



Excerpt from

COST AVOIDANCE: The Business Case for Investing In Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

By Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, May 2013

The cost of bad outcomes

Some young people leave foster care, demonstrate extraordinary resiliency and successfully navigate the path from youth to adulthood. Often they are assisted by family and/or other caring adults who provide consistent support. The data indicate, however, that many young people who transition from foster care without the needed network of support experience very poor outcomes at a much higher rate than their peers in the general population:

- More than **one in five** will become homeless after age 18⁶
- Only **58 percent** will graduate high school by age 19 (compared to 87 percent of all 19 year olds)⁷
- **71 percent** of young women are pregnant by 21, facing higher rates of unemployment, criminal conviction, public assistance, and involvement in the child welfare system⁸
- At the age of 24, **only half** are employed⁹
- Fewer than **3 percent** will earn a college degree by age 25 (compared to 28 percent of all 25 year olds)¹⁰
- **One in four** will be involved in the justice system within two years of leaving the foster care system¹¹

⁶ Casey Family Programs. (1998). *Northwest foster care alumni study*. Seattle, WA.

⁷ Courtney, M.E., and Dworsky, A. (2005). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 19*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children.

⁸ Pecora, P.J., Kessler, R.C., Williams, J., O'Brien, K., Downs, A.C., English, D., White, J., Hiripi, E., White, C.R., Wiggins, T., and Holmes, K. (2005). *Improving family foster care: Findings from the Northwest foster care alumni study*. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs.

⁹ Pecora, P.J., et al.

¹⁰ Pecora, P.J., et al.

¹¹ Courtney, M.E., et al. (2005).