

FY2023 Transitioning Youth in Care Report

This report is being submitted by the Department of Children and Family Services (the Department) pursuant to Public Act 101-0167 and the Children and Family Services Act, 20 ILCS 505/43.

Section 43, Intergovernmental agreement; transitioning youth in care, which requires the Department, the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS), the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), the Department of Corrections (DOC), the Illinois Urban Development Authority, and the Department of Public Health (DPH) enter into an interagency agreement for the purposes of providing preventative services to youth in care and young adults who are aging out or have recently aged out of the custody or guardianship of the Department. The interagency agreement shall require the agencies listed above to the following:

1. Establish an interagency liaison to review cases of youth in care and young adults who are at risk of experiencing homelessness, incarceration, unemployment and other similar outcomes; and
2. Connect such youth in care and young adults to the appropriate supportive services and treatment programs to stabilize them during their transition out of State Care.

Reporting Mandate No. 1

The statute requires that the Department and each agency listed above submit a report to the General Assembly, on or before January 1 each year on the following:

- a. The number of youth in care who were intercepted during the reporting period and the supportive services and treatment programs they were connected with to prevent homelessness, incarceration, or other negative outcomes.
- b. The duration of the services the youth in care received in order to stabilize them during their transition out of State care.

Reporting Mandate No. 2

The statute also requires the Department submit a report to the General Assembly, on or before January 1 each year on the following:

- 1) The number of youth in care who are aging out or have aged out of State care during the reporting period.
- 2) The length and type of services that were offered to the youth in care who are aging out or have aged out of State care during the reporting period and the status of those youth in care.

INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT

The Department fully executed an Interagency Agreement (Agreement) with DHS, HFS, ISBE, DJJ, DOC and DPH pursuant to the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, 5 ILCS 220/1 et seq., in connection with Illinois Public Act 101-0167 on March 16, 2020 to provide preventative services to youth in care and young adults who are aging out of or have recently aged out of the custody and guardianship of the State's care.

The Agreement has since expired and must be renewed, however; the aforementioned parties agreed to the following:

- 1) Form an Interagency Team, each agency designating a liaison to serve, for the purposes of reviewing cases of youth in care and young adults who are at risk of homelessness, incarceration, or other similar outcomes and connect such youth in care and young adults to the appropriate supportive services and treatment programs to stabilize them during their transition out of the State's care.
- 2) The Interagency Team shall meet on a quarterly basis to discuss housing, educational and employment supports to assist youth in the planning of transitioning out of the State's care.
- 3) The Department shall identify youth in care who attended their first Countdown to 21 meeting (C21) at age 19 and would request that each youth sign a consent for release of information to the Interagency Team.
- 4) The Department shall provide the list of names and the outcomes of the C21 meetings, for all youth who have consented, with the Interagency Team.
- 5) The parties of the Agreement shall work together to submit an annual report to the General Assembly as required.

The Department has designated appropriate staff to serve as liaisons on the Interagency Team for purposes of identifying aging out youth at risk for experiencing homelessness, incarceration, unemployment as well as those in need of educational or other supportive services that will help to stabilize them during the transition out of the State’s care.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other administrative issues the Interagency Team has not yet convened although the work of improving provisions of preventative services was addressed in a number of internal and external initiatives and projects including the Youth Homelessness Prevention Subcommittee pursuant to 15 ILCS 60/10.

The Department assigned a point person who shall connect with DHS, HFS, ISBE, DJJ, DOC and DPH to update and renew the required Agreement for the continued collaboration and provision of services.

AGING OUT TOTAL FOR FY23

For purposes of this report, “aging out” is defined as youth who are 18 years or older and those 18+ who have exited the care of the State to any discharge at the end of the fiscal year.

Reporting Period	Number of Youth
FY23	2166

When youth are in the custody or court appointed guardianship of the Department services are available up until the end date as determined by the Juvenile Court; however, the Department has multiple services that are afforded to Alumni Youth that carry over and beyond including, but not limited to, services available through Family Advocacy Centers and Child Welfare Referrals for their lifetime.

TYPES OF SUPPORTIVE SERVICE REFERRALS

- **Educational Support** – Includes but is not limited to resources for completion of high school, GED prep and testing, and post-secondary planning and enrollment. This type of referral also includes access to Post-Secondary Education Services that provide resources, mentoring and financial assistance to current and former youth in care seeking various post-secondary options. The Department’s post-secondary programs (available post-care) are as follows:
 - **Tuition and Fee Waiver Program** – Tuition and mandatory fee waivers available to Illinois public universities or in-district community colleges. Benefits available for up to 5 consecutive years.

- **Education Training Voucher (ETV) Program** – Assists youth with cost of attendance, post-secondary educational related expenses not covered by financial aid grants or the Tuition and Fee Waiver Program. Includes payment of up to \$5,000 annually of educational related expenses such as tuition, fees, books, supplies, uniforms, equipment and/or transportation not covered by other grants and scholarships. Youth remain eligible until they attain age 26 but may not participate in the ETV program for more than 5 years (whether or not consecutive).
- **Scholarship Program** – Provides scholarships each year. Scholarship recipients receive monthly board payments, Medicaid card for Illinois students, tuition and a mandatory fee waiver to an Illinois public university or in-district community college and reimbursement for the cost of books not covered by financial aid. Benefits available for youth for up to five consecutive years. **In FY23, there were 259 scholarships awarded to youth. This is the largest number of scholarships the Department has ever awarded in its history.*
- **Financial Literacy Support** – Recommended enrollment in the Department’s Financial Literacy curriculum “*Get Real: Financial Decisions in the Real World*”.
- **Family Advocacy Centers | DCFS Alumni Drop-In Centers** – Alumni are defined as an adult being under the age of 30 at the time of connecting with a Family Advocacy Program and having spent at least 1 day in foster care in the Illinois system. Family Advocacy Centers are contracted to provide financial and other types of assistance including community linkages that Alumni are expected to need. Alumni are eligible to receive any services offered at the Family Advocacy Center nearest their home locations.
 - Contracted services include the following:
 - Bus or gas cards to support employment and continued assistance at Family Advocacy Centers.
 - Assistance with obtaining Birth Certificates, Medical Records, Driver’s License or State IDs (each Family Advocacy Center reserve funds to cover the costs of these expenses).
 - Financial assistance to purchase items which support education and employment.
 - Financial assistance to cover other costs not listed here.

- Community linkages include the following:
 - Local food pantry programs
 - Local clinics that provide free or low-cost checkups
 - Substance abuse treatment programs
 - Mental/Behavioral health supports
 - STI/STD testing services
 - Other state agency providers for assistance services
 - Legal Aid groups for alumni who are undocumented residents
 - Youth Housing Assistance Coordinators
 - Homeless youth prevention planning grants
 - Support through individual case management/future planning

- **Housing Support** – Includes referrals for the DCFS Housing Advocacy Programs and any services to reduce barriers to achieving housing stability.

- **UCAN’s Teen Parenting Service Network (TPSN)** – provides oversight and service coordination to pregnant and parenting youth in care and their children statewide by linking youth and their child/children to an array of services including case management teams, education and employment support, parenting and clinical support, comprehensive discharge planning, advocacy, health care, early learning, home visiting, day care coordination for their children and other specialty services. Also provides risk reduction training across the state that focuses on safe sleep, how to select a good childcare provider, how to identify if a child has been mistreated and infant brain development. Includes referrals for expectant and/or parenting youth in care in need of parenting support which include infant equipment, childcare assistance, home visiting and counseling.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES REFERRAL SUMMARY FOR FY23

The chart below lists the types of supportive service referrals recommended by Countdown to 21 facilitators to address youth determined concerns identified during transitional planning which is the beginning preparation process and includes staffing from age 17.

Type of Support	Number of Youth Referrals
Educational	87
Financial Literacy	569

Family Advocacy Center Alumni Drop-in Center	55
Housing	162
Teen Parenting Support Network	23

TYPES OF SERVICES PROVIDED TO AGING OUT YOUTH

- Youth Cash Assistance Program** – Assists youth who are aging out or have aged out of the State care purchase items needed to stabilize their housing situation. Youth are eligible for services up until they attain the age of 21. Youth referred to a federal housing subsidy program can be served up until they attain the age of 23. Services are provided by contracted private agencies. **In FY23, the amount of assistance provided and the number of youth served decreased from FY22 and FY21 due to the discontinuation of the federal pandemic funding. However, the Department was able to provide \$294,973 in cash assistance, increasing the amount of cash assistance provided by nearly 50% compared to the amount provided in FY20.*
- Youth Housing Advocacy Program** – Provides a housing advocate to assist youth who are aging out or have aged out of the State’s care locate, obtain and maintain adequate housing. Youth are eligible for services up until they attain the age of 21. Youth referred to a federal housing subsidy program can be served up until they attain the age of 23. Services are provided by contracted private agencies.
- Family Unification Program (FUP)/Fostering Youth Independence (FYI) Initiative** – Provides housing choice vouchers to youth who have not yet turned 25 and are within 90 days of aging out of or have aged out of the State’s care. The local housing authorities administer the program. The Department partners with the local housing authority and the local homeless continuum of care to administer the program. All referrals to the program must be made by the Department. The Department partners with 12 housing authorities to administer FUP (Chicago, Cook County, DuPage, Joliet, Lake County, Madison, Rock Island, Rockford, Springfield, Will County, Williamson County, Winnebago County). The Department partners with three housing authorities to administer FYI (Champaign, Chicago and Peoria).

FY23 SUMMARY OF SERVICES PROVIDED TO AGING OUT YOUTH

Type of Service	Number of Youth Served
Youth Cash Assistance Program	208
Youth Housing Advocacy Program	341
Family Unification Program	21
Fostering Youth Independence Initiative	156