

University of Washington

Geographical Inequity Among Youth Aging out of Foster Care

A Quantitative Examination of Cohort 3 of the NYTD

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Chapter 1: Background

Overview of Foster care

Each year, it is estimated that more than 250,000 children enter the United States foster care system (NFYI, 2024). The Annie E. Casey Foundation notes that children enter the system because their families are in crisis. Often, children have experienced unsafe conditions, abuse, neglect, or have parents who are unable to care for them. The foster care system is intended to provide a safe, temporary living arrangement and support services for children who have been removed from their families (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2024).

Policy History of Child Welfare in the United States

The history of child welfare policy can be observed as going through several different stages of thought and priorities. As scientific and societal perspectives have shifted, child welfare policy has adapted to align with these new views. Overall, this has meant a shift from a punitive child welfare system to one that is restorative and aims for family preservation.

1970 to 1989: Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Adoption

The first significant child welfare legislation was the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974, otherwise known as CAPTA. This act provided financial assistance and assistance to States to create and develop programs for the prevention, identification and treatment of child abuse and neglect (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). In addition, the act authorized limited government research surrounding child abuse prevention and treatment and established the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect within the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). CAPTA was later reformed

in 1978 to promote the healthy development of children who would benefit from adoption. This was done through facilitation of placements into adoptive homes. The reform also expanded on the Center on Child Abuse and Neglect and required it to develop a plan for facilitation the coordination of activities among agencies and to fund the establishment of centers for the prevention, identification and treatment of child sexual abuse (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). The CAPTA Reform Act of 1978 also established the Adoption Opportunities program which sought to facilitate adoptive placements for children with special needs, promote quality standards for adoptive placements and provide a national adoption information exchange system. In 1978, the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) was passed and was a unique piece of legislation for this era of policy. While all other child welfare laws during this time discussed abuse and adoption, this policy was created to prevent the breakup of Indigenous families through standards for removal and placement of Indigenous children (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). In 1980, policy returned to an adoption focus with the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act. This policy established a program of adoption assistance, strengthened foster care for needy and dependent children, and improved programs for child welfare, social services, and aid to families with dependent children (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019).

Notably, the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act defined a child with special needs as one who cannot be returned to the parent's home, has a special condition such that the child cannot be placed without assistance, and has not been able to be placed without assistance. Adoption assistance payments established by this legislation were required to consider the circumstances of the family and the child, particularly if the family chose to adopt a child with special needs (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act also stated that states must make a "reasonable effort" to prevent the removal of

children from the home and return those removed as quickly as possible, while also requiring states to establish reunification and preventative programs. After this legislation, the remainder of this decade refocused on amending CAPTA and expanding on provisions surrounding child abuse (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). The Child Abuse Amendments of 1984 were passed to require states to develop procedures to respond to reports of neglect and to establish a federal adoption and foster care data-gathering and analysis system (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). In 1988, the Child Abuse Prevention, Adoption and Family Services Act was also passed to amend CAPTA. This legislation established the inter-agency task force on child abuse and neglect, broadened the scope of research for the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, and established a national data-collection system to include data on false or unfounded cases of neglect, as well as track the number of deaths due to abuse or neglect (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). The Act also expanded the Adoption Opportunities Program that was created in 1978 to increase the number of minority children placed in adoptive families and provide post legal adoption services to families who adopted children with special needs (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019).

1990 to 1999: CAPTA Reform, Cultural Competency, Reunification

CAPTA reform continued into the 1990s with the Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, Adoption and Family Services Act of 1992. This reform revised provisions for research to include cultural distinctions, culturally sensitive procedures, and the relationship to child abuse and neglect to cultural diversity (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). Following this, the Family Preservation and Support Services Program Act of 1993 encouraged states to use funding to create family-focused services for at-risk children and families, required states to engage in

developing more responsive family support and preservation strategies and encouraged states to use funds to integrate preventive services into treatment-oriented child welfare (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). This act also broadened the legal definition of “family” to include people needing services whether they were biological, adoptive, foster, extended or self-defined family. Lastly, the Family Preservation and Support Services Program Act of 1993 defined the two categories of services states must provide – preservation services and support services (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). Preservation services were defined to include activities designed to assist families in crisis, typically when a child is at risk of being removed from the home due to abuse or neglect. Support services were defined as preventive activities intended to improve the nurturing of children and stability of families (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). The next legislation in this era was the Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994 and the Interethnic Provisions of 1996. These policies were aimed at preventing discrimination in making foster or adoptive placements and illegalizing discrimination against prospective foster parents (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). In the last few years of this period, CAPTA was reformed again through Amendments in 1996. These amendments reauthorized CAPTA through 2001, abolished the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, created the Office on Child Abuse and Neglect with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and continued the Adoption Opportunities Act (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). These amendments also redefined child abuse to at a minimum include death, serious physical or emotional injury, sexual abuse, or imminent risk of harm. In addition to these amendments, the 1993 Family Preservation and Support Services Program Act of 1993 was reauthorized through the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, renaming it the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program. This reauthorization extended state service categories to include time-limited

reunification services, defined as services and activities that are provided to a child who is removed from the child's home and placed in out of home care and to the parents or primary caregiver of that child, in order to facilitate the reunification of the child safely and appropriately within a timely fashion, but only within a 15 month period (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). The Act has clarified the previous requirement of "reasonable efforts" by emphasizing children's health and safety, requiring states to specify the circumstances when efforts to prevent foster placement or reunify are not required and required shorter time limits for making decisions about permanent placements (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). The last legislation of this era has remained a significant policy in modern-day. The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 amended Title IV-E of the Social Security Act to provide states with more funding and greater flexibility in programs to help children transition from foster care to self-sufficiency. This was the beginning of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). This flexibility in funding allowed states to identify children who are likely to remain in foster care until age 18 and help them transition to self-sufficiency through assistance obtaining a high school diploma, career exploration, vocational training, job placement and retention, training in daily living skills, budgeting, substance use prevention and preventive health activities (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). The Chafee program aimed to provide personal and emotional support to children aging out of foster care and provide financial, housing, counseling, employment, education and other supports to former foster youth between the ages of 18 to 21 (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). Other important provisions of this legislation focused on national data collection regarding foster care outcomes, the ability to extend Medicaid coverage to 18 to 21 year olds emancipated from care, and increased funding for adoption incentive payments.

2000 to 2005: Child Abuse Prevention and Enforcement, Chafee Program, Adoption

From 2000 to 2005, legislation took on the same tone as earlier eras in policy. The Child Abuse Prevention and Enforcement Act of 2000 was passed to reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect by allowing states to utilize funds to improve their criminal justice systems (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). The era continued with Amendments to the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program in 2001. These amendments provided new authority to support programs for mentoring children of incarcerated parents and amend the Foster Care Independent Living Program to provide Education and Training Vouchers for youth aging out of foster care (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). In 2003, CAPTA was reformed again through the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003. This reform reauthorized CAPTA through 2008, authorized expanded research and required the Secretary of Health and Human Services to provide for the implementation of programs to increase the number of older foster youth placed in adoptive families (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). Policy continued to incentive adoptions during this period as well with the Adoption Promotion Act of 2003 to reauthorize adoption incentive payments.

2006 to 2010: Child Protection, Kinship Care

The Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006 continued a historical focus on child abuse in child welfare policy. The legislation was passed to protect children from sexual exploitation and violent crime, prevent child abuse and pornography, promote internet safety, and prevent sex offender access to children. Essentially, the policy created stricter requirements surrounding individuals involved in the care of foster children (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). It established a requirement for fingerprint-based checks of the national crime

information databases for prospective foster or adoptive parents and checks of State child abuse and neglect registries anywhere where a prospective foster or adoptive parent, or other adult residing in the home, have lived in the past 5 years. In In 2008, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act amended the Social Security Act to connect and support relative caregivers, improve outcomes for children in foster care, provide Tribes access to title IV-E funding, and improve adoption incentives (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). More specifically, the act create a new options for states and Tribes to provide assistance payments for kinship care, extended the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program to allow services to youth who leave foster care for kinship guardianship or adoption after age 16, expanded Education and Training Vouchers to youth who entered kinship or adoption after age 16, and allowed states to extend foster care to 21 (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019).

2011 to 2017: Sex Trafficking, Substance Abuse Supports

Leading up to the Family First Prevention Services Act, legislation focused on sex trafficking and protecting victims. However, a significant piece of legislation that prefaced FFPSA was the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). This act was intended to address various aspects of substance use disorders – particularly opioid use disorder – with provisions that affect multiple agencies and systems and creation of title V, to help states address the effects of substance use disorders on infants, children and families (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). Though the foster care system has been widely overburdened with children with the onset of the opioid epidemic, this is the first significant piece of legislation that discusses substance abuse and considers providing treatment to parents as a strategy of family preservation.

Family First Prevention Services Act

The Family First Prevention Services Act is a huge milestone in child welfare policy as, for the first time, federal funds are being redirected from foster homes and into parents in order to address the number of children in foster care, the opioid epidemic, mass incarceration, and increased homelessness (Garcia, 2019). This funding will help reduce the number of children in foster care and has shifted the focus of child welfare from the removal of children to the preservation of families (Garcia, 2019). The Act is a culmination of changes to many of the policies described. The act focuses on multiple issues, including prevention, limiting funding for congregate care, adoption and guardianship assistance, kinship care, foster home recruitment and retention, the Chafee Independence Program, and data collection.

Prevention

Prevention is mentioned in a variety of historical policies related to child welfare. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 has been amended repeatedly since its creation, but its perspectives on prevention have remained consistent. This policy and its amendments have continuously maintained a narrow focus on child abuse and neglect, ignoring the significant role factors such as mental health and substance abuse may have on family preservation. The Family First Prevention Services Act has shifted this narrative through its alterations to the use of Title IV-E funding. Title IV-E was established by the 1980 Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act and essentially created a pool of funds for foster care services that were separated from the funding of other dependent child supports. Title IV-E is now the largest source of federal funds for child welfare and provides uncapped reimbursement for a set percentage of costs expended by states on eligible children. Prior to the FFPSA, eligible children

were defined as children removed from families with very low income. The FFPSA changes this definition to include funding for foster care prevention services if the state determines the child is at risk of entering foster care or the child is pregnant or parenting youth in foster care. The Act also eliminates any income related eligibility (Stoltzfus, 2018). This shift was inspired by data in fiscal year 2016 that showed that about ten percent of children who exited foster care had been in the system for less than thirty days, and preventative services could have avoided them entering the system at all (Garcia, 2019). Though the Adoption Assistance Child Welfare Act required states to make a reasonable effort to prevent removal of children, promote reunification, and establish reunification and prevention programs, it did not establish any funding in which States could use to accomplish this. This continues with the Family Preservation and Support Services Program Act of 1993 which also encouraged the use of funding for family-focused services for at risk children and families but did not establish a funding source for these endeavors. The Family First Prevention Services Act changed this by allowing Title IV-E funding to reimburse programs for term-limited services for mental health, substance use prevention and treatment services, and in-home parent skills-based programs for candidates for foster care, regardless of whether the child is title IV-E eligible. This means that states are now more enabled to implement effective reunification and prevention services.

In addition, the Family First Prevention Services Act altered reunification services that were established by the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. This act established time-limited reunification services and defined them as services and activities that are provided to a child who is removed from their home and to the parents or primary caregiver of that child, but only within a 15-month period. The FFPSA removed the term “time-limited” from this definition

of family reunification services and expanded these services to continue 15 months after a child has been reunified with their family.

Limited funding for congregate care

Another major focus of the FFPSA was to limit funding for congregate care and disincentivizing these placements long-term. In the examination of policy history related to child welfare, no policies stood out as addressing congregate care specifically. However, with growing concerns around the number of children placed in these settings, the FFPSA established provisions surrounding these placements. The FFPSA restricted funding for group care and imposed robust requirements on group care settings that receive federal funding. Family First limited foster care payments to congregate care settings, stating that these maintenance payments will no longer be paid out at the start of the third week a child remains in this type of placement. A family foster home is defined as having six or fewer kids, with some exceptions made to keep siblings together. A child care institution includes any private child-serving institution and any public serving institution that holds 25 or fewer children. FFPSA exempts juvenile facilities from these regulations and requires that states do not enact policies that would result in an increase in juvenile incarceration.

As an alternative to congregate care, the FFPSA also established a new placement type known as the Qualified Residential Treatment Program. This type of placement must be licensed by either the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, or the Council on Accreditation (Kelly, 2018). These placements must also have a trauma-informed treatment model that includes clinical needs, have registered or licensed nursing staff and a nurse on-call at all times, be inclusive of family

members in treatment plans and programs, and plan for at least a six-month window of support after discharge (Kelly, 2018).

Adoption and Guardianship Assistance

The FFPSA also expanded on an extensive history of adoption and guardianship assistance. The act makes significant cuts on adoption assistance in order to fund the projected spending on foster care prevention services (Kelly, 2018). The CAPTA reform in 1978 established the Adoption Opportunities Program which assisted with the facilitation of placements of children with special needs into adoptive homes, promoted standards for adoptive placements, and established a national adoption information exchange system (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). This was further in 1988 when the Child Abuse Prevention, Adoption and Family Services Act expanded the Adoption Opportunity Program to increase the number of minority children placed into adoptive homes and provided post-legal adoption services to families who adopted children with special needs. The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 established a requirement for states to make adoption assistance payments. These payments under Title IV-E were linked with income tests, resulting in federal contributions being limited to children adopted from parents with significantly low socioeconomic status (Kelly, 2018). The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 set this income test to expire by 2019 through a process of de-linking this test initially for teens, and then working backwards by age to newborns. The FFPSA freezes this de-link at 2-year-olds and engages the Government Accountability Office in conducting a study to determine if states are using the money saved to serve adoptive families (Kelly, 2018). In addition, the Family First Prevention Services Act extends federal adoption incentive programs

that reward states for finalizing the adoptions of youth in foster care (Kelly, 2018) The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014 shifted this incentive program to include guardianships, emphasize the adoption of older youth, and used more recent data to determine incentive calculations.

Kinship Care

The Family First Prevention Services Act established provisions to support evidence-based kinship navigator programs. Previous law surrounding Kinship Navigators has been centered on Family Connection Grants. This grant program required that kinship navigator programs establish information and referral systems that link kinship caregivers to other caregiver support groups, public eligibility and enrollment information, and relevant training and legal services (Stoltzfus, 2018). These programs were also required to be planned and operated in consultation with kin caregivers, youth raised by kin, organizations representing kinship caregivers and promote public and private partnerships to increase knowledge about the needs of kinship families (Stoltzfus, 2018). The Family First Prevention Services Act expanded support for kinship navigator programs by permitting federal funding of them under title IV-E. The program must meet the requirements for kinship navigator programs established under the Family Connection Grant Program and are operated in accordance with promising, support or well-supported practices (Stoltzfus, 2018). These programs, under the FFPSA, must utilize trauma-informed approaches and meet evidence based criteria. Federal support under Title IV-E will be available regardless of whether the child is in foster care or meets other income eligibility criteria (Stoltzfus, 2018).

Foster Home Recruitment and Retention

Prior to the Family First Preservation Services Act, the Social Security act laid out definitions of “family preservation” and “family support” services that defined options pertaining to assisting birth families. The FFPSA adds “support and retention” of foster families as a new service and establishes funds for the recruitment and retention of foster parents (Kelly, 2018). This was in response to at least half of states losing foster home capacity or having a much more significant influx of youth in care.

Data Collection

The last major category of Family First Prevention Services Act provisions were surrounding data collection and the improvement of data collection on experiences and outcomes of youth who age out of care. The first authorization for government research in relation to child welfare was established by CAPTA in 1974 and focused on child abuse prevention and treatment. CAPTA established the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect within the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The Child Abuse Amendments of 1984 expanded on this data collection and established a federal adoption and foster care data-gathering and analysis system. The scope of research for the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect was broadened in 1988 by CAPTA reforms to include false or unfounded cases of abuse and neglect, as well as data around child deaths due to abuse or neglect. In 1996, the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect was abolished and replaced with the Office on Child Abuse and Neglect within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The 1999 Foster Care Independence Act established transitional services through the Chafee Independence Program and included the creation of a data collection system called the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). States were required to collect information on each youth who receives independent living

services paid for or provided by the State agency and to collect demographic and outcome information on certain youth in care whom the State will follow over time collect outcome information (NYTD, N.d). States also conduct outcome data by conducting surveys of youth in foster care on or around their 17th birthday. States track these youth as they age and conduct a new survey around their 19th and 21st birthdays (NYTD, N.d.). The Family First Prevention Services Act expanded data collection by taking a focus on reporting and access to data and information. New provisions were implemented that require agencies to share data with each other and the federal government, and accurately report on foster care placements and outcomes.

Defining Permanency

Permanency was established as one of three critical child welfare goals by the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. It involves ensuring youth have meaningful connections to their family or long-term caring adults (Salazar et al., 2018). Permanency is often discussed in a formal or legal context, and refers to outcomes such as adoption, long-term foster care and reunification (Lindner, 2022). In recent years, permanency for foster youth has become an increasingly significant priority of child welfare policymakers and practitioners.

For youth who may not be able to achieve legal permanency, relational permanency becomes critically important. Relational permanency can come in many forms and can involve a wide variety of individuals. This type of permanency can be established through relatives, non-kin supportive adults, service providers, peers and romantic partners (Salazar et al., 2018). Relational permanency has many positive impacts on outcomes for adolescent youth, and thus maintains an immensely important role for adolescent youth in care who do not have legal permanency options.

Adolescent Foster Youth and Aging out of Care

Legal permanency rates for older foster youth have declined in recent years. In 2021, only 44% of 14- to 21-year-olds in foster care exited foster into permanency (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2024). Leaving foster care without achieving permanence makes youth more likely to engage in risky behaviors and experience homelessness, joblessness, early parenthood and substance abuse (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2024). Youth who enter care after the age of 12 have a 2 in 5 chance of aging out of care, with an average of 13% of youth being discharged from care without a successful placement (NFYI, 2024).

Homelessness among Youth who Age out of Foster Care

After aging out of care, 20% of youth will become instantly homeless (NFYI, 2024). Individuals are classified as homeless if they have “no viable residence” (on the street or in shelters), no stable residence (couch surfing or temporary housing), or if they are not in the custody of the state (Chassman, et al., 2020). According to the National Youth in Transitions Database, 20% of youth in foster care report experiencing homelessness between the ages of 17 and 19, and 29% report experiencing homelessness between the ages of 19 and 21 (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2020). The Midwest Study found that about two-thirds of aged out foster youth experienced their first spell of homelessness within six months of exiting care (Lindner, 2022). This study also found that over 30% of 26-year-olds who had aged out of care reported couch-surfing or experiencing homelessness, with nearly 40% of these youth reporting that these experiences lasted for a month or more (Schelbe, 2023). Another study found that over 40% of youth experienced housing instability within the two years following their exit from care (Schelbe, 2023).

In comparison to youth who exited care due to reunification, the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being II found that youth who aged out of care had worse outcomes (Lindner, 2022). Another nationwide study based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth agreed that, compared to youth with similar risk factors, youth who exited foster care experienced higher rates of homelessness and housing instability. A multi-pilot study of Denver, Austin, and Los Angeles found that one-third of all youth seeking homeless services had had previous foster care involvement (Lindner, 2022).

On a federal level there are only two programs that support foster youth with housing as they age out of care – the Foster Youth to Independence Initiative and the Chafee program. The Chafee program does not solely dedicate funds to housing, but states are permitted to spend up to 30% of their funding on supporting room and board for eligible youth. The Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) initiative made Housing Choice Vouchers available to public Housing Agencies in partnership with child welfare agencies (HUD, 2024). These vouchers provide housing assistance to former foster youth over the age of 18, but under the age of 25, who have or will leave foster care within 90 days. They are only able to provide assistance for a maximum of 36 months unless the youth qualifies for an extension (HUD, 2024). Though these vouchers are available, data shows that in 2023 many states have very low proportions of child welfare agencies accessing the needed vouchers. According to the awards administered by HUD in 2023, about 13 states and territories had less than 10% of child welfare agencies accessing the FYI voucher program (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2024).

Educational Attainment Among youth who Age out of Foster Care

Children in foster care are academically disadvantaged early on in their educational careers. These students are more likely than their peers without foster care experience to attend low-performing schools (Schelbe, 2023). The Midwest Study young that youth in foster care are twice as likely to be suspended and almost 4 times as likely to be expelled from school compared to a national sample. Another study has shown that 30% of youth who have aged out of care reported repeating a grade, compared to a 3.1% national rate (Schelbe, 2023). Research has consistently shown that 25% of youth who age out of foster care will not graduate from high school or be able to pass their GED (NFYI, 2024). In addition, only 6% of youth who age out of care will attend any institution of higher education and only 50% of those who do attend will graduate with a degree. Despite these discouraging statistics, 70% of foster youth regularly report a desire to attend college one day (NFYI, 2024). A study drawing from a university's administrative data found that former foster youth are twice as likely to drop out of their degree programs in comparison with low-income first-generation students without foster care experience (Lindner, 2022). After 5 years of college enrollment, less than 10% of foster care alumni receive a college degree in comparison to 40% of the general population (Schelbe, 2023). Students that do persist in postsecondary education still face mental, behavioral and emotional issues from their experiences in foster care; housing instability; food instability; and financial hardships (Lindner, 2022). Overall, there is less than a 3% chance that youth who age out foster care will earn a college degree at any point in their life (NFYI, 2024).

There are only two federal programs that support education for former foster youth. The primary program is known as Education and Training Vouchers (ETV), which is a program under John H. Chafee Foster Care for Successful Transition to Adulthood. The ETV program is a fully-funded initiative to provide funding and support for post-secondary education for former

foster youth. Eligible students can receive grants up to \$5,000 per academic year for up to five years. The Administration for Children and Families has found that only 37% of ETV-eligible young adults enrolled in college and were awarded or used the voucher.

John H. Chafee Foster Care for Successful Transition to Adulthood

The primary governing statutes regarding foster care and foster care funding are Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. Title IV-B consists of two programs that have been in place for decades and provide flexible child welfare funding to states. The funding can be used for either community response or differential response. Community responses prioritize families who have reports made to Child Protective Services but do not meet the criteria for child maltreatment. These programs can support these families by providing emergency financial and housing assistance, parental training, or case management. Differential response programs provide services without any formal Child Protective Services interventions. They can evaluate family needs and provide services such as parenting classes, mental health, or substance abuse interventions.

Title IV-E helps states and participating territories to provide out-of-home care for eligible youth until they achieve permanency or reach age of majority. It also provides funding for pre-placement, preventative activities for children at imminent risk of removal. Funding is annually appropriated by Congress and awarded as an entitlement grant to states. Title IV-E recipients must submit quarterly reports of estimated and actual program expenditures, and funding is contingent on a state's submission of an approved 5-year plan to administer and supervise administration of the program. Participating agencies have the ability to elect to extend foster care up to age 21 to youth who are completing secondary or post-secondary education,

working at least 80 hours per month, participating in certain pre-employment activities, or have a medical condition that prevents them from participating in education or work activities. The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 established the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (referred to as Chafee) under Title IV-E and was later amended to include Education and Training Vouchers (referred to as ETV) under this program.

The Chafee Foster Care Independence Program was established by the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 and allocates annual funding to states to implement a variety of independent living services for young people 14 and over who have experienced foster care. These funds can be used for services targeting educational achievement, employment, daily living skills, health-related services, or interpersonal relationship development. In 2002 Chafee was amended to add Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) to Chafee's programs, which provide up to \$5000 per year for Chafee-eligible youth to attend an institution of higher education. The Chafee program was renamed in 2018 through the Family First Prevention Services Act and is now called John H. Chafee Foster Care to Successful Transition to Adulthood. The Family First Prevention Services Act also extended Chafee to allow states to opt to provide transitional services known as Extended Foster Care until age 23. Despite the availability of various Chafee services in every state, studies have found that less than 25% of eligible youth actually receive them (Landers, 2024).

National Youth in Transitions Database

The 1999 Foster Care Independent Act not only amended Chafee, but took an important focus on data collection regarding youth aging out of care. The act established a new data collection system - the National Youth in Transitions Database (NYTD). NYTD required states

to collect information on each youth who receives independent living services paid for or provided by the State agency (NYTD, N.d). States also conduct outcome data by conducting surveys of youth in foster care on or around their 17th birthday. States track these youth as they age and conduct a new survey every two years around their 19th and 21st birthdays (NYTD, N.d.).

Purpose of the Study

This study examines Cohort 3 of NYTD. This is the most recent raw data available through the database and began data collection in 2017 when these youth were around the age of 17. Follow-up surveys were completed in 2019 and 2021 when youth in the cohort were turning 19 and 21 years old. The current study focuses on both the national data and state-by-state analysis, emphasizing experiences of homelessness, educational attainment, and Chafee service receipt. Current federal structures allow for immense flexibility in how states administer child welfare systems and utilize funding. As a result, there is dramatic geographical inequity among youth from state to state. The study utilizes the obtained NYTD data to analyze geographical inequities in foster care outcomes for youth aging out of care, and examines the influence of place on access to opportunities and success.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Relational Permanency for Adolescents in Care

Relational permanency can come in many forms and can involve a wide variety of individuals, including relatives, non-family supportive adults, paid service providers, or peers. Studies have found that having meaningful, enduring relationships with caring adults is associated with a variety of positive adult outcomes for youth with foster care experiences

including increased postsecondary educational attainment, reduced risk of homelessness, and improved psychological well-being. Studies of maltreated youth and youth in foster care have consistently found that positive relationships with adults are protective, especially when they facilitate youth empowerment and input in service decisions (Jaramillo, 2021). Chafee services can play a significant role in establishing relational permanency for adolescent foster youth who are unlikely to achieve legal permanency.

The National Mentoring Resource Center conducted a study of mentorship programs with outcomes aligned with Chafee's intentions. They studied an educationally focused mentoring program - Take Charge - and found that positive outcomes were noted in self-determination and mental health, independent living activities, use of transition services, self-identified educational goals and accomplishments, educational planning knowledge and engagement, postsecondary preparation and quality of life. Additional study of a similar program, Better Futures, also resulted in higher rates of enrollment in postsecondary school, and positive reports of self-determination, mental health empowerment, postsecondary preparation, and transition planning.

Chafee Service Access and Inequity

In 2021, less than 25% eligible young people received any services through Chafee (Landers, 2024). Chafee services that seem to have a higher receipt rate among youth tend to be services that are available to youth without foster care involvement including education support, career preparation, and family and marriage education. In addition, an Administration for Children and Families study found that only 37% of ETV-eligible young adults enrolled in college and were awarded or used the voucher. Journey to Success testified before Congress that lack of awareness is likely a significant driver of low rates of Chafee service delivery.

There are also significant demographic differences in rates of Chafee service receipt. Studies have found that females are more likely than males to receive at least one service, and African American youth are the least likely to receive a Chafee service at all. In addition, despite reports that the rate of foster care entry in urban areas is considerably above the rate of entry in other areas, it has also been found that youth in rural or nonmetropolitan areas are more likely to receive Chafee services than youth in large, metropolitan areas. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation has found that about 37% of first-time foster care entries in urban areas are adolescent youth. In these urban areas, about 22% of adolescent youth age out of care compared to only 9% in non-urban communities.

Intersectionality between Homelessness and Educational Attainment

Homelessness among college students is becoming more common. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid estimated that 58,000 students experienced homelessness on campuses nationwide (Chassman, et al., 2020). Approximately 1 in 10 young adults aged 18 to 25 will experience some form of homelessness over any 12-month period. These young adults are making up a much more significant portion of homeless individuals in the United States. A study of homeless young adults in California found that one-third reported having attained no educational milestones, compared to a national rate of 5.4%. These young adults experiencing homelessness are also 87% more likely to stop going to school than their housed peers (Chassman, et al., 2020).

Injustice of Place

In 2020, Kathryn Edin, Luke Shaefer and Timothy Nelson published a revolutionary novel entitled “The Injustice of Place.” This book details a study and found that the poorest

places in the United States fall into three primarily rural regions: Hispanic-majority South Texas, Appalachia, and the vast Cotton Belt of the American South. In the study, the researchers created the Index of Deep Disadvantage, a new measure of poverty that took on a holistic view of people's lives (Padilla, 2023). The Index took into account cyclical, cumulative, and structural measures of poverty. The study found that those in disadvantages areas face inequitable education, structural racism, public corruption, and the collapse of infrastructure (Padilla, 2023). This research is foundationally important for understanding how geography can influence societal outcomes and may have parallels for youth aging out of foster care.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study examined data from Cohort 3 of the National Youth in Transitions Database. Raw data was obtained from the Administration of Children and Families and NYTD national and state profiles were used in analyses. Youth included in the dataset were reported by states as in foster care at the age of 17 and all youth in the follow-up surveys that were not incarcerated, incapacitated or deceased. NYTD data gathers information on a variety of experiences such as incarceration, homelessness, educational attainment, and employment. This study isolated and focused on homelessness, educational attainment, current enrollment, educational aid, and independent living services in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Initially, a demographic analysis was conducted of the entire cohort by generating frequency tables for race and gender.

To examine educational attainment, a demographic analysis of the cohort was first conducted by generating frequency tables of the variable HigherEdCert. Then, state profiles for all 52 locations were examined. From the state reports, the study isolated the percentage of youth

who achieved a college degree by the age of 21, the percentage of youth who achieved a high school diploma or GED by 21, and the percentage of youth who had completed no formal education by the age of 21. A bar graph was created displaying the percent of youth who obtained a high school diploma by the age of 21 in each state and territory and a choropleth map was created to show percentages of youth with no formal education. In addition, current enrollment was examined at both the ages of 19 and 21 to observe changes in enrollment over time. Additional choropleth maps were created to portray changes in current enrollment from the age of 19 to 21. Current enrollment at the age of 21 was displayed in a stacked bar graph, comparing the percentage of youth enrolled with the percentage of youth who were receiving financial educational aid. To examine the relationship between state and educational attainment, a chi square test was conducted, with emphasis on Cramer's V to determine the strength of relationship.

To analyze experiences of homelessness, a demographic analysis was conducted utilizing frequency tables of the raw data. All 52 state profiles were examined to determine the percentage of youth who experienced homelessness between the ages of 17-19 and then between the ages of 19-21. A stacked bar graph was used to compare these percentages at each follow-up survey for a portion of states in the study. To examine the relationship between state and homelessness, a chi square test was conducted, with emphasis on Cramer's V to determine the strength of relationship.

Connection to an Adult was also examined, as it is a significant protective factor noted in many studies. A frequency table was generated for the variable, then multiple tests were done to measure its influence. A chi-square test was conducted between CnctAdult and EducAttain to

determine the relationship between reported connections to an adult and educational attainment. Cramer's V was then analyzed to determine the strength of this relationship. An additional chi-square test was performed to examine the relationship between CnctAdult and Homeless, also utilizing Cramer's V to determine the strength of the relationship. A table was created to show trends in connections to an adult from the age of 19 to the age of 21.

Independent living service data was also analyzed. Raw data for independent living services was not available, but NYTD provides this data on a state-by-state basis. Data was gathered from all 52 state profiles, which show the percentage of respondents who reported receiving various categories of Chafee-funded independent living services. This study focused primarily on postsecondary educational supports and housing education and home management. A scatterplot was created comparing the percentage of youth who received postsecondary educational supports and the percentage of youth who were currently enrolled in school. These variables were chosen to identify whether these supports had an influence on whether youth stayed in their educational programs, rather than dropping out. An additional scatterplot was created comparing the percentage of youth who received housing education and home management services with the percentage of youth who experienced homelessness in each state. These profiles were also utilized to find the services that were most commonly received by youth in each state, and to determine the percentage of youth who were receiving independent living skills assessments by the age of 18.

This study also sought to determine if increased spending per youth made an impact on educational attainment or experiences of homelessness for youth aging out of foster care. A dataset was created utilizing Chafee spending per youth by state, the percentage of youth who

obtained their high school diploma or GED by the age of 21 in each state, and the percentage of youth who experienced homelessness between the ages of 19-21 by state. A scatterplot was created for each of these comparisons to determine if there was a notable correlation.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

Cohort 3 Demographics

Cohort 3 of the NYTD consisted of approximately 57,971 respondents. Of these respondents, 54% were of white ethnicity only, 28% were Black only, 1.7% were American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.8% were Asian, 0.3% were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 6.5% were multiracial (as shown in table A-1). The Cohort was split almost evenly between male and female respondents, with 48.5% of respondents being male and 48.2% being female. This data is shown in Table A-2.

Educational Attainment

National Demographics

SPSS was used to analyze demographic statistics for Cohort 3 of the NYTD and their levels of educational attainment on a national scale. Education attainment was represented by the variable [HigherEdCert], which measured the highest educational certification received. The response categories for this variable included (1) high school or GED, (2) vocational certificate, (3) vocational license, (4) associate degree, (5) bachelor's degree, (6) higher degree, (7) none of the above, (8) declined, and (77) blank. A total of 56,050 participants were included in this data, with 29,095 either declining or leaving the question blank. Table B-1 displays frequencies of this data, showing that

20.6% of the cohort had received their high school diploma or GED, and that 35.6% had received no educational certification. For each of the other categories (vocational certificate, vocational license, associate degree, bachelor's degree, or higher degree), less than 1% of respondents had received these levels of educational certification.

State-level Breakdown

To further examine educational attainment among Cohort 3 youth, this study focused on the percentage of youth who had obtained their high school diploma and the percentage of youth who had achieved no educational certification in each state by the age of 21.

Figure 1 was created to display this data. In 37 states, 60% to 79% of youth had obtained their high school diploma or GED by the age of 21.

Another 7 states maintained 80 to 89% of youth who achieved their

high school diploma or GED by the age of 21. In this dataset, two outliers were obvious.

Minnesota was the only state who had less than 40% completion of a high school diploma or GED by the age of 21, and Illinois was the only state with more than 90% completion.

Minnesota primarily limits its supports of former foster youth to administration of the ETV program and through an additional Fostering Independence Grant Program. This grant program

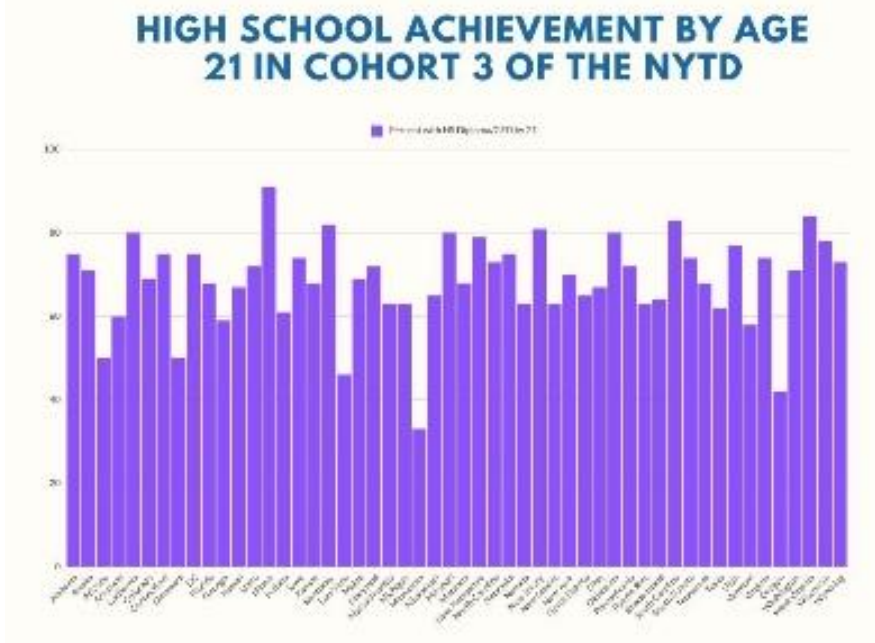


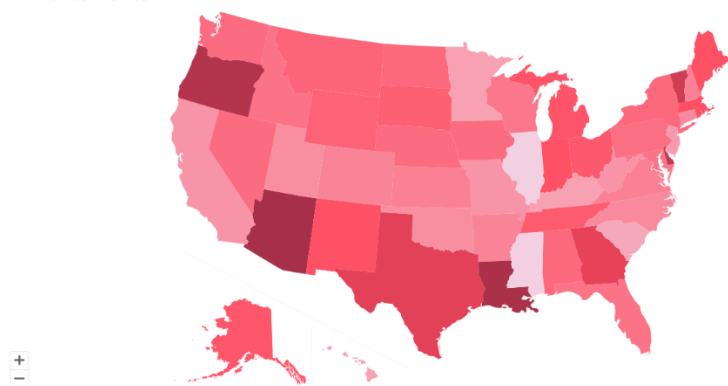
Figure 1: High School Achievement in each state by Age 21

is provided to former foster youth attending participating Minnesota colleges and universities. Illinois, however, administers a tuition waiver program, ETV, a scholarship program, the Youth in College/Vocational Training Program, and the Youth in Care – College Advocate Program. This widespread variety of educational interventions may play a significant role in why youth in Illinois are more likely to achieve higher education than in states like Minnesota.

There were also significant populations of youth who had achieved no formal education

Percent of Youth who Completed No Education by 21

NYTD Cohort 3



by the age of 21. Of the 52 states and territories examined, more than half had between 10 to 29% of youth with no formal education by the age of 21. 8 other states had between 30 and 39% of youth with no formal education, and 4 states had between 40 to 49 percent. There was one obvious outlier – Arizona – who had between 50 and 59% of youth with no formal education.

Post-secondary education could not properly be examined based on available NYTD data. Since the NYTD data only surveys youth up until the age of 21, it does not allow adequate time to collect data on youth who immediately enroll in a 4-year degree after high school. The data does report on youth who achieve a 2-year degree or vocational education, but this represented a very small portion of the population.

Relationship between Geographical Location and Educational Attainment

In order to establish the relationship between what state a youth aged out of care and their educational attainment, a chi-square test was run between the two variables and Cramer's V was used to determine the strength of this correlation. Table B-3 shows the values found from this test. The chi square test resulted in a value of 9214.401 with degrees of freedom of 408. The asymptotic significance was less than 0.001. The chi square test was conducted with $p < 0.05$. Since the asymptotic significance level is less than 0.05, the data shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between the state in which a respondent was in and their educational attainment. Cramer's V was further examined to determine the strength of this relationship. The Cramer's V value was 0.143, indicating that state has a small influence on educational attainment for Cohort 3 participants.

Enrollment and Educational Aid

National Demographics

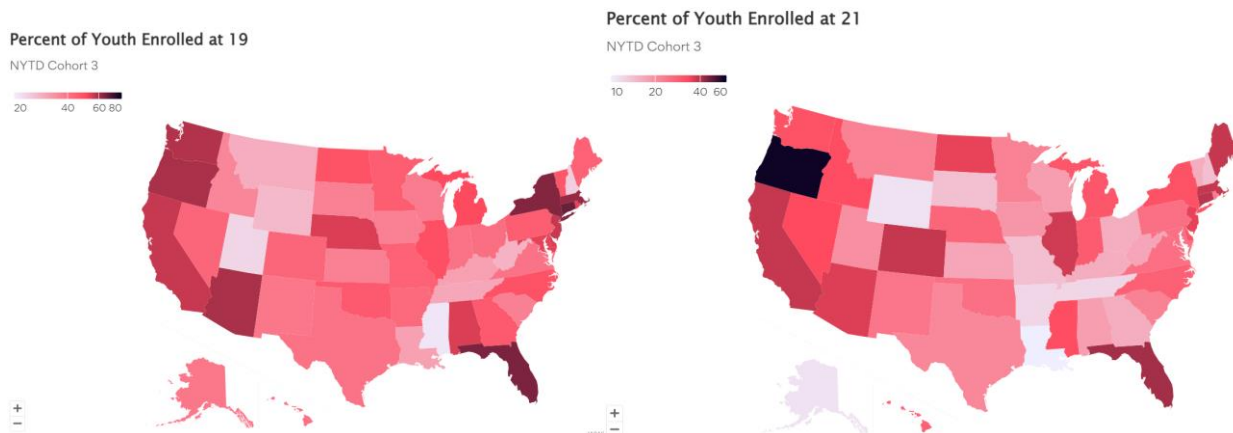
SPSS was used to analyze demographic statistics for Cohort 3 of the NYTD and their current enrollment in school on a national scale. Current enrollment was represented by the variable [CurrEnroll], which measured whether a respondent was currently enrolled in school or not. The response categories for this variable included (0) no, (1) yes, (2) declined, and (77) blank. A total of 56,040 participants were included in this data, with 22,525 either declining or leaving the question blank. Table B-4 displays frequencies of this data, showing that 19.2% of the cohort were not currently enrolled, and that 38.6% were.

Educational Aid was represented by the variable [EducAid] with response categories of (0) no, (1) yes, (2) declined, and (77) blank. A total of 56,040 participants were included in this

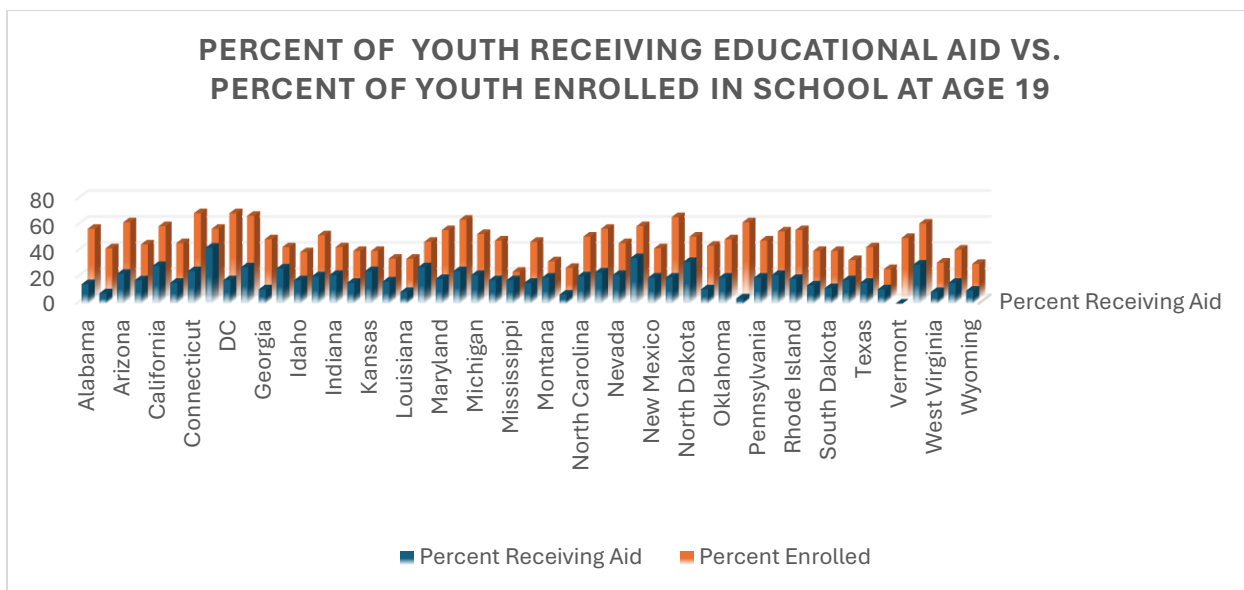
data, with 22,821 either declining or leaving the question blank. Table B-5 displays frequencies of this data, showing that 50.9% of the cohort not receiving educational aid and that 6.4% were.

State-level Breakdown

In all states and territories but one, enrollment from the ages of 19 to 21 dropped significantly. This may demonstrate that even of the small percentages of former foster youth that do enroll in college, a significant portion of those youth drop out before completing their degree. The following maps show how current enrollment shifted in 2019 to 2021 among NYTD youth, with darker states indicating higher enrollment and lighter states indicated lower enrollment. On average, enrollment dropped by 19% between the ages of 19 and 21.



Though in many states the percentage of respondents who were actively enrolled in school was relatively large, the number of those youth that were receiving financial educational aid was significantly lower. The figure below displays around half of the states and territories examined, and displays the percent of youth receiving aid at the age of 19 against the percent of youth enrolled in school. For all of the states shown, the number of youth receiving educational aid is significantly lower than the number currently enrolled in school.



Relationship between Educational Aid and Current Enrollment

In order to establish the relationship between educational aid and current enrollment, a chi-square test was run between the two variables and Cramer’s V was used to determine the strength of this correlation. Table B-6 shows the values found from this test. The chi square test resulted in a value of 63520.395 with degrees of freedom of 9. The asymptotic significance was less than 0.001. The chi square test was conducted with $p < 0.05$. Since the asymptotic significance level is less than 0.05, the data shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between educational aid and current enrollment. Cramer’s V was further examined to determine the strength of this relationship. The Cramer’s V value was 0.615, indicating that receiving educational aid had a large effect on current enrollment among NYTD Cohort 3 respondents.

Homelessness

National Demographics

SPSS was used to analyze demographic statistics for Cohort 3 of the NYTD and experiences of homelessness on a national scale. Homelessness was represented by the variable [Homeless], which measured whether a respondent had experienced homelessness. The response categories for this variable included (0) no, (1) yes, (2) declined, and (77) blank. A total of 56,040 participants were included in this data, with 23,322 either declining or leaving the question blank. Table B-7 displays frequencies of this data, showing that 43.9% of the cohort had not experienced homelessness and that 12.6% had. This data is initially misleading and must be further examined for changes between distribution of the survey at age 19 and then again at age 21.

State-level Breakdown

Examining state-level data reveals that the percentage of youth who experienced homelessness at age 21 was much larger than those that had experienced it by the age of 19. Rates of homelessness at the age of 21 varied among states and territories. Around 14 states fell between 10 to 19% of youth, 11 between 20-29% of youth, 16 between 30 to 39% of youth, 5 between 40 to 49%, and 4 between 50 to 59% of youth. Maryland and Puerto Rico were the only states and territories with less than 10% of youth experiencing homelessness at the age of 21. Maryland maintains 4 primary programs supporting housing for youth aging out of care. These programs include the independent living, Ready by 21 services, aftercare services, and Pressley Ridge's Independence Plus Program.

Relationship between Geographical Location and Homelessness

In order to establish the relationship between what state a youth aged out of care and their experiences of homelessness, a chi-square test was run between the two variables and

Cramer's V was used to determine the strength of this correlation. Table B-8 shows the values found from this test. The chi square test resulted in a value of 12210.211 with degrees of freedom of 153. The asymptotic significance was less than 0.001. The chi square test was conducted with $p < 0.05$. Since the asymptotic significance level is less than 0.05, the data shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between the state in which a respondent was in and their experiences of homelessness. Cramer's V was further examined to determine the strength of this relationship. The Cramer's V value was 0.269, indicating that state has a small influence on homelessness for Cohort 3 participants.

Connection to an Adult

Having a consistent connection to a positive adult is noted as an important protective factor for youth aging out of foster care. The variable [CnctAdult] represented this data and had a total of 56,040 responses, with 22,733 either declining or leaving the question blank. The variable had response categories (0) no, (1) yes, (2) declined, and (77) blank. Table B-9 shows that 4.2% reported no connection to an adult, while 53.2% reported that they did. To examine the influence that connections to an adult can have on outcomes for foster youth, a chi-square test was run between CnctAdult and Homeless and EducAttain. In the chi square test between connection to adults and homelessness, the value was 61738.401 with degrees of freedom of 9. The asymptotic significance was less than 0.001 percent, indicating a statistically significant relationship. When examining Cramer's V, the value was 0.606, showing that connections to an adult have a strong effect on homelessness. These figures are shown in Table C-1. When conducting a chi-square test between Connections to an adult and educational attainment, those who reported having a connection to an adult consistently had higher educational attainment at

every response category. The chi-square test revealed a value of 60413.102 and degrees of freedom of 24. The asymptotic significant was less than 0.001, indicating a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. The Cramer’s V was 0.599 showing that connections to an adult had high effects on educational attainment. This data is shown in Table C-2. In order to observe how connections to adults may shift from the age of 19 to the age of 21, NYTD state profiles were examined. The below table shows the percent of youth who reported having a connection to an adult at each increment of the survey.

Table 1: Percentage of Youth in each State who Reported a Connection to an Adult at Age 19

90% to 100% of youth	80% to 89% of youth	70% to 79% of youth	60 to 69% of youth	50 to 59% of youth	Less than 50%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alabama • Arizona • California • Connecticut • Delaware • DC • Georgia • Hawaii • Idaho • Illinois • Iowa • Maine • Maryland • Massachusetts • Michigan • Missouri • Montana • North Carolina • Nebraska • Nevada • New jersey • New Mexico • North Dakota • Rhode Island • South Dakota • Tennessee • Virginia • Washington • West Virginia • Wyoming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arkansas • Florida • Alaska • Colorado • Indiana • Kansas • Kentucky • Louisiana • Minnesota • New Hampshire • New York • Ohio • Oklahoma • Oregon • Puerto Rico • South Carolina • Texas • utah • Vermont • Wisconsin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pennsylvania 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mississippi 		

Table 2: Percentage of Youth in each State who Reported a Connection to an Adult at Age 21

90% to 100% of youth	80% to 89% of youth	70% to 79% of youth	60 to 69% of youth	50 to 59% of youth	Less than 50%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alaska • Arizona • California • Connecticut • Delaware • Georgia • Hawaii • Indiana • Iowa • Kentucky • Maryland • Massachusetts • Montana • North Carolina • Nebraska • Nevada • New Mexico • North Dakota • Utah • Virginia • West Virginia • Wyoming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alabama • DC • Idaho • Illinois • Kansas • Louisiana • Maine • Michigan • Minnesota • Missouri • New Hampshire • New Jersey • New York • Ohio • Oklahoma • Oregon • Puerto Rico • Rhode Island • Tennessee • Texas • Vermont • Washington 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arkansas • Colorado • Florida • South Carolina • South Dakota • Wisconsin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pennsylvania 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mississippi 	

This table shows that at the age of 19, 30 states and territories had between 90% and 100% of youth who reported they had a connection with an adult. By the age of 21, this dropped to 22 states.

Independent Living Service Receipt

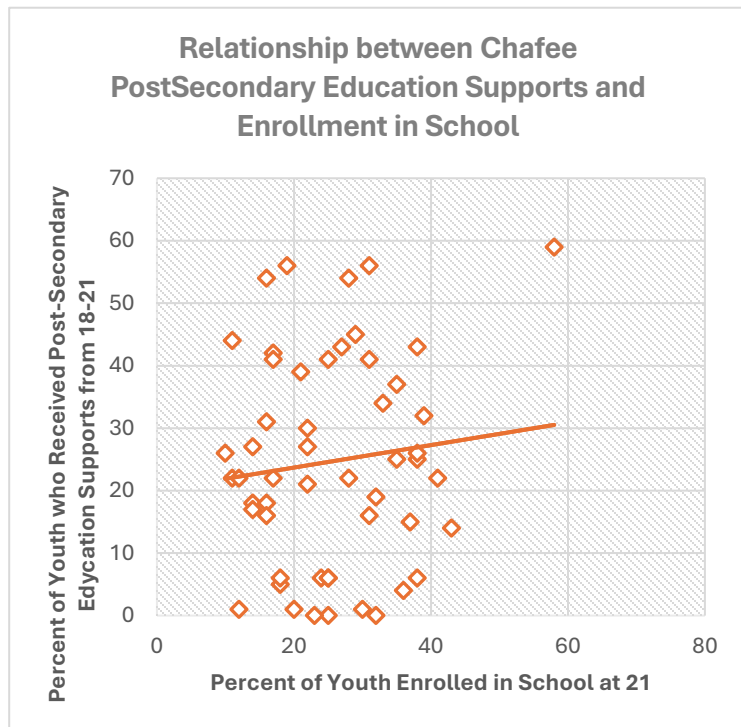
Raw data was not available for independent living service receipt, but NYTD provided this data on a state-by-state basis. These state-by-state profiles show the number of respondents who received certain categories of independent living services, which are funded through the Chafee program. State profiles reported the most common service received by surveyed youth. The most common service category was reported by 11 states as Other Financial Assistance, which excluded financial assistance related to housing or education. Other categories of highest receipt were academic support with 5 states, room and board financial assistance with 4 states, supervised Independent Living with 5 states, family support and healthy marriage education with

2 states, housing education and home management with 2 states, health education and prevention with 3 states, independent living skills assessment with 10 states, budget and financial management with 6 states, career preparation with 3 states and educational financial assistance with 1 state. Further examination of independent living skills assessments revealed that 32 states had not administered these assessments by the time youth had turned 18, though the assessment is intended to measure the youth's level of need for transitioning into adulthood. One state, Idaho, had administered the assessment to 99% of youth by the age of 19. This study more thoroughly examines data for postsecondary educational supports and housing education and home management.

Postsecondary Education Supports

Upon examining state profiles for reported receipt of postsecondary educational supports among NYTD Cohort 3 respondents, it was evident that there was immense inconsistency in how likely youth were to receive this type of support. For 13 states, less than 9% of youth received these supports, in 8 states only 10% to 19% received these supports, in 12 states 20% to 29% received these supports, in 6 states 20% to 39% received these supports, in 8 states 40% to 49% received these supports, and in 5 states 50% to 59% received these supports. No states reported 60% or more of youth receiving postsecondary education supports.

In order to examine a correlation between enrollment at the age of 21 and whether the respondent



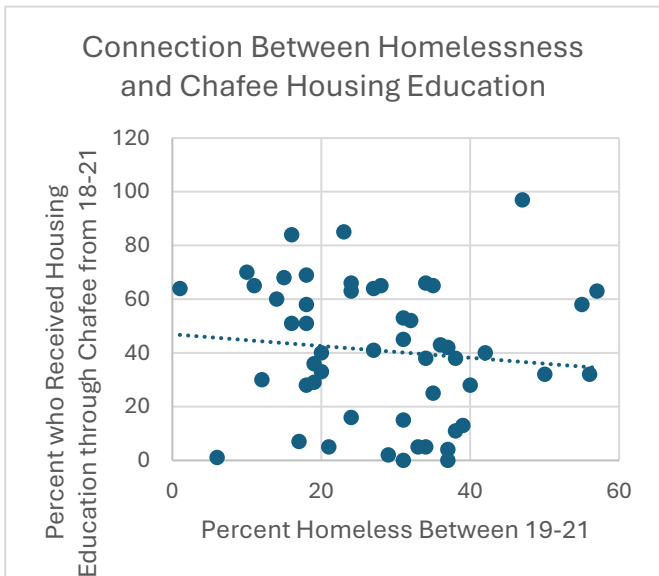
received postsecondary services between the ages of 18-21, a scatterplot was created. The scatterplot placed the number of youth enrolled in school at 21 along the x-axis, and the number of youth who received post-secondary supports from 18-21 on the y axis. A forecast line was added to the scatter plot to demonstrate any notable trends in the data. The scatterplot

shows potentially a weak positive correlation between postsecondary supports and youth enrollment.

Housing Education and Home Management

State-level data revealed that youth were more likely to experience homelessness between the ages of 19-21, when the final survey of the Cohort was administered, than they were at prior intervals. The NYTD measured the percentage of youth in each state who reported receiving housing education and home management services between the ages of 18-21 and the results varied greatly. A majority of states (12 states) had 60% to 69% of youth reporting they received these services. Around 35 states reported that less than 60% of youth received these supports, while only 4 states had more than 69% receiving these services.

In order to examine a correlation between housing education between the ages of 18-21

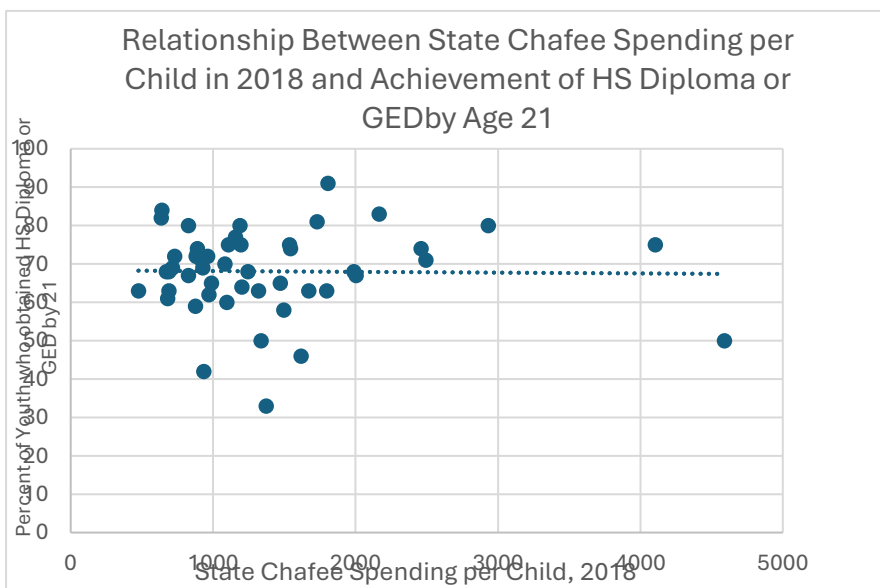


and experiences of homelessness, a scatterplot was created. The scatterplot placed the number of youth experiencing homelessness at 21 along the x-axis, and the number of youth who received housing education and home management services from 18-21 on the y axis. A forecast line was added to the scatter plot to demonstrate any

notable trends in the data. The scatterplot shows no correlation between housing education and experiences of homelessness.

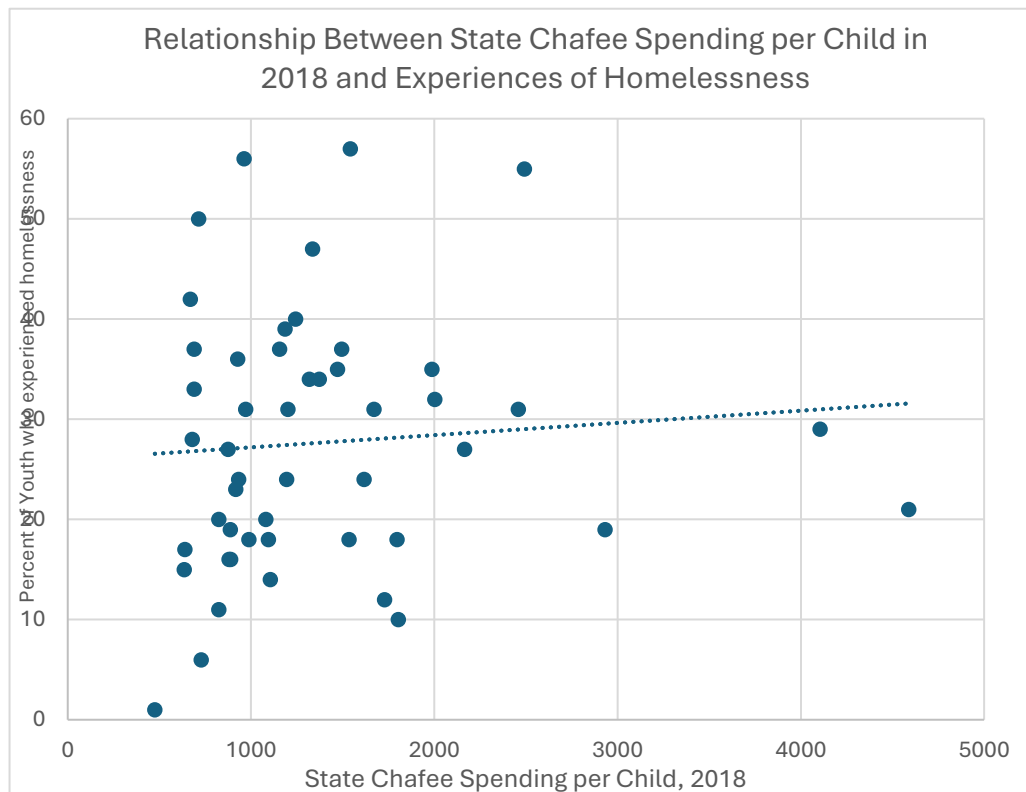
Association between State Spending on Chafee and Foster Care Outcomes

FosterClub conducted a spending analysis on 2018 that identified the amount of Chafee funds



states spent per youth. A new dataset was created utilizing the dollar amount spent per youth in 2018 and the percentage of youth who experienced different outcomes in each state. A scatterplot was created comparing the relationship

between spending and the percent of youth who had achieved a high school diploma or GED by the age of 21. This scatterplot did not indicate an obvious relationship between the two variables.



Another scatterplot was generated utilizing the spending per youth in 2018 and the percent of youth who had experienced homelessness between the ages of 19-21. This scatterplot showed

no obvious relationship between the two variables, with levels of spending having minimal to no impact on the percentage of youth who experienced homelessness.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Improving the National Youth in Transitions Database

The NYTD began collecting data in 2010 and will publish raw data for its fourth cohort in 2024. Though this has been a revolutionary system of data collection for understanding the long-term impacts of foster care and service delivery, there are still many ways in which NYTD must be improved.

When examining raw data from Cohort 3, it was found that 54% of respondents were White and 28% were Black. The survey results significantly underrepresent other minority groups, though these minorities are overrepresented in the national foster care population. In order to address this, agencies must work on effective engagement of minority communities, and strategies for NYTD engagement for youth who are of historically marginalized communities. In addition, demographic analysis showed that Cohort 3 was split almost perfectly between male and female respondents. However, NYTD did not provide any representation for nonbinary or alternative gender identities, though LGBTQ+ youth are proven to be more at risk of their cisgender counterparts. NYTD should expand to include additional gender identities to identify challenges specific to youth who do not identify as cisgender.

Lastly, when examining educational attainment outcomes for respondents of the NYTD, it was realized that proper evaluation of postsecondary educational attainment can not currently be conducted. The NYTD administers its final survey when youth reach the age of 21. However, youth who graduate high school and enroll in a 4-year program are unlikely to graduate until at least the age of 22. This creates a significant gap in the data, failing to identify and analyze barriers that may exist for youth in achieving education beyond high school or a GED. The NYTD survey should include an additional dataset at the age of 23 for future cohorts to adequately represent postsecondary educational attainment.

Educational Attainment Interventions

The study determined that state had a small effect on educational attainment for youth who aged out of foster care. This indicates that youth are experiencing barriers to education on a national scale. When examining a state like Illinois, who was the only state with more than 90%

of youth having achieved a high school diploma or GED by the age of 21, there are a variety of programs found. Illinois operates a tuition waiver program, ETV, and a college advocate program. These practices should be a national standard. Financial educational aid appeared many times as having a strong influence on whether foster youth stayed enrolled in school and whether they completed their degree. Knowing this, a federal tuition waiver program should be implemented to incentivize former foster youth to pursue higher education, and to clear a path for degree completion. In addition, for aid that already does exist, data showed that though 38.6% of youth were enrolled in school only 6.4% were receiving educational aid. This means that awareness of ETV should be addressed and that the program should become more accessible.

Homelessness Interventions

Much like educational attainment, state was found to have a small effect on the percentage of youth who experienced homelessness. Though this was true, it was obvious that rates of homelessness increased from the age of 19 to the age of 21. As previously mentioned, many states are underutilizing programs such as the FYI initiative, and no other federal housing programs exist to support former foster youth.

To address the homelessness crisis among former foster youth, the Department of Housing and Urban Development should conduct robust outreach to spread awareness of the FYI program and engage child welfare agencies in the process of applying to receive the necessary vouchers. In addition, a federal standard should be established to require states to develop a housing plan for youth who are aging out of foster care in preparation for the transition, since 20% of youth instantly become homelessness upon aging out.

Chafee Recommendations

When addressing Chafee, service delivery must work to provide foundational supports for youth that work as protective factors in many arenas. Positive connections with adults is a well-known protective factor that can prevent homelessness, support educational attainment, and help youth in navigating their transition to adulthood. Though many youth reported a connection to an adult at 19, these relationships were significantly diminished by the age of 21. Survey results revealed that many individuals reported mentorship and educational supports as a place they found positive adult connections. Chafee funding and implementation should take a significant focus on these categories, allowing federal policy to consider the implementation of a federally-managed mentorship program for foster youth aging out of care.

In addition, independent living skills assessments are critical in understanding the individualized needs of youth aging out of care and where there may be gaps in their transition. NYTD found that 32 states had not administered these assessments by the time a youth had turned 18. A national standard should be established that requires states to administer these assessments at the age of 16, allowing social workers and youth to collaboratively work to develop skillsets and engage in services prior to aging out of care.

Chapter 6: Appendix

Table A-1 Racial Demographics of Cohort 3 of the NYTD

Derived Race without Ethnicity

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
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Valid	White Only	31293	54.0	54.0	54.0
	Black Only	16221	28.0	28.0	82.0
	American Indian / Alaska Native Only	995	1.7	1.7	83.7
	Asian Only	442	.8	.8	84.4
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Only	174	.3	.3	84.7
	More than One Race	3742	6.5	6.5	91.2
	Race Unknown	5104	8.8	8.8	100.0
	Total	57971	100.0	100.0	

Table A-2 Gender Demographics of Cohort 3 of the NYTD

#5: Sex

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	28097	48.5	50.1	50.1
	female	27943	48.2	49.9	100.0
	Total	56040	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1931	3.3		
Total		57971	100.0		

Table B-1 Frequencies of HigherEdCert

#46: Highest Educational Certification Received

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

Valid	high school or ged	11931	20.6	21.3	21.3
	vocational certificate	339	.6	.6	21.9
	vocational license	124	.2	.2	22.1
	associate degree	151	.3	.3	22.4
	bachelor degree	31	.1	.1	22.4
	higher degree	52	.1	.1	22.5
	none of the above	20617	35.6	36.8	59.3
	declined	745	1.3	1.3	60.7
	blank	22050	38.0	39.3	100.0
	Total	56040	96.7	100.0	
Missing System		1931	3.3		
Total		57971	100.0		

Table B-2 High Educational Certification Received by State

#46: Highest Educational Certification Received * Two-Digit USPS code for state: Crosstabulation

Count

Highest Educational Certification Received	Two-Digit USPS code for state																																																		Total		
	AK	AL	AR	AZ	CA	CO	CT	DC	DE	FL	GA	HI	IA	ID	IL	IN	KS	KY	LA	MA	MD	ME	MI	MN	MO	MS	MT	NC	ND	NE	NH	NJ	NM	NV	NY	OH	OK	OR	PA	PR	RI	SC	SD	TN	TX	UT	VA	VT	WA	WI		WV	WY
high school or ged	91	249	86	40	2145	137	203	49	34	257	199	59	191	65	195	239	229	207	103	234	195	25	449	205	222	127	79	176	65	164	79	163	83	111	622	291	205	172	219	445	69	159	54	194	339	155	355	19	284	299	339	69	11931
vocational certificate	0	3	6	1	42	3	9	1	2	6	4	0	5	3	2	9	14	6	3	9	6	0	0	2	4	17	0	3	4	2	4	6	1	5	20	4	9	3	10	44	0	3	0	10	1	5	19	0	3	3	2	0	339
vocational license	0	0	0	0	16	3	3	1	0	6	1	0	3	1	0	2	11	1	0	1	2	0	5	6	1	9	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	6	0	5	2	3	9	1	9	0	2	2	1	6	0	0	0	1	124		
associate degree	0	0	1	0	24	3	1	0	1	9	1	4	0	1	2	5	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	13	5	2	2	0	0	1	1	0	15	0	1	0	3	28	1	0	0	4	1	2	2	0	1	4	0	151	
bachelor degree	0	1	7	0	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	31		
higher degree	0	1	2	0	6	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	4	0	0	6	1	1	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	2	0	0	1	6	0	0	2	1	0	52
none of the above	62	390	190	141	2971	263	285	69	90	375	702	64	269	122	593	735	471	480	279	697	245	69	729	457	270	190	105	231	65	229	72	279	121	155	1274	701	284	293	610	116	175	329	63	470	1376	219	501	63	481	441	345	64	20917
declined	0	12	17	0	116	19	2	0	2	28	6	2	1	1	13	25	15	47	10	12	11	0	0	137	26	11	0	28	1	12	3	6	1	2	29	44	3	40	20	5	0	9	0	7	7	8	1	0	12	8	2	745	
blank	42	284	124	1072	2454	365	191	24	29	855	625	79	295	57	1390	665	409	517	269	696	375	43	321	370	690	293	69	529	63	67	75	174	43	64	1065	1219	193	216	690	91	64	212	43	769	1997	339	316	29	237	244	399	69	22050
Total	175	620	433	1255	6384	814	675	144	149	1928	1594	335	991	250	2765	1994	1239	729	1654	629	129	1465	1176	1469	540	299	972	241	489	295	659	220	309	3923	2719	647	728	1554	741	353	747	182	1480	3912	566	1259	69	946	1002	696	239	90949	

Table B-3 Chi Square Test and Cramer's V – Highest Educational Certification Received and State

Chi-Square Tests

Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
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Pearson Chi-Square	9214.401 ^a	408	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	7985.829	408	<.001
N of Valid Cases	56040		

a. 240 cells (51.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05.

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.405	<.001
	Cramer's V	.143	<.001
N of Valid Cases		56040	

c. Correlation statistics are available for numeric data only.

Table B-4 Demographics of Current Enrollment

#47: Current Enrollment And Attendance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	11151	19.2	19.9	19.9
	yes	22363	38.6	39.9	59.8
	declined	493	.9	.9	60.7
	blank	22033	38.0	39.3	100.0
	Total	56040	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1931	3.3		
Total		57971	100.0		

Table B-5 Demographics of Educational Aid

#41: Educational Aid

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	29485	50.9	52.6	52.6
	yes	3734	6.4	6.7	59.3
	declined	781	1.3	1.4	60.7
	blank	22040	38.0	39.3	100.0
	Total	56040	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1931	3.3		
Total		57971	100.0		

Table B-6: Chi Square and Cramer's V for Educational Aid and Current Enrollment

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	63520.395 ^a	9	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	76082.399	9	<.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	55783.937	1	<.001
N of Valid Cases	56040		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.87.

Symmetric Measures

	Value	Asymptotic Standard Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Phi	1.065			<.001

Nominal by Nominal	Cramer's V	.615			<.001
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.998	.000	3500.840	<.001 ^c
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.882	.001	442.060	<.001 ^c
N of Valid Cases		56040			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

Table B-7 Homelessness Frequencies

#49: Homelessness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	25424	43.9	45.4	45.4
	yes	7294	12.6	13.0	58.4
	declined	1292	2.2	2.3	60.7
	blank	22030	38.0	39.3	100.0
	Total	56040	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1931	3.3		
Total		57971	100.0		

Table B-8 Chi Square and Cramer's V for State and Homelessness

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12210.221 ^a	153	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	8290.498	153	<.001
N of Valid Cases	56040		

a. 7 cells (3.4%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.21.

Symmetric Measures^c

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.467	<.001
	Cramer's V	.269	<.001
N of Valid Cases		56040	

Table B-9 Connection to an Adult

#48: Connection To Adult

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	2462	4.2	4.4	4.4
	yes	30845	53.2	55.0	59.4
	declined	700	1.2	1.2	60.7
	blank	22033	38.0	39.3	100.0
	Total	56040	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1931	3.3		
Total		57971	100.0		

Table C-1: Chi Square test and Cramer's V between CnctAdlt and Homeless

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	61738.401 ^a	9	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	75928.621	9	<.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	55867.364	1	<.001
N of Valid Cases	56040		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 16.14.

Symmetric Measures

	Value	Asymptotic Standard Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance

Nominal by Nominal	Phi	1.050			<.001
	Cramer's V	.606			<.001
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.998	.000	4270.866	<.001 ^c
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.885	.002	450.017	<.001 ^c
N of Valid Cases		56040			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

Table C-2: Chi Square and Cramer's V for Connection to an Adult and Educational Attainment

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	60413.102 ^a	24	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	74640.785	24	<.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	55386.208	1	<.001
N of Valid Cases	56040		

a. 7 cells (19.4%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .39.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	1.038			<.001
	Cramer's V	.599			<.001
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.994	.000	2180.494	<.001 ^c
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.874	.002	425.187	<.001 ^c
N of Valid Cases		56040			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

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