



Expand Transition Services for Foster Youth

Oregon has an opportunity to ensure all youth who transition out of foster care have the skills they need to become successful, self-sufficient adults. While learning to live independently is a challenge for any young person, youth experiencing foster care often lack the long-term relationships and resources needed to successfully complete high school, rent their first apartment, find employment, budget for expenses, apply to college, and establish supportive relationships with adults and other youth in care.

For young people aging out of foster care without permanency, Oregon's Independent Living Program (ILP) is a key resource for gaining these skills. Youth have shared that their ILP worker is the one person in their lives with the time to teach them the complicated steps of budgeting, applying for a job, and looking for their first apartment. Youth also feel a strong connection with their peers in this program, who share the unique experience of aging out of foster care.

Developed and proposed by current and former foster youth, this bill to expand ILP is essential to support youth who are transitioning out of the foster care system without a family. Children in foster care are **our** children — it's our responsibility to help them learn the skills needed to succeed as adults.

- 2,205 youth in care — 21% of Oregon's foster care population — is 14 years of age or older.
- In FY 2017, 1,357 youth received at least one type of ILP service.
- In 2016, over 71% of young people 16 or older who left foster care in Oregon "aged out" without being reunited or connected to a family, compared to 51% of foster youth nationwide.
- Youth of color in Oregon are more likely to age out of care without permanency. 79% of black youth, 71% of Native youth, and 86% of youth of more than one race age out, compared to 68% of white youth.

"The most challenging thing about transitioning out of care is feeling like you've lost all your resources and supports. Through ILP, I was able to learn how to be accountable for myself as well as for my future."
— CJ Jones

Our bill:

- Invests an additional \$8.5M to ensure foster youth learn the skills for a successful transition.
- Expands the age for eligibility for ILP from 16-21 to 14-23, allowing more youth to be served.
 - Requires case plans to include meetings explaining available transition services.
- Includes a report for the Legislature to track outreach to eligible youth and use of ILP services.

By expanding ILP services, we can prepare all foster youth for a successful transition into adulthood.

Oregon Foster Youth Connection (OFYC) is a statewide, youth led advocacy group of current and former foster youth between the ages of 14 and 24. Members shape every aspect of what OFYC is, how it is structured, which policies to focus on and what activities to participate in. With support from Children First for Oregon staff, OFYC trains and empowers youth to share their voices and to be heard in key decisions affecting children and youth in foster care.