



FOSTER PROGRESS





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College Road Trips



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*College Mentoring
& Scholarships*



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*Workshops
& Advocacy*

Illinois DCFS Overview

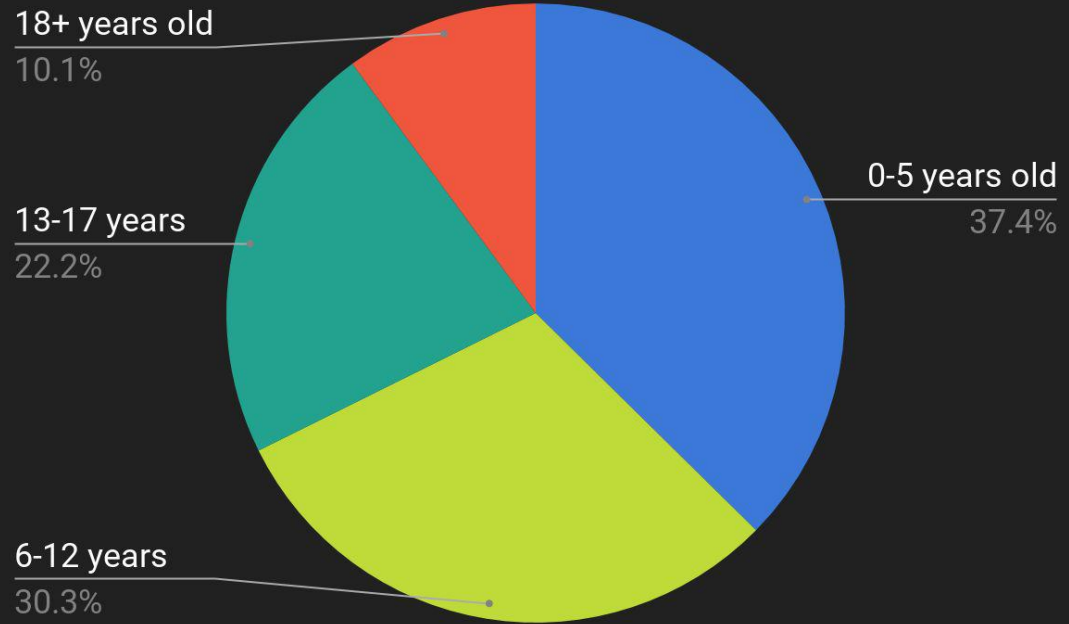
Who is the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)?

Mission Statement

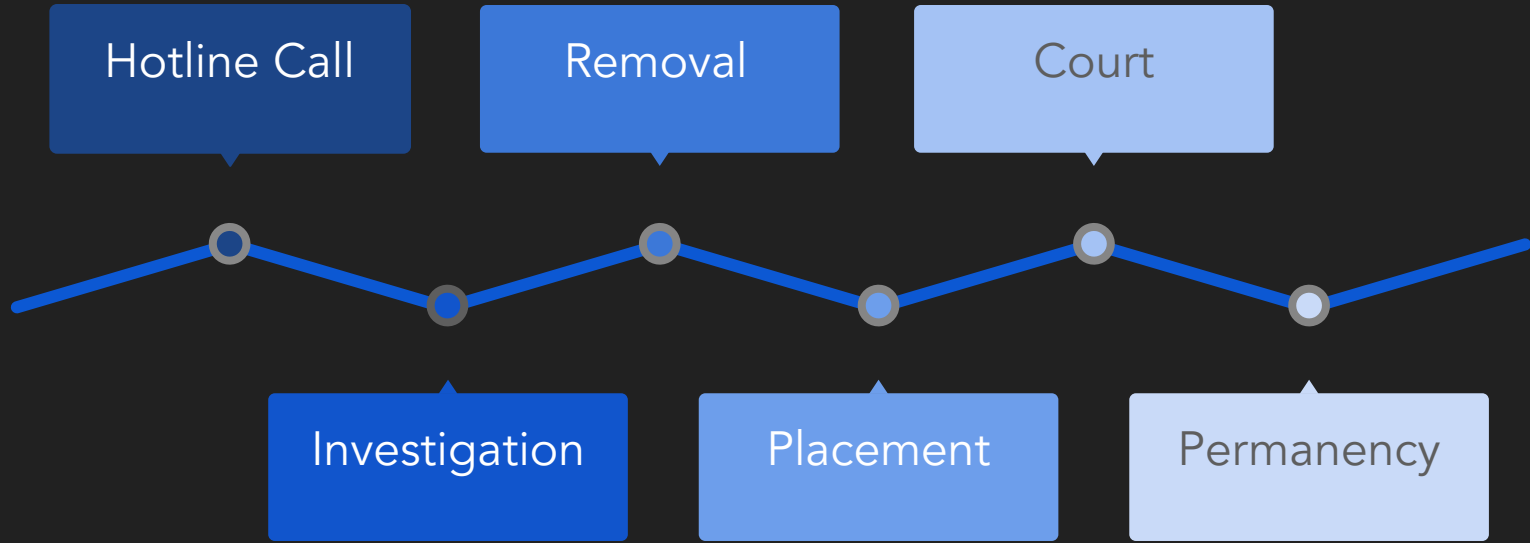
- Protect children who are reported to be **abused or neglected** and to increase their families' capacity to safely care for them
- Provide for the well-being of children in our care
- Provide appropriate, **permanent families** as quickly as possible for those children who cannot safely return home
- Support early intervention and child abuse prevention activities
- Work in partnerships with communities to fulfill this mission

There are approximately 17,000 children in foster care in Illinois.

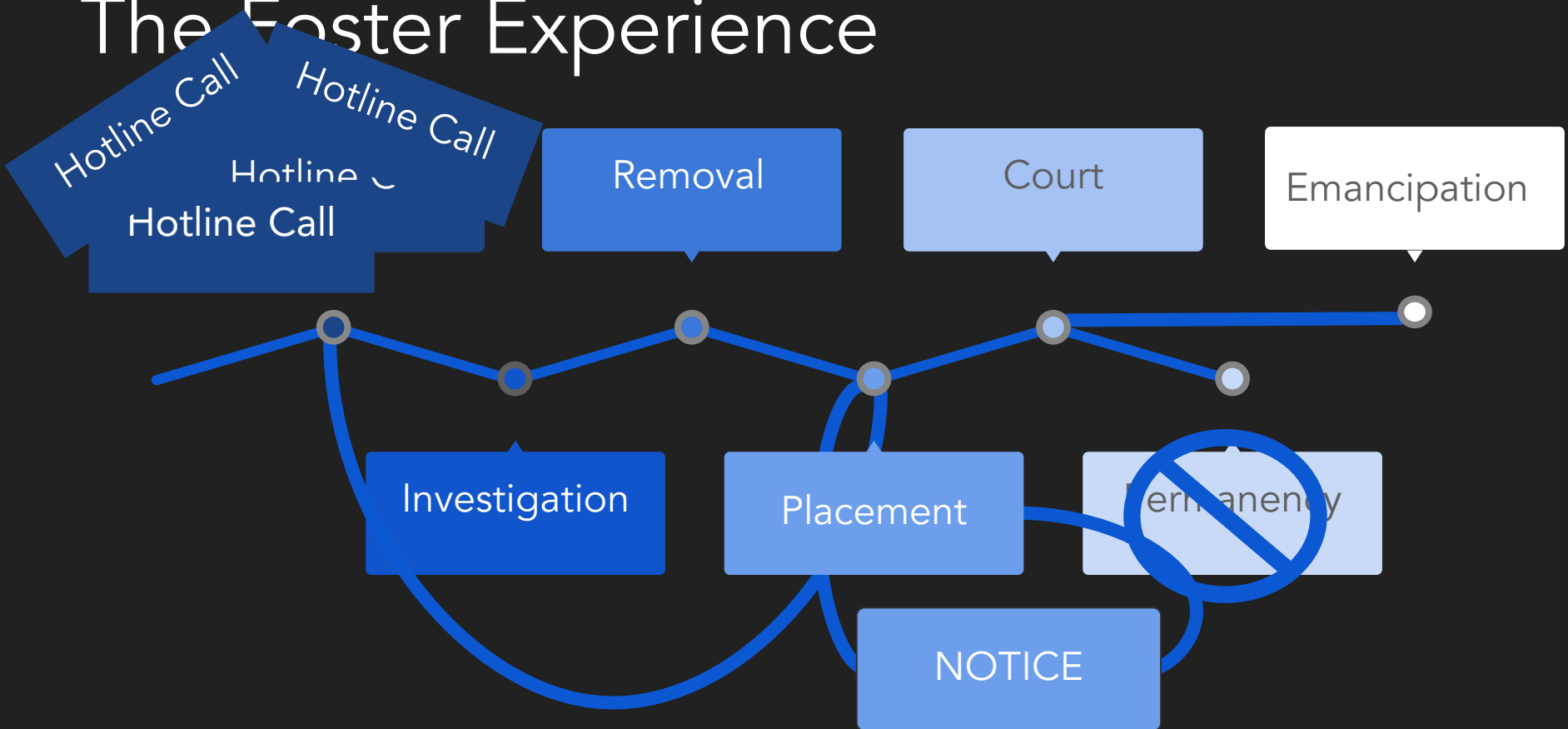
32.3% of them, or 5,491 youth, are teens and young adults.



The Foster Experience



The Foster Experience



Aging Out



28,000 youth "age-out" of foster care each year in the US between the ages of 18-21.

In 2011, Illinois had the **third highest rate** in the country of youth aging out.

In 2011, around **50%** of youth in Illinois exited foster care via emancipation.

Outcomes for youth aging out

Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning
of Former Foster Care Youth at age 26, 2011

31%

experience
homelessness

50%

had been
unemployed

57%

had been
incarcerated

Outcomes for youth aging out

76.5% of young adults who age out of foster care use public assistance

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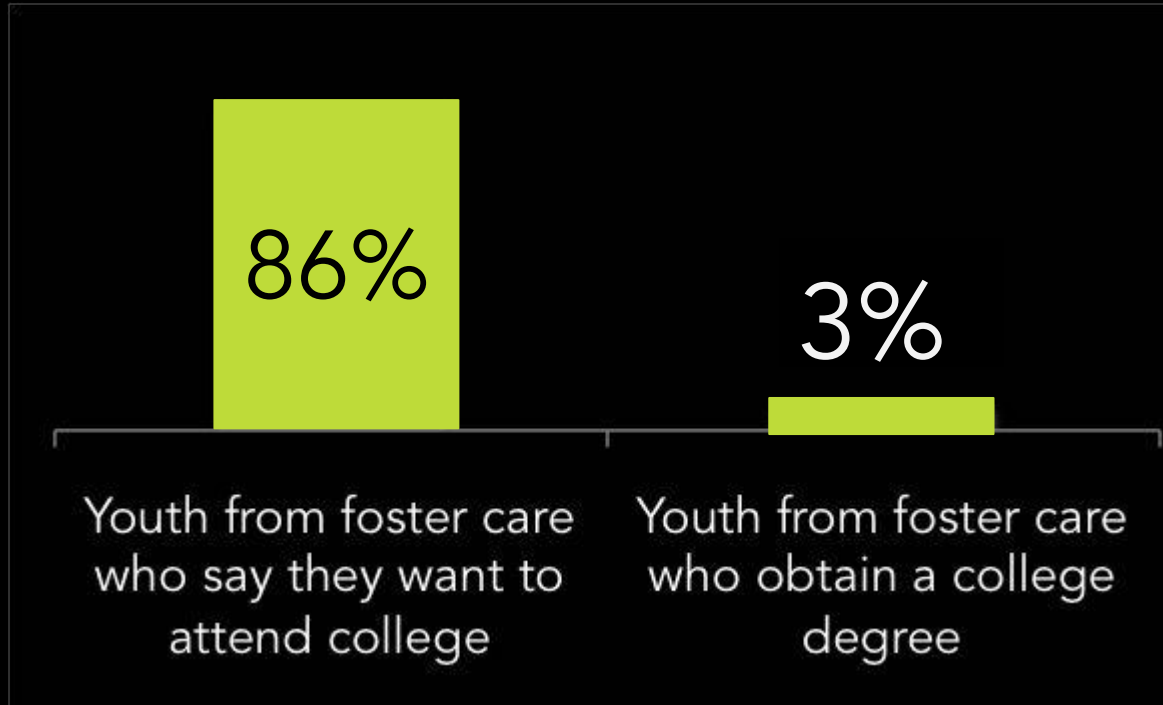
79% of young women who age out of foster care become pregnant at an early age

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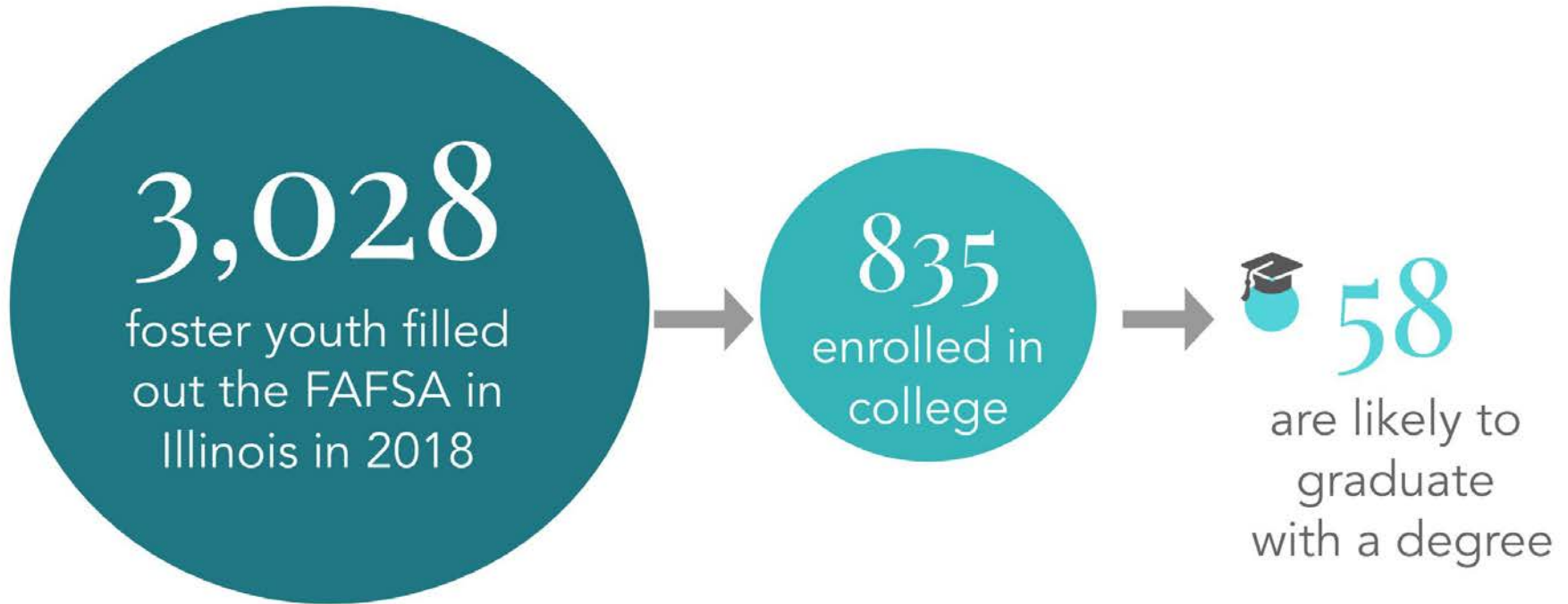
17-18 year olds in foster care have typically had 5+ school changes

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Degree Attainment



Degree Attainment



Hurdles Our Students Face

burdensome
documen-
tation

lack of
caring
adults and
family ties

biases

housing
insecurity

educational
deficits

early
parenthood

financial
instability

medical
issues

mental/
emotional
health

trauma

Barrier: Finances

- Inadequate Financial Aid
- Insufficient or incorrect information about accessing financial aid
- No financial safety net
- No supportive adult
- Small fees are insurmountable hurdles
- Student loans may be inadvisable
- "Youth in College" stipend is insufficient

Solution: Financial Aid

- Generous Financial Aid packages, not including loans
- Easy access to emergency funds
- Correct, thorough, easily digestible information at students' fingertips
- Tuition and Fee Waivers
- Room and Board Waivers



DCFS Tuition and Fee Waiver

- Signed into law and in effect as of January 1, 2019
- 219 students have utilized so far
- Public colleges in IL required to waive tuition and mandatory fees after other financial aid is applied for any youth who have experienced foster care, even if they were adopted, up to age 26
- Due to Pell, MAP, and other aid, the amount being waived is minimal
- Most public hear “free tuition” and think “College is free!”
- Confusion about how to access this waiver
 - [DCFS Form](#)

A photograph of two people holding hands, serving as a background for the text. The person on the left is wearing a grey jacket over a brown patterned sweater. The person on the right is wearing a blue and white striped shirt. The text is overlaid on the image in white.

Barrier: Lack of Support

- No/limited permanent family support
- No financial or practical support
- No one to turn to for emotional support or advice
- No ride to campus on move in day
- Protected, confidential status

Solution: Foster Connections

- Meet and Greet: opportunity to self-disclose status to others
- Identify a DCFS Liaison on campus
- Establish a coaching model

Barrier: Housing Insecurity

Before moving into college dorms, youth are living in one of three places:

- With foster parents
- ILO - Independent Living Options
- TLP - Transitional Living Program

When they move to on-campus housing, they join a program called "Youth In College" which is a different "placement."

Solution: Housing Stability

- Keep dorms open during breaks
- Create a "home for the holidays" program like you may have for international students

Barrier: Burdensome Documentation

- Birth certificate
- State ID
- Proof of Wardship/Status as Foster Youth
- Required questions about parent/guardian
- Independent Status on the FAFSA
- Tax Transcript/Verification of Non-Filing

Youth often don't have access to these documents or understand what they are and how to find them.

Solution: Minimize Requirements

- When possible, have staff verify students' status in foster care.
- Only require what is federally mandated
- Train staff to use plain language, not technical terms, and to give clear instructions on where to find documents
- Require verification only one time

Promising Practices: On-Campus Support Programs

Key Program Components

Counseling

Housing

Academic Support

Coaching/Mentoring

Connecting with other FCA

Relationships with Key on-Campus
Units



**JANE ADDAMS
COLLEGE
OF SOCIAL WORK**

Scholarships

Tutoring

Host Families

Summer Bridge Program

Peer Mentoring

Strategic Academic Advising

Connection to DCFS Resources

Internships and Career Exploration

Proactive health and wellness care

Campus-wide Professional Development



Further Reading

Campus Coaches Make Crucial Difference to Foster Youth in College, [Youth Today](#)

College Campus Support Programs Are Strong Model of Services Helping Foster Youth, [Youth Today](#)

Getting by and getting ahead: Social capital and transition to college among homeless and foster youth, [Children and Youth Services Review](#)

Increasing Competency, Self-Confidence, and Connectedness Among Foster Care Alumni Entering a 4-Year University: Findings from an Early-Start Program, [Journal of Social Service Research](#)

Experiences and outcomes of foster care alumni in postsecondary education: A review of the literature, [Children and Youth Services Review](#)

Developing an on-campus recruitment and retention program for foster care alumni, [Children and Youth Services Review](#)

Thank you!

www.foster-progress.org

Kate Danielson

773-793-0951

kate@foster-progress.org