

EXTENDED FOSTER CARE (EFC)

Extended Foster Care, or EFC, is a program to support young people who are dependents of the state when they turn 18.

EXTENDED FOSTER CARE IS EFFECTIVE...

RESEARCH HAS CONSISTENTLY SHOWN THAT:



Participation in EFC Increases:

High school graduation, college enrollment, employment, & lifetime earnings.

Participation in EFC Decreases:

Homelessness, criminal legal system involvement, need-based public aid, teenage parenting, substance abuse & mental health disorders.



...BUT THERE IS STILL WORK TO BE DONE TO GET SUPPORT TO YOUNG PEOPLE WHO NEED IT.

WE MUST REMOVE BARRIERS TO ENSURE ALL YOUTH WHO TURN 18 WHILE DEPENDENT GET WHAT THEY NEED TO BECOME SUCCESSFUL ADULTS.

20% of young people who are dependent at age 18 do not currently participate in Extended Foster Care.

PROPOSALS:

1) EXPAND ACCESS TO EFC

SB 5908 (2024) removes barriers to access.

The current program withholds support from young people who don't have an approved job, school plan, or home. This bill would guarantee support is available to all youth who are dependent at age 18—so they can find the right job, school, and home.

2) ADDRESS THE CRISIS OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG YOUNG ADULTS WHO AGE OUT OF FOSTER CARE

Dept. of Children, Youth, & Families Decision Package

Advocates support DCYF's decision package— increasing the amount of the Supervised Independent Living (SIL) subsidy and providing a housing stipend to young people. However, this will not be enough to ensure all young people are housed.

This bill defines the SIL subsidy (young people in EFC are eligible to receive) as having two parts: a maintenance payment and a housing subsidy. The housing subsidy would be calculated based on the fair market rent of the county where the young person intends to reside. This subsidy structure allows DCYF to take advantage of federal drawdowns for foster care and to use those federal funds to support housing.

\$ EFC IS GOOD FOR THE STATE! \$

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy found that **our state's current EFC program produces \$3.95 of lifetime benefits for each \$1 invested**, with 40% representing savings and revenue that would accrue to state, local, and federal governments.

In 2022, the WA legislature commissioned an Extended Foster Care systems assessment ESSB 5693 (2022) Sec. 227, 36. Recommendations include:

- **Expand Reach of EFC:** "Expanding participation by engaging all who are eligible ...represents a prudent investment."
- **Reconsider Eligibility for EFC:** "Eligibility criteria are often a barrier to service utilization"— "Amend criteria which exclude the most vulnerable (e.g., those who are street homeless...)"
- **Extend and augment EFC supports:** "Ensure housing stability; Housing first and also as long-term, ongoing need; resource housing navigators, eviction prevention support."

HOMELESSNESS THE LONGSTANDING, WELL-DOCUMENTED CRISIS OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE WHO AGED OUT OF FOSTER CARE WAS AGAIN DOCUMENTED BY RDA IN 2023.

23% of 18-year-olds participating in EFC are homeless or housing unstable.

51% of 20-year-olds who were exited from EFC are homeless or housing unstable.

EFC IN 2024

WHO CAN OPT IN TO EFC?

Young people who were dependents of Washington State at age 18 can voluntarily agree to continue receiving foster care services while working towards independence. Eligible youth's dependency action will continue if they choose to participate in EFC. They can opt in on their 18th birthday (or at any point before their 21st birthday) and may enter and exit the program as needed between the ages of 18-21 years old.

Currently, "eligible youth" must be actively working on at least one of these activities:

- Enrolled in high school or GED program;
- Applied for or enrolled in college or a vocational program;
- Participating in a program or activity designed to promote or remove barriers to employment;
- Working 80 hours or more a month; or
- Unable to engage in any of the above activities due to a documented medical condition. (Written documentation must be provided to case worker and be certified by a licensed health care provider.)

ONCE IN EFC, WHAT DOES THE PROGRAM OFFER YOUNG PEOPLE?

DCYF's EFC services may include:

- Case management by DCYF;
- Placement in a licensed foster home or Supervised Independent Living (SIL) placement (shared living, apartment, college dormitory, with a relative or other adult, etc.);
- Medical and dental insurance; referrals to medical and mental health providers;
- Independent Living (IL) program (daily living skills; educational support; career exploration; vocational training; employment assistance; helping to establish stable and healthy connections);
- Transition planning support; and/or
- Referrals to community resources.

Young people in EFC are also appointed an attorney to represent them in their EFC court proceedings, which includes court hearings every 6 months.

EFC REIMAGINED

WHAT MUST WE DO TO CREATE A MORE ACCESSIBLE & ROBUST EFC PROGRAM FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

ALL DEPENDENT YOUNG PEOPLE MUST BE MADE AWARE OF & ELIGIBLE FOR EFC.

- Require DCYF to develop policies and procedures to ensure that dependent youth aged 15 and older are informed of the EFC program.
- Ensure that all youth who are dependent at age 18 are eligible for EFC, while maintaining the state's ability to draw down federal funds for all cases that are IV-E eligible—designate a pot of state funds to provide a safety net to cover those cases that are not IV-E eligible (those not meeting one of the 5 eligibility categories).

YOUNG PEOPLE'S EFC SUBSIDY MUST MEET THEIR BASIC NEEDS, COVER THE COST OF HOUSING, & BE ISSUED IN A TIMELY FASHION.

- Ensure that the EFC financial subsidy is set at a rate matching or exceeding the level two foster care reimbursement rate for children 12 and older for those in an independent living setting.
- Ensure that young people in EFC, regardless of their living situation, continue to receive their SIL stipend—require DCYF to work with young people whose living situations DCYF would otherwise not approve.
- Ensure that young people (1) become eligible for EFC the day they sign an EFC agreement or Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA); (2) can sign a VPA for EFC prior to turning 18 (taking effect on the youth's 18th birthday). The youth may withdraw consent to participate at any time, including prior to their 18th birthday.
- Require DCYF to create a payment system that will issue the SIL stipend to young people, even if the young person does not have a stable address.