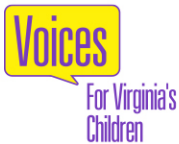




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# Support SB 967: Extend Foster Care Supports for Youth Who “Age Out” of Foster Care & Adoption Assistance for Older Youth to Age 21

From 2008 to 2013, more than 4350 youth “aged out” of Virginia’s foster care system, meaning they turned 18 years old before being connected to a permanent family through adoption, returning home to parents, or having a relative take custody of them. The Jim Casey Initiative reports that young people who age out of foster care without permanent connections experience very poor outcomes compared to their peers in the general population:

- More than one in five will become homeless after age 18
- Only 58% will graduate high school by age 19 (compared to 87% of all 19 year olds)
- One in four will be involved in the justice system within two years of leaving the foster care system
- Fewer than 3% will earn a college degree by age 25 (compared to 28% of all 25 year olds)

There are tremendous benefits to Virginia extending such supports to this population that go well beyond financial savings. Youth who continue to receive services after age 18:

- Are two to three times more likely to be enrolled in college and less likely to be evicted than those who discontinue services at 18;
- Are more likely to avoid homelessness, school dropout, and incarceration, as well as avoid the need for further and longer-term public assistance.
- Are more likely to have health insurance and to seek health and mental health treatment and therapy when needed.

**The federal Fostering Connections Act allows states to extend foster care supports to youth until age 21 **\*\* (including housing) \*\*** and receive federal IV-E matching funds for doing so.** The program also allows adoption assistance to continue for any youth adopted at age 16 or older, which will help increase older-youth adoptions—a group of youth most in danger of “aging out.”

**It’s also important to note: youth must be in school, working, or involved in a job training/job skills program to access these services.**

Jim Casey Initiative estimates the “cost of doing nothing” for these young people at \$300,000 per youth, meaning the 558 youth who “aged out” of foster care in 2013 could cost the state and taxpayers \$167.4 million.

**This item is already in the final 2015-2016 biennial budget.** Opting in to this program would mean a total expenditure of \$4.6m in General Funds, a shift of cost away from CSA expenditures, as well as **access to \$10.1 million in additional IV-E funds to help these vulnerable youth. The cost-shift would save localities over \$3.5 million.**

Additionally, the cost of this program should decrease over time: over the past 5 years, the number of youth who have “aged out” of care has dropped approximately 9% per year, & a revived focus on adoptions should decrease this amount even more.

## **Supporting Organizations**

FACES of Virginia Families

The Family Foundation of Virginia

JustChildren/Legal Aid Justice Center

Prevent Child Abuse Virginia

United Methodist Family Services

Virginia Association of Community Services Boards

The Virginia League of Social Services Executives

Virginia Catholic Conference

Virginia Coalition of Private Provider Associations

Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy

Virginia Organizing

The Virginia Poverty Law Center

The Virginia School Counselors Association

Voices for Virginia's Children