



Supporting Youth Aging Out of Care

October 2023

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training

Each year approximately 20,000 young adults emancipate from foster care.^v As they transition to adulthood many of these young people can benefit from a support system that promotes stability, success in education and work, and community development. As youth aging out of foster care strive for independence, programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) play an important role in this support system by ensuring youth's nutritional needs are met and providing access to career pathways through employment and training supports.

Leveraging SNAP & SNAP E&T For Former Foster Youth

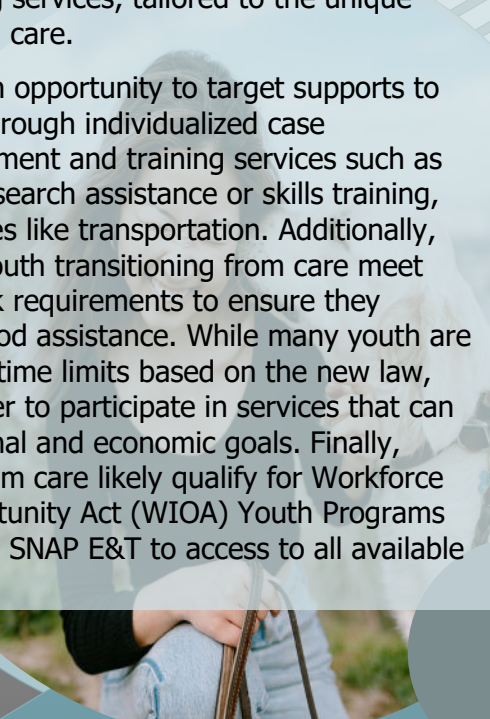
Connecting eligible former foster youth to SNAP ensures access to food supports that combat hunger and foster stability. Furthermore, in an effort to improve access, the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 exempts people under the age of 24 who transitioned from foster care from the ABAWD time limits. Past research, however, has shown that eligible youth are not accessing SNAP. According to the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) in

2015, only 30% of former foster youth received SNAP, although significantly more were eligible.ⁱ Research from the Urban Institute pinpointed navigating benefits applications while transitioning from foster care as a barrier to accessing SNAP for young adults.ⁱⁱ However, intentional partnerships between economic support agencies and child welfare to assist transitioning youth with application processes is a promising practice to improve access to SNAP. Additionally, once former foster youth are receiving SNAP they may qualify for employment and training services through the SNAP employment and training (SNAP E&T) program.

Employment & Training Services for Youth Aging Out of Care

Youth aging out of foster care often face higher barriers to attaining a post-secondary education than their peers. For example, one study found that foster youth experience school mobility, lower academic achievement, and exclusionary school discipline at more than three times the rate of their peers.ⁱⁱⁱ Moreover, youth in the foster care system experience trauma at higher rates than their peers^{iv} and are less likely to have a strong system of community supports to bolster their success. Foster youth's experiences point to a need for enhanced education and training services, tailored to the unique needs of youth exiting care.

SNAP E&T presents an opportunity to target supports to former foster youth through individualized case management, employment and training services such as work experience, job search assistance or skills training, and supportive services like transportation. Additionally, SNAP E&T can help youth transitioning from care meet state and federal work requirements to ensure they maintain necessary food assistance. While many youth are exempt from ABAWD time limits based on the new law, they may still volunteer to participate in services that can benefit their educational and economic goals. Finally, youth transitioning from care likely qualify for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth Programs and can co-enroll with SNAP E&T to access to all available resources.



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To support youth aging out of foster care, states may consider the following options for SNAP and SNAP E&T

- Partner with child welfare agencies to provide information and application assistance for SNAP and SNAP E&T as part of structured transition planning and after-care for foster youth.
- Promote SNAP E&T to youth transitioning from care as a meaningful opportunity to fulfill work requirements and avoid time limits. Ensure that youth are screened for the foster care ABAWD time limits exemption and that opportunities exist for youth to volunteer for E&T even when exempt.
- Onboard providers that understand the unique needs of youth aging out of care and offer trauma informed services.
- Coordinate with state and local workforce systems to co-enroll former foster youth in WIOA Youth Programs when eligible to ensure continuity of services and access to all available supports.

Providers in States Leading the Way

Georgia

SNAP E&T provider Goodwill of Middle Georgia & Central Savannah River Area (CSRA) runs the [SNAP Cares](#) program for former foster youth in Georgia who are not eligible for Independent Living Program (ILP) services. SNAP Cares provides short-term training to former foster youth to obtain an industry recognized credential or certificate. To promote the program CSRA created an [infographic](#) and [video](#) targeted to former foster youth. While starting off as a pilot program in Macon-Bibb and surrounding counties, SNAP Cares plans to grow statewide.

Virginia

The Virginia Community College System is a SNAP E&T provider that offers training programs at the 23 community colleges throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. This includes the [Great Expectations program](#) supporting former foster youth. Youth are paired with an adult coach who works with youth to assess their skills and interests, talk about goals, and make a plan for enrolling in college. Coaches support youth with application assistance, arranging transportation between school, home and work, and many other activities.

Texas

In partnership with the Texas Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS), The [Texas Workforce Commission \(TWC\)](#) offers a [suite of services](#) tailored to meet the unique needs of youth transitioning from care. This includes funding for Foster Youth Transition Centers, a central clearinghouse of one stop services, including providing job readiness and job search assistance, career exploration, housing assistance and mentoring services. Workforce boards must also have an appointed foster youth liaison to ensure current and former foster youth receive services. Boards may leverage SNAP E&T where appropriate to support services for former foster youth.

ⁱ [Supporting Youth Aging Out of Foster Care through SNAP](#), Center for the Study of Social Policy (2015)

ⁱⁱ Health Hahn, Amelia Coffey, Gina Adams, [Young People and Nutrition Assistance](#), Urban Institute (2021)

ⁱⁱⁱ Henry Joel Crumé, [Educational Outcomes among Students Whose Lives Have Been Touched by Foster Care in Washington State](#), Partners for Our Children (2020)

^{iv} Caitlin Papovich, [Trauma & Children In Foster Care: A Comprehensive Overview](#), Forensic Scholars Today (2019).

^v [Foster Care Statistics 2019](#), Child Welfare Information Gateway (2021).