

FAQs

November 09, 2017

1. What is the scope of the challenge?

Nationally

- In 2015, more than 427,000 children in the United States received foster care services.
- About 5% (23,000 in 2015) age out of the system annually.
- In the past five years (2011-2015), the number of children in foster care has increased by 8% (30,000).
- Within two years, 25% of young people who transition out of foster care are incarcerated, 20% are homeless, 42% drop out of high school, and 71% are pregnant or parents.
- If this population graduated from high school at the same rate as the general population of young people, every year those 7,000 additional graduates would earn \$1.8 billion more over their working lifetimes, and contribute \$430 million in additional taxes.

Virginia

- 464 foster-care youth aged out of care in Virginia in 2016 (51 in the Richmond metro area)
- Virginia has the greatest need as fewer children exit foster care to permanency (78% compared to 88% nationally, as reported by the Child Trends survey)
- Virginia has one of the highest percentages of exits due to aging out in the country (20% compared to 9% nationally in 2015, as reported by the Child Trends survey).

2. What is The Possibilities Project, and why did you do this survey?

- TPP is the result of a partnership between Children's Home Society of Virginia and the Richmond-area's Better Housing Coalition to provide youth transitioning out of foster care (ages 18-25) with stable housing and trauma-informed wraparound services.
- Founded in 2015, early results are promising – 100% of participants have secure, stable housing; 75% are enrolled in postsecondary education or completed vocational training and 88% are employed; 100% have long-term connections and mentors, as well as access to comprehensive health care services.
- TPP commissioned the Child Trends reports to learn from other states and to get a deeper sense of the state of affairs in Virginia.
- TPP is designed to be research-based and designed to be replicable in communities across Virginia and the country.
- TPP is forming The Task force on Transitioning Youth to analyze data, build and strengthen a network of support, and make recommendations to policy makers.

3. What is The Task force on Transitioning Youth?

- The task force will analyze data available and make recommendations to policy makers.
- The task force anticipates issuing a call-to-action in mid-2018.
- Expertise on the task force cuts across the six crucial areas of support for transitioning youth. One member aged out of foster care herself.

(continued)

- Initial Task force members include:
 - Senator Barbara Favola
 - Pam Kestner, Deputy Director of Housing at Department of Housing and Community Development
 - Allison Gilbreath, Policy Analyst for Foster Care and Juvenile Justice, Voices for Virginia's Children
 - Michael Farley, CEO of Elk Hill
 - Chris Saxman, political coach and member of Virginia's House of Delegates from 2002-2010.
 - Jon Barrett, VP of Property Management, Better Housing Coalition
 - Nadine Marsh-Carter, CEO of Children's Home Society of Virginia
 - Greta Harris, President & CEO of Better Housing Coalition
 - Dietra Trent, Virginia Secretary of Education
 - Sarah Mendoza, Peer Network Coordinator, Piedmont Virginia Community College
 - Jenny Pokempner, Child Welfare Policy Director at the Juvenile Law Center

4. What does "exiting to permanency" mean?

- Reunification, adoption, guardianship, and living with other relatives

5. What does the opioid crisis have to do with this issue?

- Addicted parents are resulting in greater numbers of children being placed in foster care. Down the road, we can anticipate a higher number of young adults aging out of care. Warning of that now, we hope, will lead to improvements in the supports these young people can access to build an independent life free of addiction or other dependency. While the goal for these young people should be an exit to permanency, experience tells us that hoping for that result without planning for the possibility of aging-out is not realistic.

6. What are your thoughts on the possible elimination of the federal tax credit for adoption, under the tax legislation Congress is developing?

- Adoptive parents make that decision because they want to give a child a better life. The tax credit has long been a way to make the choice to adopt a more financially viable one, particularly for lower to middle income families who make up a significant portion of the families who adopt many of the harder to place children. We join with other adoption advocates in opposing the elimination of the tax credit. Eliminating it will likely result in fewer young people being adopted, which would lead to more young people entering adulthood on their own. The cost of keeping the credit now far outweighs the likely costs to young people and society down the road.