

# States should extend benefits for youth in foster care, expert says

February 3 2011

---

Each year, 29,000 foster youths are released from care as they become adults. A University of Missouri foster care expert says these young people encounter tremendous challenges as they transition out of care. However, those who receive care benefits through age 21 have greatly improved outcomes. Clark Peters, assistant professor in the School of Social Work, says all states should consider extending benefits for foster youth.

"The transition between foster care and the real world leaves many 18-year-olds without a place to stay, money, a job or reliable transportation," Peters said. "Foster youths who continue to receive benefits through age 21 have improved outcomes including a greater likelihood of attending college and achieving financial stability."

Some states provide foster youths with continued benefits, such as educational aid, until age 21. Under the Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2009, the [federal government](#) matches states' expenditures for benefits through age 21. However, many states choose to discontinue foster benefits at age 18, Peters says.

Peters says foster youths lack personal assets or financial savings, making it difficult to secure housing, withstand unexpected changes or maintain jobs. Unlike other people their age, they often don't have a broad network of friends or family to rely on for help when they run out of gas or can't pay rent.

"Without families or established social networks, foster youths are faced with numerous difficulties in negotiating life on their own," Peters said. "They are forced to grow up faster than most kids because they don't have the same emotional or financial support when things go wrong or they make mistakes typical of youths their age."

Peters researched the costs and benefits to states that provide [foster care](#) benefits through age 21. In a 2009 study published by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, Peters found that the benefits of continued care outweighed the costs by a 2-1 ratio. Foster youths who receive extended benefits have more opportunities to make successful transitions to independent living. As a result, they utilize fewer government benefits and have higher incomes, resulting in more tax revenues for state and federal governments.

Provided by University of Missouri-Columbia

Citation: States should extend benefits for youth in foster care, expert says (2011, February 3) retrieved 10 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-02-states-benefits-youth-foster-expert.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--