could serve as a framework for providing supportive services beyond core supportive services. Additional supportive services could help: 1) "Accelerated Youth" earn an Associate's degree; 2) "Emerging Youth" earn career certification; 3) "Struggling Parents" work or go to school by covering the cost of raising a child; 4) a "Troubled" youth receive necessary interventions.

The costs of additional support services could be off-set through program consolidation or shared operations within state departments currently serving transition-aged youth. For example: 1) low-income, first generation college student funds could support Accelerated Youth; 2) Workforce Investment Act (WIA) out-of-school youth programs could support Emerging Adults; 3) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for Struggling Parents, and 4) Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OMHAS) programs and Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) diversion programs for Troubled Youth.

Benefit Due to Improved Educational Outcomes and Higher Earnings

Educational Benefit Type	Total Benefit Due to Improved Educational Outcomes and Higher Earnings
High School Diploma	\$1,746,181
Some college	\$704,740
Associate of Arts Degree	\$468,650
Bachelor of Arts Degree	\$3,298,250
Support for Struggling Parents	\$1,390,970
Intervention for Troubled Youth	\$1,420,580
Total Benefit (over 5-yr period)	\$9,029,371

Cost-Benefit Conclusion

Based on liberal cost and conservative benefit estimates, a positive return on investment to the State of Ohio of \$1.08 for every \$1.00 spent will be realized beginning in year 6 of the program.

The investment will grow through increased tax revenues associated with higher earnings achieved during adulthood (ages of 26 through 66) and through increased educational attainment during early adulthood (ages 18-20). *To review the complete cost-benefit analysis, visit ohiofosteringconnections.org.*



*"I'm a former foster child, as are my 12 siblings, and we would've benefited greatly from such a resource. Hopefully this legislation will help future foster children avoid some of the pitfalls and obstacles we endured." ~Maggie**

"Kids aging out of the system need the same kind of support we offer our own kids and they need to know there is someone there to catch them if they fall on their first try." ~ Jennifer

**pseudonyms used throughout report to respect and protect the identity of foster alumni who participated in focus groups and community forums*

Throughout 2014, Ohio Fostering Connections hosted a series of listening tours throughout Ohio with field experts, stakeholders, alumni of foster care and decision-makers.

What follows is a summary of what we heard— program recommendations for Ohio decision-makers as the Buckeye State considers expanding supportive services for foster youth to age 21.

How would it work?

Putting Ohio Fostering Connections into practice.

Who would be eligible for the Ohio Fostering Connections program and how would the program be implemented?

- Ohio should follow the eligibility standards set in the federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008. These standards include youth age 18 - 21 who aged out of foster care and who meet any one of the following criteria:
 - Completing secondary education or a program leading to an equivalent credential;
 - Enrolled part-time or full-time in: 1) an institution that provides post-secondary or vocational education; 2) a university or college, or 3) a vocational or trade school;
 - Participating in a program or activity designed to promote, or remove barriers to employment;
 - Employed for at least 80 hours per month; or
 - Incapable of doing any of the previously described educational or employment activities due to a documented medical condition.

2. Unlike Ohio's existing IV-E foster care program, which the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) supervises and county public children service agencies (PCSA) administer, the Ohio Fostering Connections program should be centrally administered by ODJFS and sub-contracted to local agencies. Eligible local agencies should include ODJFS-certified private agencies and PCSAs.

ODJFS should update existing regulations regarding post emancipation services to align with the Ohio Fostering Connections programs.

3. Program services should be voluntary, easy to access, and youth-friendly. Young people who choose to exit the program should not be prohibited from re-enrolling.
4. Information about the availability of the Ohio Fostering Connections transition services should be presented and discussed with young people as part of the emancipation planning process and shared in a variety of youth-friendly formats.
5. Foster parents and other professionals working with transition-age foster youth should receive specialized training on the full range of transition services available under the Fostering Connections program so that they can help to link the youth with available services.

*"I would have liked to transition into independent housing with more and more independence with time."
~Nadine, former foster youth*



What should housing options look like?

1. Transition services available in the Fostering Connections program should include a variety of housing options that are appropriate 1) to varying levels of need for support and 2) to readiness for independence, including:
 - Foster and kin homes, host homes, group homes, residential centers
 - Transitional living and supportive housing programs, including housing targeted to the needs of particular groups, such as young parents, young people with disabilities, young people with a history of sexual offense, and young people with substance abuse disorders
 - On- and off-campus housing in post-secondary education settings
 - Housing cash stipends paid directly to young people enrolled in the program who meet an appropriate criteria
2. ODJFS should establish clear parameters for young people's admittance into housing settings that are restrictive, including group homes and residential centers. The State Departments of Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health and Addiction Services and their local boards should work with OJDFS to create a plan and provide appropriate services to enrolled young people with developmental disabilities and mental health and substance abuse problems.

*"Most people I know who aged out of foster care became homeless. Any housing would have been good, so I would not be on my own. [When I turned 18], I couldn't get anything in my name and didn't know how to pay my bills."
~Charlotte, former foster youth*
3. Case managers and other professionals involved in the Fostering Connections program should work in partnership with enrolled young people to identify the most desirable and appropriate housing and supportive service options. Young people should direct decisions about the most appropriate options. Young people should have the opportunity for a "pre-placement visit" before agreeing to participate in a particular housing program.
4. Participants should have access to transitional housing with increasing independence, consistent with healthy development and emerging adulthood, e.g. foster home, to independent living group home, to apartment or house. Young people should have the opportunity to make their own decisions and learn from mistakes.

*"The housing arrangement should be up to the [young person] and there should be training on how to save money."
~Andy, former foster youth*

What should case management and supportive services look like?

1. Case managers who serve young people, enrolled in the Fostering Connections program, should receive specialized training under parameters set by state government. Training should include hearing directly from foster youth who are in the process of transitioning and young people who have already emancipated from care.
2. The State of Ohio currently requires a transition-to-adulthood plan for each foster youth. As part of this plan, each young person should be equipped with a user-friendly tool-kit of information about available Fostering Connections supportive services.
3. Establishing life-long social connections should be a focus of case management for young people enrolled in the Fostering Connections program, including family-finding where appropriate.
4. A range of developmentally appropriate supportive services should be provided to young people enrolled in the Fostering Connections program, including but not limited to employment supports; developmental skills, relational skills, and hands-on life skills training; financial management; transportation; educational supports (including at the post-secondary level); access to mental health and addiction services; and assistance enrolling on Medicaid.

"Aging out requires different and much more support— budget, apartment, expenses, management, teacher."
~ Nadine



I needed someone to listen, someone to talk to. I wasn't looking for a handout- I needed advice. ~ Andy

How should Fostering Connections participants' cases be reviewed?

1. Ohio should adopt a hybrid case review model. Administrative reviews should be held every six months. Young people enrolled in the Fostering Connections program should have the option to request a formal court review in extenuating circumstances.
2. Young people enrolled in the Fostering Connections program need to participate in and, when possible, lead the administrative review process. Reviews should be convened in areas where the young people reside and scheduled based on their availability.
3. Administrative reviewers should be diverse. Young people should have the authority to request certain individuals be eligible reviewers. The reviewers should include the young people, caseworker, and other professionals and supportive figures deemed appropriate by all parties.
4. Free legal representation and consultation should be offered to program enrollees on relevant topics, such as landlord-tenant relations, identify theft or debt settlement.

What is administrative review?

A full review of a young person's records, conducted by a team of eligible reviewers, to determine compliance with program requirements.

Would Ohio Fostering Connections legislation disincentivize adoption of older youth in foster care?

Families of older youth who were adopted would be eligible for financial supports offered through the Fostering Connections legislation.

The adoption assistance extension, required by federal law, was designed to offset the costs of adopting older, qualifying foster youth.





How long would it take to implement the Ohio Fostering Connections program?

February 2015	Ohio Fostering Connections Legislation Introduced
June 30, 2015	Bill Passes into Law
July 1, 2015	12-month implementation planning starts
July 1, 2016	Statewide implementation occurs

Get Involved



Sign the petition.

Join more than 2,900 supporters of Ohio Fostering Connections.

Endorse.

Have your organization publicly endorse Ohio Fostering Connections.

Write your legislator.

Make sure your legislator knows that you support Ohio Fostering Connections.

[ohiofosteringconnections.org/
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Endorsements of Ohio Fostering Connections

Agape for Youth, Inc.

Beech Brook

Catholic Charities Corporation

CHOICES, Inc.

Center of Vocational Alternatives (COVA)

Cuyahoga Co. Division of Children & Family Services

Focus on Youth, Inc.

Foster Care Alumni of America – Ohio Chapter

Harmony Project

Justice for Children Project, Moritz College of Law

Juvenile Justice Coalition

Lighthouse Youth Services

Lowery Training Associates

Marjory Curry & Associates, LLC

Mental Health & Addiction Advocacy Coalition

Montgomery Co. Office of Family and Children First

National Youth Advocate Program

Necco

O.H.I.O Youth Advisory Board

Oesterlen Services for Youth

Ohio Association of Child Caring Agencies

Ohio Family Care Association

Pressley Ridge

ProKids

Safely Home, Inc.

Schubert Center for Child Studies at Case Western

Reserve University

Specialized Alternatives for Families & Youth

St. Joseph Orphanage

Starfish Alliance

The Buckeye Ranch

UMCH Family Services

ViaQuest Clinical Services

Voices for Ohio's Children

YWCA of Cleveland