

December 10, 2025

Eyes on California

Extended Foster Care as a Tool
to Prevent Youth
Homelessness



TAY-Hub

Transition-Age Youth
Research & Evaluation Hub



JOHN BURTON
Advocates
for Youth

AGENDA

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Background: Extended Foster Care in California
3. Study Linking CalYOUTH Study and State Administrative Data
 - a. Implications
 - b. Policy Recommendations
4. Provider Perspective
5. Q & A

Today's Presenters



Dr. Mark Courtney

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Snapshot of California Foster Care

17,000

children & youth enter foster care
per year due to due abuse & neglect

42,000

children & youth
in foster care in
California



7,400

are young adults,
aged 18 to 21

Extended Foster Care



- Assembly Bill 12, the California Fostering Connections to Success Act **extended foster care to age 21** in 2010, **implemented in 2012**.
- Upon turning 18, eligible youth can continue in foster care. If they leave the system, they can re-enter up to age 21.
- Youth are considered **non-minor dependents (NMDs)** under dependency, transition or delinquency jurisdiction.
- Supervised by child welfare agency or probation department.
- Must fulfill at least one participation condition (e.g. education, employment)

Extended Foster Care Placements



**Supervised
Independent Living
Placement (SILP)**

40% of NMDs



**Transitional Housing
Placement for Non-
minor Dependents
(THP-NMD)**

30% of NMDs

Resource Family

(relative home, county
foster home, FFA home,
guardianship with
dependency)

~18% of NMDs

**Short-Term Residential
Therapeutic Program
(STRTP)**

(temporary, under certain
conditions <age 19)

2% of NMDs



**Transitional Living
Setting (TLS)**
(temporary/emergency
placement)



**= only for
non-minor
dependents**

Extended Foster Care Presents a Unique Opportunity to Prevent Homelessness Before it Occurs

Foster youth are at heightened risk for homelessness:

- Lack of co-signer, parental support, “safety net” home
- May be attending school, minimal earnings
- California is one of the most expensive states to live in
- Impact of trauma: emotional, behavioral, physical
- Nationwide, more than half (57%) of youth ages 18-24 live with their parents

Extended foster care lengthens the runway of support:

- Ensures housing support until 21
- Overlaps with:
 - postsecondary education and career exploration
 - final stages of prefrontal cortex brain development
 - new responsibilities as legal adults
- We know the year, month and day each young person will exit care, with ample time to help them plan



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Foster Care Policy And Homelessness Among Youth Transitioning To Adulthood From Foster Care

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Thank you!

[Partners]



[Funders]



Berkeley Social Welfare





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Foster care policy and homelessness among youth transitioning to adulthood from foster care

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ABSTRACT

Background: Youth aging out of foster care experience troubling rates of homelessness.

Objective: This study examines whether policies directed towards youth transitioning to adulthood from foster care, Extended Foster Care (EFC) and Supervised Independent Living Placements (SILPs), reduce the risk of homelessness.

Participants and setting: Participants were 595 youths aging out of foster care in California.

Methods: Data from interviews conducted with the youths, and state child welfare administrative data on their involvement with the child welfare system, were used to examine predictors of homelessness between ages 17 and 19. Cox proportional hazard regression models, controlling for the characteristics of the youths, were used to identify associations between time in EFC, and in SILPs, and the hazard of homelessness.

Results: Approximately 18 % of the youth experienced homelessness during this period. Controlling for youth characteristics, youths who left care were at much higher risk of homelessness during the study period than were those who remained in care past their 19th birthday (Hazard ratio [HR] = 3; $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, youths living in transitional supportive housing (HR = 0.20; $p < 0.01$) and therapeutic foster care settings (HR = 0.19; $p < 0.05$) exhibited a lower hazard of homelessness than those who had left care.

Conclusions: Our findings suggest that EFC, and particularly the living arrangements offering extensive support in EFC, reduce the risk of homelessness for youth aging out of foster care.



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FOSTER CARE POLICY AND HOMELESSNESS AMONG YOUTH TRANSITIONING TO ADULTHOOD FROM FOSTER CARE



SEPTEMBER 2025

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Transition-Age Youth
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Berkeley Social Welfare



CCWIP
California Child Welfare
Indicators Project

Background

- Transition-age youth (TAY) who age out of foster care face disproportionately high rates of homelessness.
 - reflecting systemic challenges (e.g., limited affordable housing, insufficient mental health services, and economic inequality)
- Little is known about how foster care policies influence young people's likelihood of experiencing homelessness.



Background

- The Fostering Connections Act of 2008 gave states the option to extend foster care to age 21 and introduced Supervised Independent Living Placements (SILPs).
 - supported transitional housing programs with on-site services to more independent settings
- Most states now extend foster care, yet many still experience homelessness.
- This study examines how these EFC and SILP policies shape the risk of homelessness.



Questions

- Does remaining in EFC reduce the likelihood of homelessness between ages 17 and 19?
- Does the risk of experiencing homelessness at any point in time vary between different living arrangements within EFC?



Data

Sources:

CalYOUTH Survey

CA child welfare administrative data (CWS/CMS)

CalYOUTH Survey sample

Eligible youth: ages 16.75–17.75 at sample draw (Dec 2012), in care for ≥ 6 months

Initial sample: 880 youth (763 eligible)

Baseline: 727 respondents ($\approx 95\%$ response rate)

Follow-up (age 19): 611 respondents (84% follow-up)



Sample

N = 595 youth (82% of baseline)

- Completed both survey waves
- Consented to admin data use
- Complete records through age 19 or exit

Focus:

Youth interviewed at age 19

One-third exited care between baseline & follow-up

Homelessness data collected at age 19



Measures

CaLYOUTH survey:

Demographics, foster care experience, homelessness, economic hardships, health, and social support.

Administrative data:

Foster care history through age 21 (e.g., placement types, entry age, maltreatment records, participation in extended foster care).

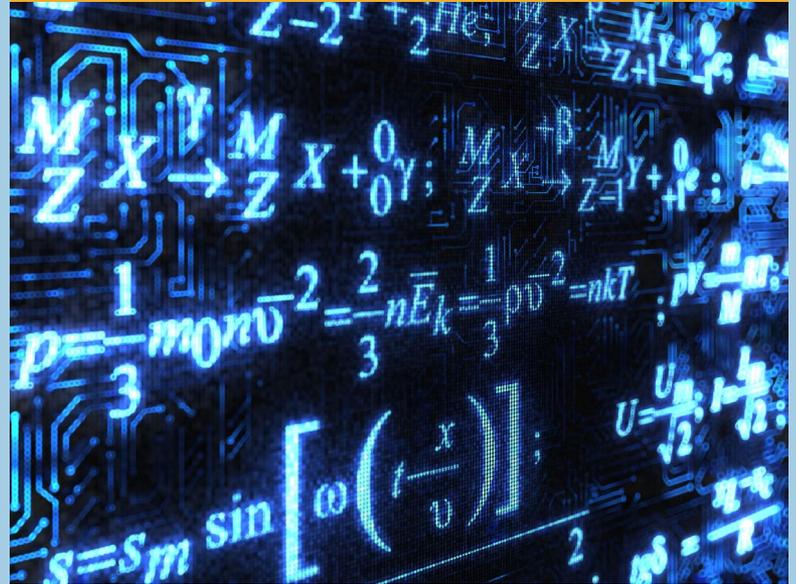


**Outcome:
Homelessness
between ages 17–19**

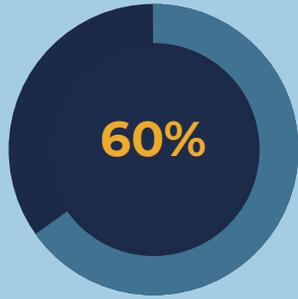
**“Since we last talked,
have you ever been
homeless for one night or
longer...?”**

Analysis

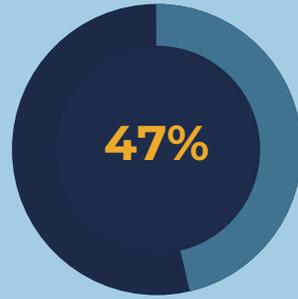
- Descriptive statistics were calculated using the youth survey weight.
- Cox proportional hazard regression models, controlling for the characteristics of the youths, were used to identify associations between time in EFC, and in SILPs, and the hazard of homelessness.



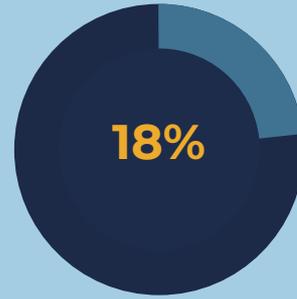
Sample Characteristics



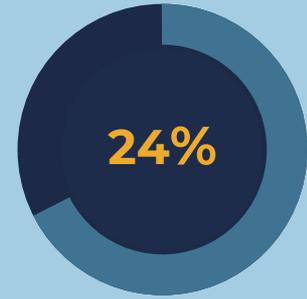
were
assigned
female at
birth



identified
as Latine



identified as
Black



identified as
sexual
minority at
age 17

Table 1:

Descriptive statistics of study variables (N =595 youths).

Outcome variables	Unweighted N	Weighted mean (S.D.)/%
Experienced homelessness between surveys	109	18.3%
Number of months between the baseline survey and the first experience of homelessness or the follow-up survey		23.1 (5.1)

Table 3. Hazard Analyses Results

(Significant findings from Models 2 and 3)

Variable	Hazard ratio	95% CI
White (ref.=Hispanic)	2.24**	1.24–4.07
Not 100% heterosexual	1.75*	1.04–2.95
Physically assaulted prior to baseline (14.1%)	2.07*	1.18–3.62
In care at 18 and left before follow-up (18.4%)	3.00***	1.83–4.90
In care at 18, left and re-entered by follow-up (7.2%)	3.00**	1.58–5.67
FFA home (7.3% of youth at age 19; ref.=Not in care)	0.19*	0.04–0.93
THP (14. 2% of youth at age 19; ref.=Not in care)	0.20**	0.06–0.66

Findings:

1

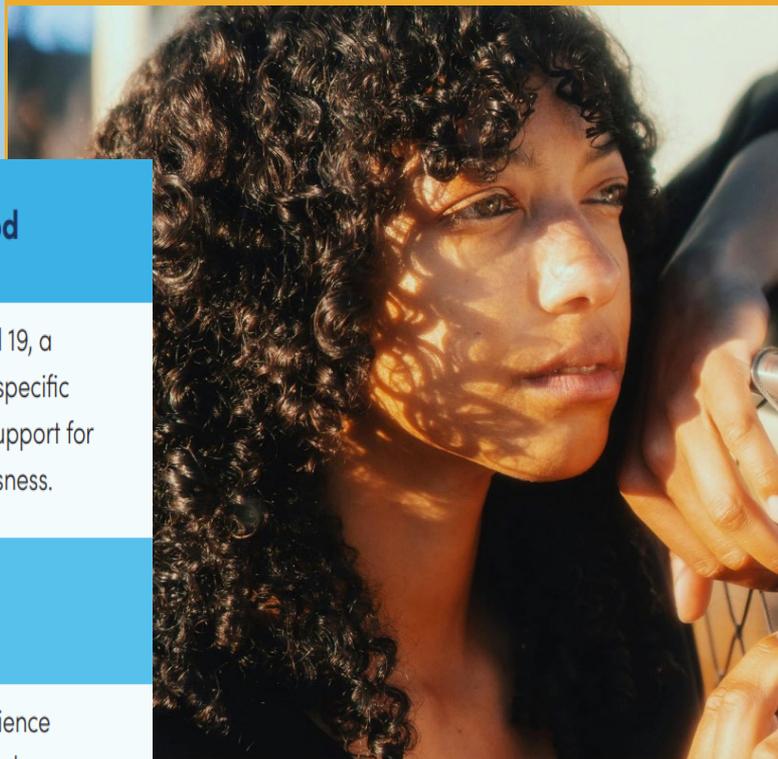
Homelessness is Common During the Transition to Adulthood

Nearly one in five youth (18%) experienced homelessness between ages 17 and 19, a much higher rate than that of their peers in the general population. While the specific role of EFC in reducing risk is not fully understood, it provides direct financial support for housing, and connects youth with services that can reduce the risk of homelessness.

2

Extended Foster Care Protects Against Homelessness

TAY who exited foster care before age 19 were three times more likely to experience homelessness than those who remained in care after controlling for individual characteristics - even if they later re-entered care.



Findings:

3

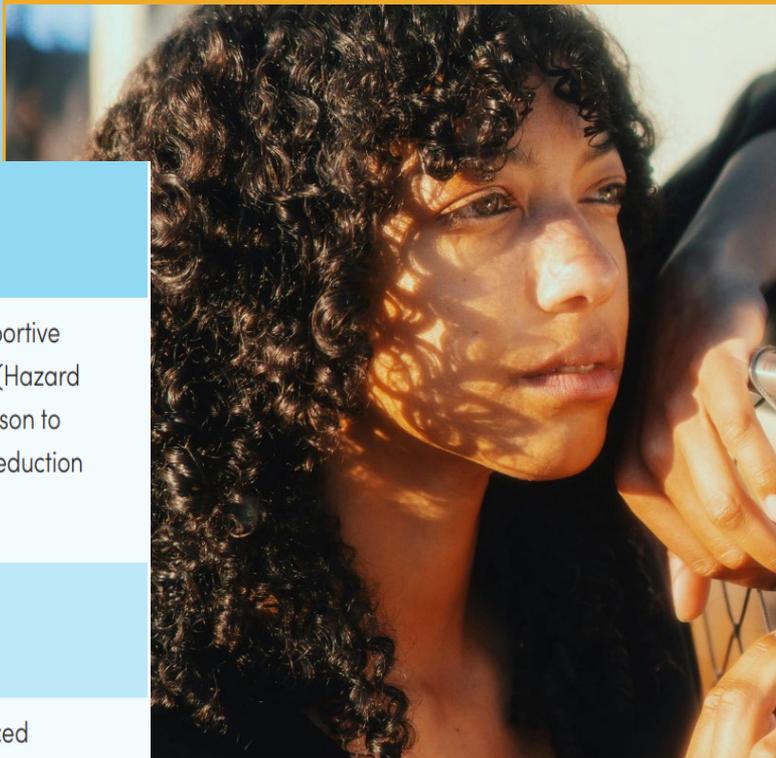
Supportive Housing Makes a Difference

Placement in treatment-oriented living arrangements, such as transitional supportive housing (Hazard Ratio = 0.20; $p < 0.01$) and Foster Family Agency (FFA) homes (Hazard Ratio = 0.19; $p < 0.05$) was strongly protective against homelessness in comparison to having left care. Importantly, these placements explained much of the overall reduction in homelessness associated with extended foster care.

4

Certain Youth Face Higher Risks

Youth who identified as sexual minorities or had a history of physical assault faced significantly higher risks of homelessness.





Study Significance

- One of the first studies to examine how EFC prevents homelessness among TAY.
- Confirms that EFC serves as both a housing safety net and a service delivery system during the transition to adulthood.
- By age 19, two-thirds of youth remained in EFC, showing that programs can be designed to retain most young people in care.
 - 79% lived in SILPs or THPs, indicating a steady shift toward more independent settings.

Implications

→ *THPs and FFAs emerged as particularly effective in reducing homelessness.*

- The finding that FFA placement is associated with reduced risk of homelessness is encouraging, however relatively few young people in EFC are residing in those settings.
- Although THPs are more costly than foster homes, their broader availability and impact suggest they remain a critical resource, especially given the low utilization of therapeutic foster homes in California.
 - Fewer than one in five young adults in care live in kinship, nonrelative, or therapeutic foster homes.

Implications

- California's rate reform structure provides a unique opportunity to align funding with needs-based supports.
- Findings highlight the need to layer services (e.g., individualized programs like LifeSet) onto living arrangements.
- Points to the importance of strengthening EFC as a housing safety net and mechanism for delivering therapeutic and practical supports.



**RATE
REFORM**



Policy & Practice

- Strengthen outreach and engagement strategies that encourage youth to stay past age 18.
 - States that have not yet extended care should consider claiming Title IV-E funding to expand services, particularly for states that want to better serve TAY with complex needs.
 - Congress should reconsider H.R.7010, the Increasing Access to Foster Care Through Age 21 Act, which would expand IV-E funding to support EFC regardless of parental AFDC eligibility and allow young people to reenter care after age 18.



Policy & Practice

- Reducing administrative barriers may help more youth remain in care and benefit from its protective effects.
- Despite these protections, some groups, including sexual minority youth and those with histories of physical assault, remain at elevated risk of homelessness.
 - Calls for targeted strategies to address the unique challenges faced by these young people.

Conclusion

- The relatively high rate of homelessness among TAY underscores the urgency of strengthening EFC participation and post-exit housing supports.
- Public and private child welfare agencies should connect youth exiting care to alternative housing options, including public housing resources.



Conclusion

- Overall, EFC- especially when paired with supportive housing and integrated services - remains one of the most powerful tools to prevent early homelessness among young people aging out of foster care.
- Continued federal, state, and local investment in EFC is essential to sustain progress and reduce youth homelessness nationwide.



Thank you!



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READ THE FULL STUDY:

Courtney, M. E., Park, S., & Harty, J. S. (2025). Foster care policy and homelessness among youth transitioning to adulthood from foster care. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 169, 107638.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2025.107638>

READ THE SUMMARY REPORT:

<https://tayhub.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/TAY-Hub-Homelessness-Summary-September-2025.pdf>

Provider Perspective



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Question & Answer

Please submit questions via the questions box.

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