

# HEY Statistics: Education

## Statistics about Former Foster Youth

### California has Options to Help Former Foster Youth Obtain Degrees

- Tuition at California's community colleges costs only \$20 per unit, giving students an extremely affordable educational option.<sup>9</sup>
- The College Pathways Program, formerly known as Guardian Scholars, is currently in place at 20 colleges, universities, and technical schools in Orange County, the San Francisco Bay Area, and the state of Washington. This program is designed to support former foster youth both personally and academically.<sup>10</sup>
- Foster youth enrolled in college are eligible to apply for the Chafee Grant which provides funding of up to \$5,000 per student per year. Funds are only available to youth up to age 22.<sup>11</sup>

### Encourage California to Offer More Options

- In 2008, the Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 passed. This legislation is the most significant federal child welfare legislation enacted in at least a decade. This bill, when fully phased in, which may take up to 10 years, will have a significant impact on outcomes for former foster youth.<sup>12</sup> California may choose to opt into many provisions, including allowing youth to remain in care until age 21. Data from the Midwest Study suggest that allowing foster youth to remain in care past age 18 increases their likelihood of attending college.<sup>13</sup>

### Introduction

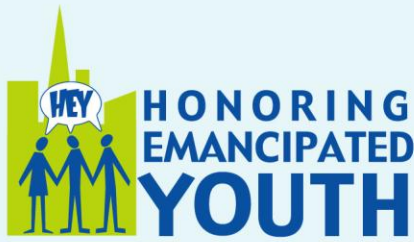
Education is important to former foster youth. However, while a majority of foster youth want to attend college, only a tiny minority earn any type of degree or certificate after high school. The experience of being in foster care, multiple disruptions in placements and relationships and lack of opportunities as a child continue to affect youth after they emancipate. Once emancipated, youth experience hardships that affect their ability to succeed in school, such as lack of affordable housing, difficulty maintaining permanent supportive relationships and obtaining jobs in a rough economy. While many obstacles exist, California currently has several programs that support youth with their education, and advocates are working diligently towards providing even more practical opportunities.

### Former Foster Youth Want Higher Education but Only a Minority Graduate

- 70% of foster youth say they want to pursue some form of postsecondary education or training. Yet, only 10% actually enroll in college, compared to total U.S. college enrollment rates of 65%.<sup>1</sup>
- Only 4% percent of former foster youth obtain any type of degree or certificate, and only about 2% earn a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>2</sup>

### Former Foster Youth Face Multiple Barriers

- Compared to their peers, foster youth are more likely to be poor before they enter the foster care system, while they are in foster care, and after they leave foster care.<sup>3</sup>
- Nationally, 80% of foster youths did not earn enough to be fully self-supporting four years after leaving care.<sup>4</sup> 45% of California's emancipated youth are unemployed, 30% are on welfare.<sup>5</sup>
- 1/3 of former foster youth have incomes at, or below, \$6,000 per year, which is substantially below the federal poverty level of \$10,400 for a single individual.<sup>6</sup> This is far below the estimated annual income of \$25,693 that a single adult would need to be self sufficient in San Francisco.<sup>7</sup>
- Recent estimates suggest that young adults in the general population receive material assistance totaling approximately \$38,000 between the ages of 18 and 34 from their parents.<sup>8</sup> Foster youth are legally independent with no adults who are obligated to provide additional funds.



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## What are HEY Statistics?

- HEY Statistics offer relevant information for any person interested in foster care, emancipation and transitional age youth in the Bay Area.
- HEY Statistics shows the most current statistics regarding foster youth in the Bay Area in many subject areas. This issue focuses on the education plans and education supports for former foster youth.

## What is HEY?

Honoring Emancipated Youth (HEY), a community project of United Way of the Bay Area, is dedicated to strengthening and connecting San Francisco's systems of support so that Bay Area youth emancipating, or "aging out" of the foster care system can enjoy a healthy transition to adulthood.

HEY identifies and raises awareness around challenges affecting local emancipating or emancipated foster youth by bringing together a diversity of voices and experiences, including those of former foster youth, service providers, and other supporters, in finding solutions.

### HEY's core work includes:

1. **Focused research on local practices** that affect transition aged current and former foster youth
2. **Skill building and information sharing opportunities** for youth and direct service providers through trainings and convenings
3. **An information hub** of issues and challenges affecting local transition aged current and former foster care youth

As a result, supporters of foster youth are linked and informed about the challenges faced by former foster youth and gain access to hard data and expert review of policies and practices so that they can help improve the lives of former foster youth.

## Works Cited

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- <sup>3</sup> Institute for Higher Education Policy, "Higher Education Opportunities for Former Foster Youth: A Primer for Policymakers," December 2005.
- <sup>4</sup> Newswire (2006). *National Convening on Youth Permanence Addresses Needs of Older Children and Youth in Foster Care*; Sept 14-15. Stats from Casey Foundation.
- <sup>5</sup> Administrative Office of the Courts. (2007). *Beyond the Bench XVIII: Access and Fairness*. Sacramento: Administrative Office of the Courts, Center for Families, Children & the Courts, Judicial Council of California.
- <sup>6</sup> Pecora, Peter. (2005). *Improving Family Foster Care, Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study*. Seattle: The Northwest Foster Care Alumni Studies, Casey Family Programs.
- <sup>7</sup> Insight Center for Community Economic Justice. (2008).
- <sup>8</sup> Settersten, R. Jr., Et Al. (Eds.). (2004). *On the frontier of adulthood: Theory, research, and public policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- <sup>9</sup> Center for Student Success Research & Planning Group for California Community Colleges, "Serving Former Foster Youth in California Community Colleges Successes, Challenges, and Recommendations," October 2008.
- <sup>10</sup> Center for Student Success Research & Planning Group for California Community Colleges, "Serving Former Foster Youth in California Community Colleges Successes, Challenges, and Recommendations," October 2008.
- <sup>11</sup> Center for Student Success Research & Planning Group for California Community Colleges, "Serving Former Foster Youth in California Community Colleges Successes, Challenges, and Recommendations," October 2008.
- <sup>12</sup> Child Welfare League of America, "Hope for America's Children, Youth, and Families: Briefing and Recommendations to President-Elect Barack Obama", November 2008.
- <sup>13</sup> Honoring Emancipated Youth, "Fostering Connections to Success Act (HR 6307), HEY's position on this important federal legislation: A Summary for youth and those who work with them" September 2008. [www.heysf.org](http://www.heysf.org)