



ISAC
FAFSA
SYMPOSIUM

Supporting Foster Youth in Higher Education

Presented by:
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Foster Progress



FOSTER PROGRESS



Overview

1. Foster Progress
2. Foster Care 101
3. Aging Out
4. Barriers to Success
5. Financial Aid & DCFS Programs

Foster Progress

Empowering youth who have experienced foster care to attain a college degree and transition into adulthood successfully through mentoring, advocacy, and educational opportunity.

Mentoring &
Scholarships

Traverse

Training &
Advocacy

Y-CAP

Y-CAP

Youth in Care
College Advocate Program

Peer advocates on college campuses running supportive groups for youth who have experienced foster care

- University of Illinois at Chicago
- University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign
- Northern Illinois University
- Governors State University
- Harold Washington College
- Illinois State University

Mentoring & Scholarship Program

- 1-on-1 College Educated Mentors paired with high school students
- Students earn \$100 each time they meet with their mentor
- In Chicagoland and expanding to other cities
- Mentors are trained and well supported



Traverse

- Adventure Therapy
- Travel, hiking, camping, excursions
- Life skills journal
- International service trip
Columbia, learning to create a documentary



Foster

Care

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Illinois DCFS Overview

Who is the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)?

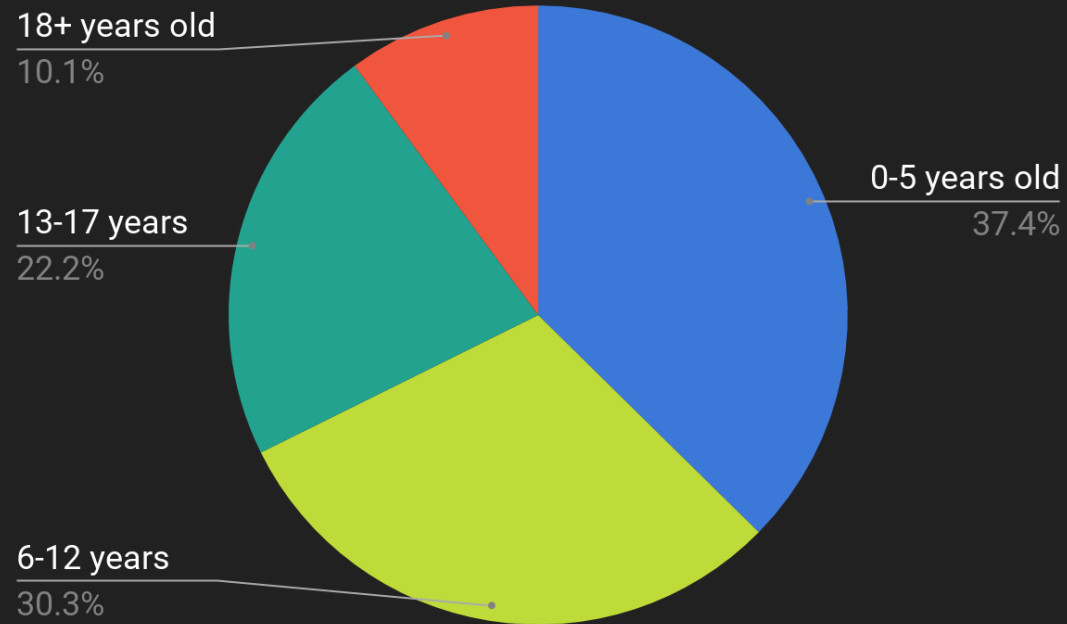
Mission Statement

- Protect children who are reported to be **abused or neglected** and to increase their families' capacity to safely care for them
- Provide for the well-being of children in our care
- Provide appropriate, **permanent families** as quickly as possible for those children who cannot safely return home
- Support early intervention and child abuse prevention activities
- Work in partnerships with communities to fulfill this mission

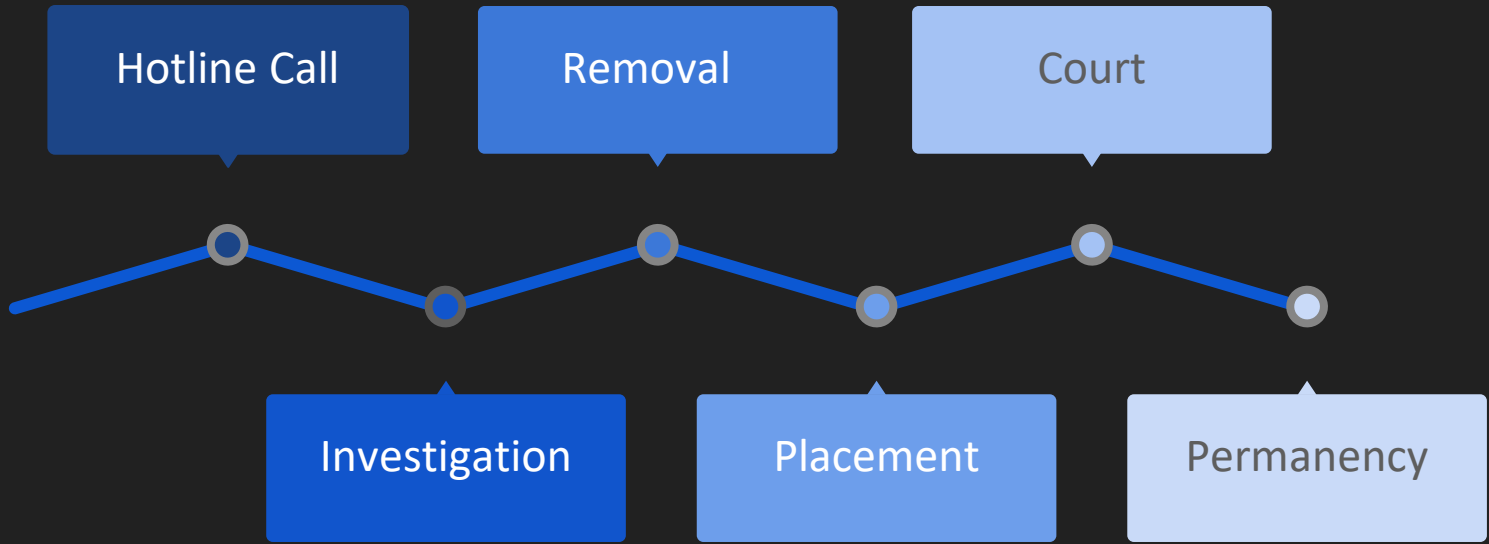
Age Ranges

There are approximately 21,000 children in foster care in Illinois.

32.3% of them, or 6,783 youth, are teens and young adults.



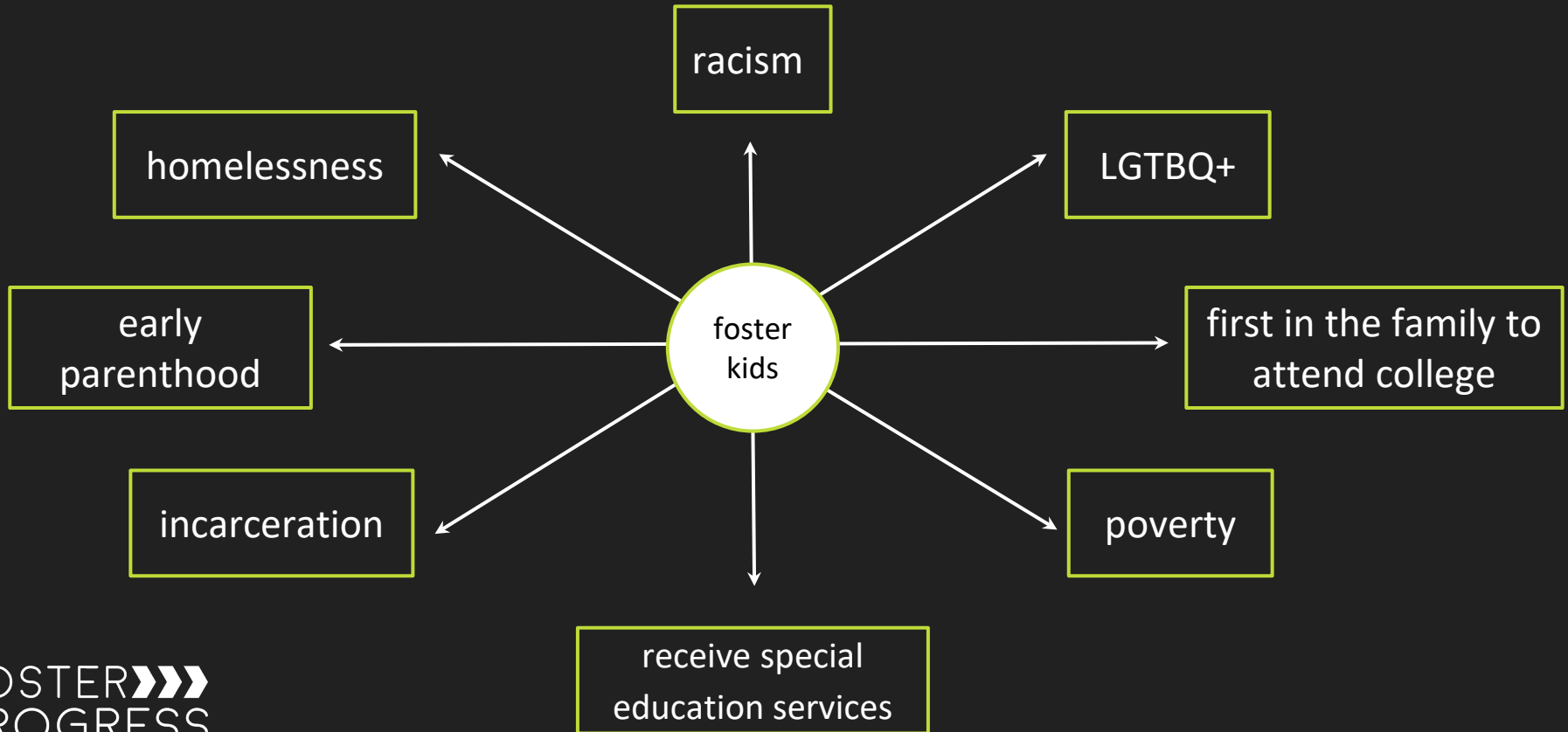
The Foster Experience



The Foster Experience - IRL



Multiple axes of marginalization



Aging Out



28,000 youth “age-out” of foster care each year in the US between the ages of 18-21.

In 2011, Illinois had the **third highest rate** in the country of youth aging out.

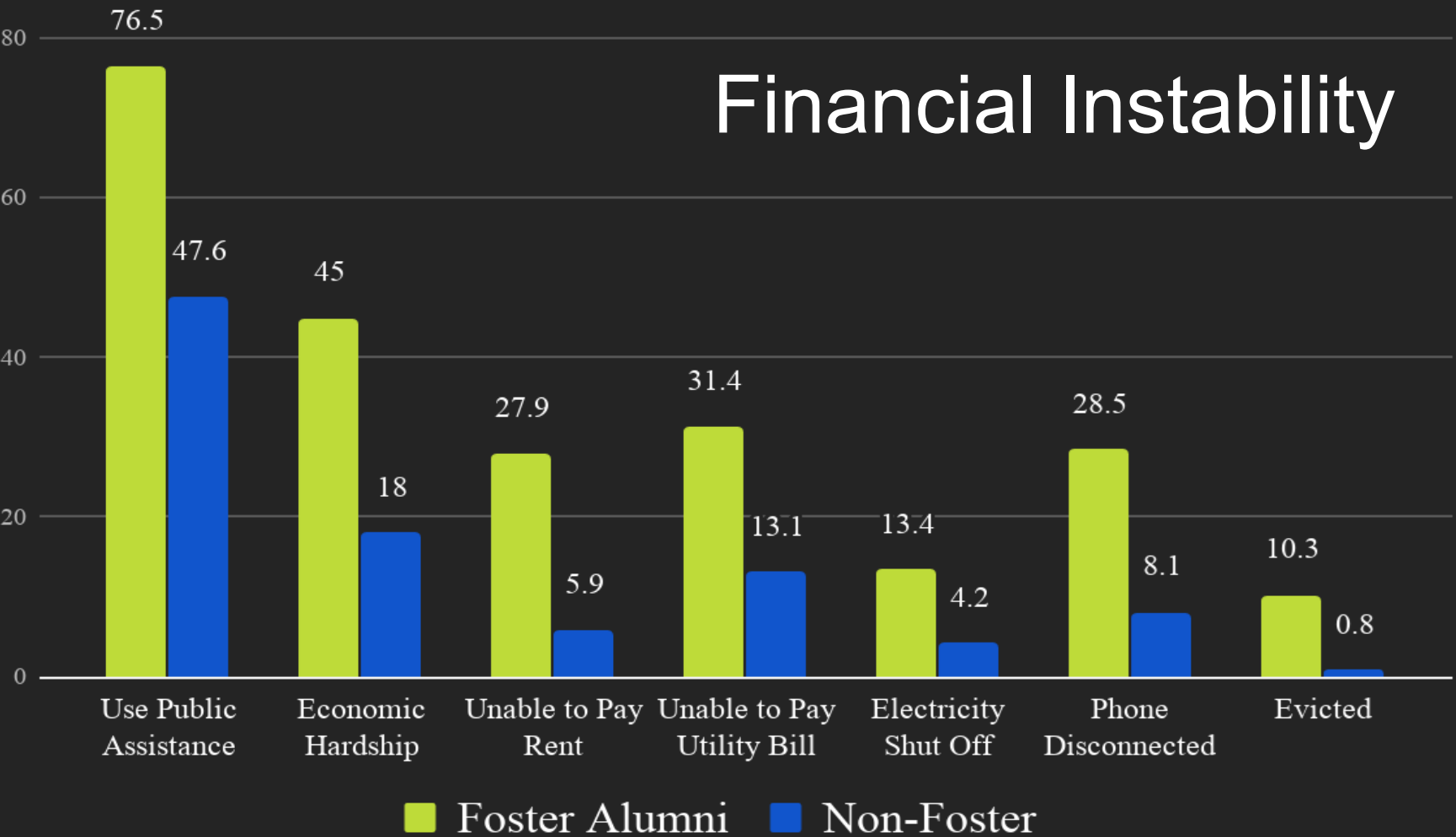
In 2011, around **50%** of youth in Illinois exited foster care via aging out.

Outcomes for youth aging out

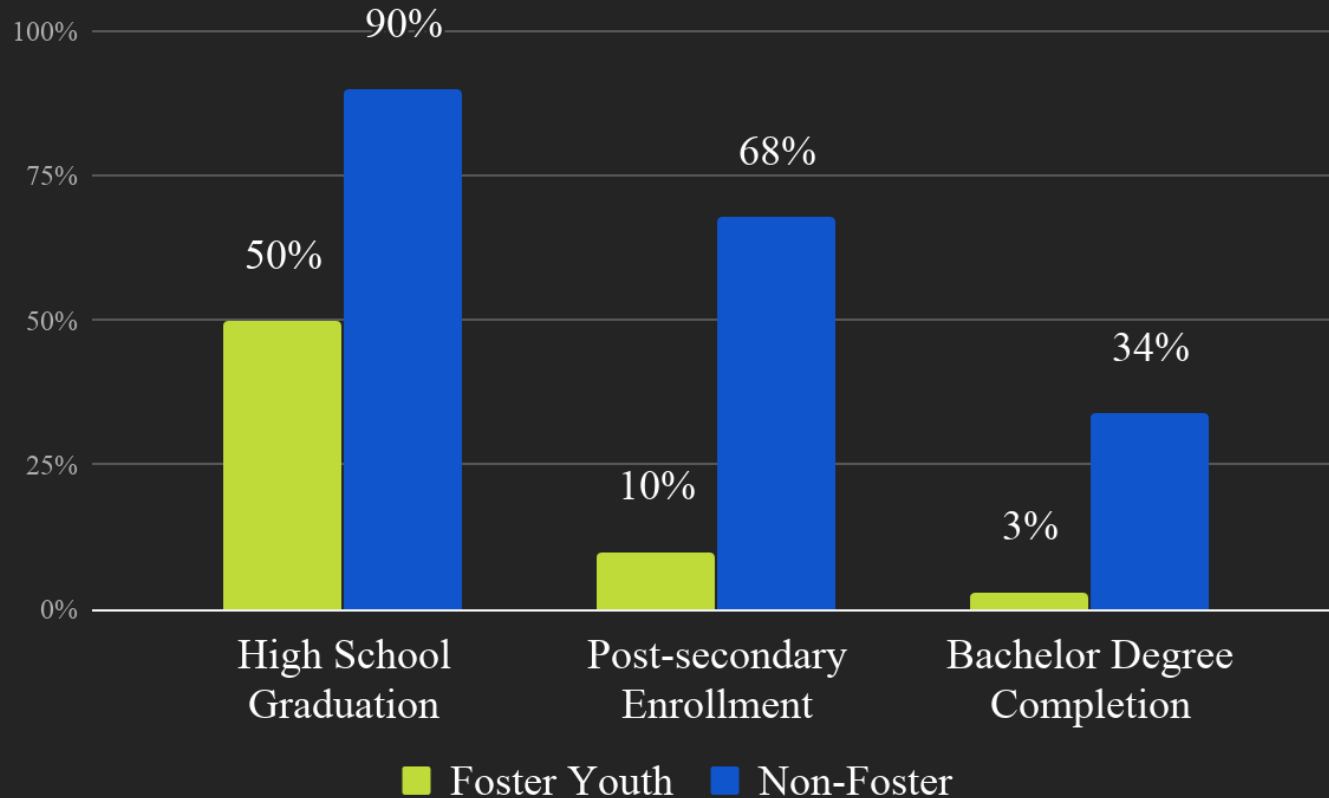
Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning
of Former Foster Care Youth at age 26, 2011



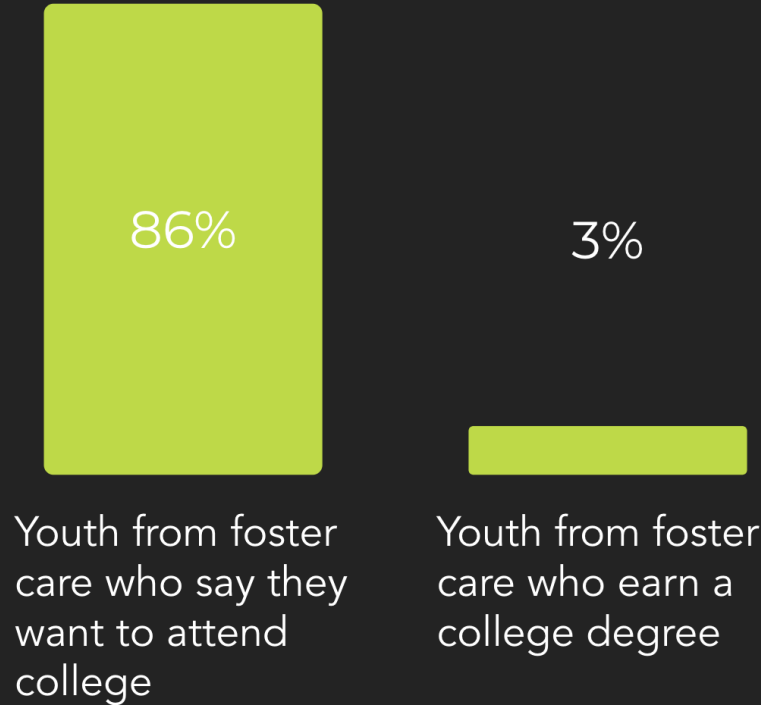
Financial Instability



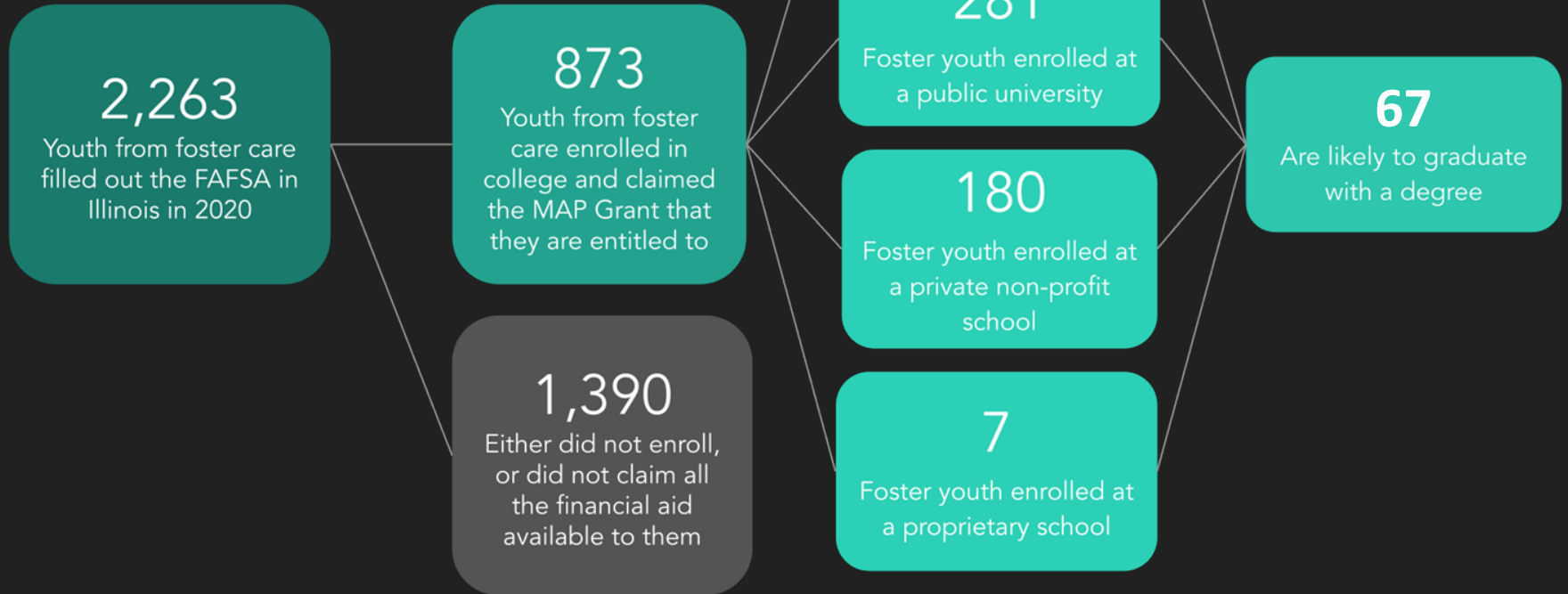
Educational Attainment



Degree Attainment



FAFSA, Enrollment, Completion



Barriers to youth pursuing higher ed

burdensome
document-
ation

lack of
caring
adults and
family ties

biases

housing
insecurity

educational
deficits

early
parenthood

financial
instability

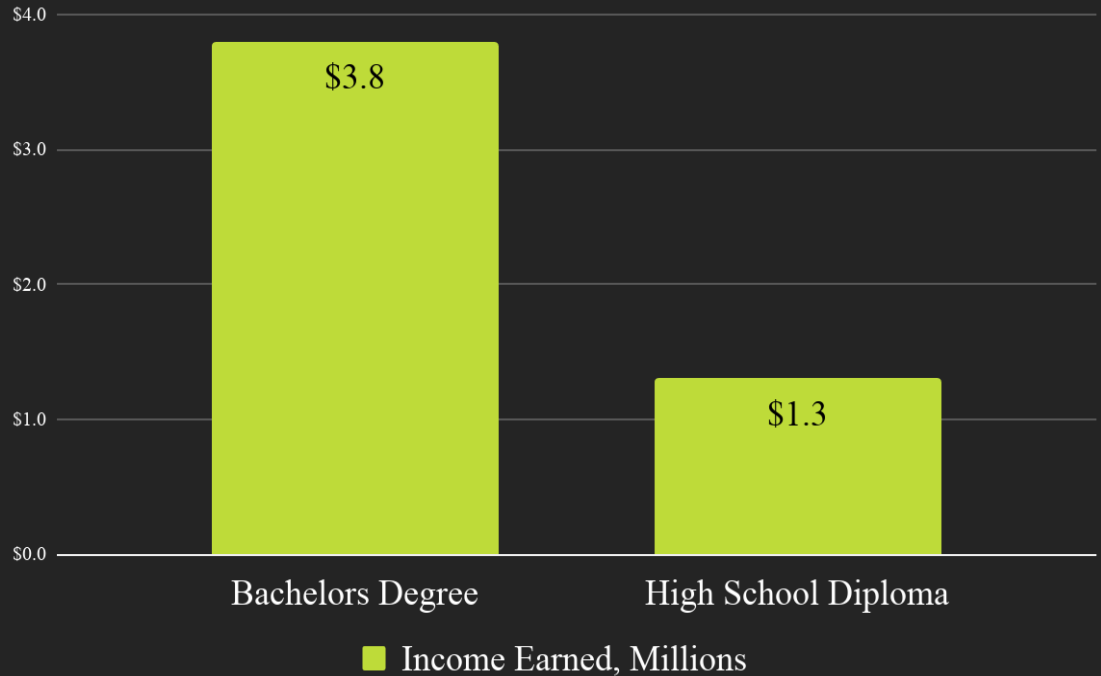
medical
issues

mental/
emotional
health

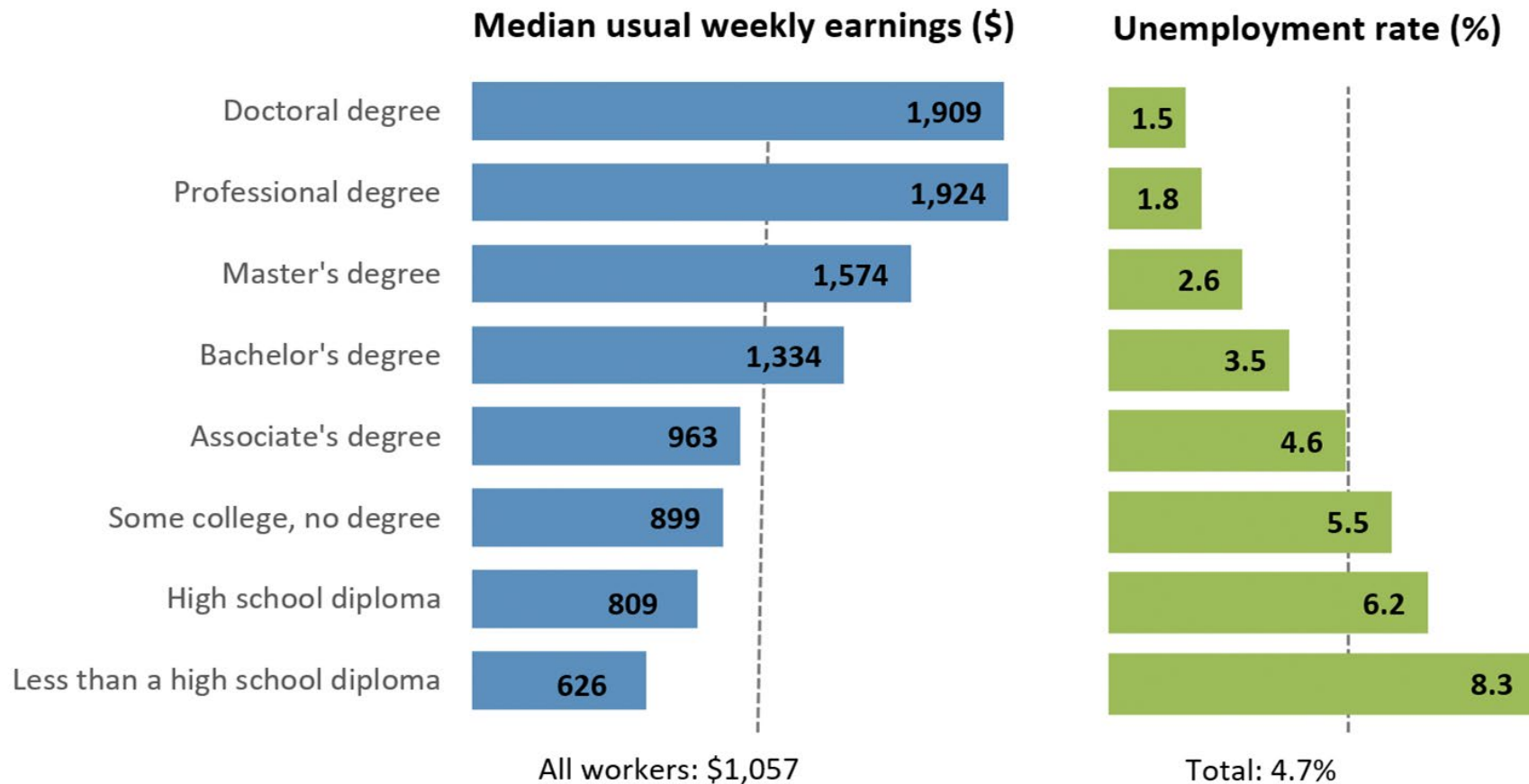
trauma

Is college worth it?

An individual with a Bachelor's degree will earn 84% more than someone with a high school diploma over their lifetime.

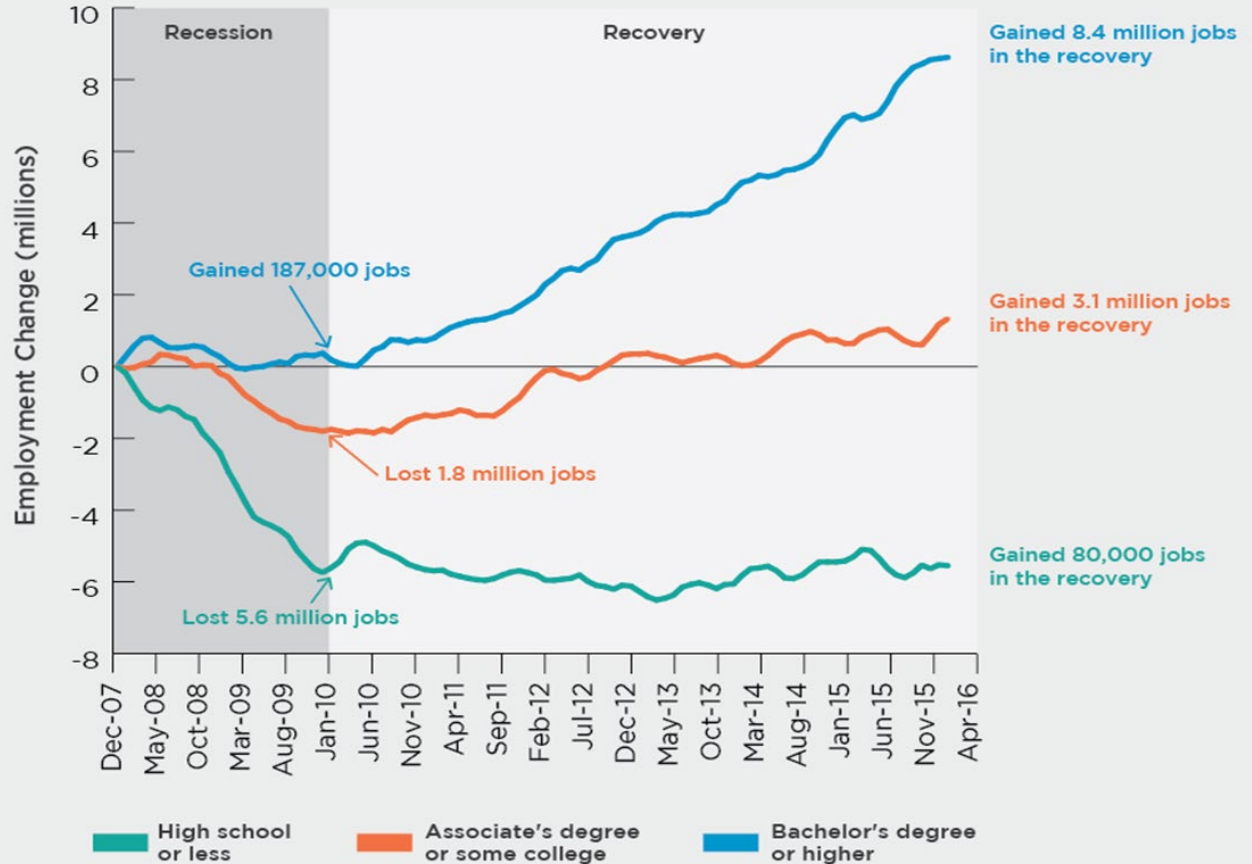


Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment, 2021



Is college worth it?

Figure I. Workers with a Bachelor's degree have added 8.4 million jobs in the recovery, but workers with high school diplomas or less added only 80,000 jobs after losing 5.6 million jobs in the recession.



Research from Dr. Jennifer Geiger



**JANE ADDAMS
COLLEGE
OF SOCIAL WORK**

Creating Pathways to College for Youth in Care

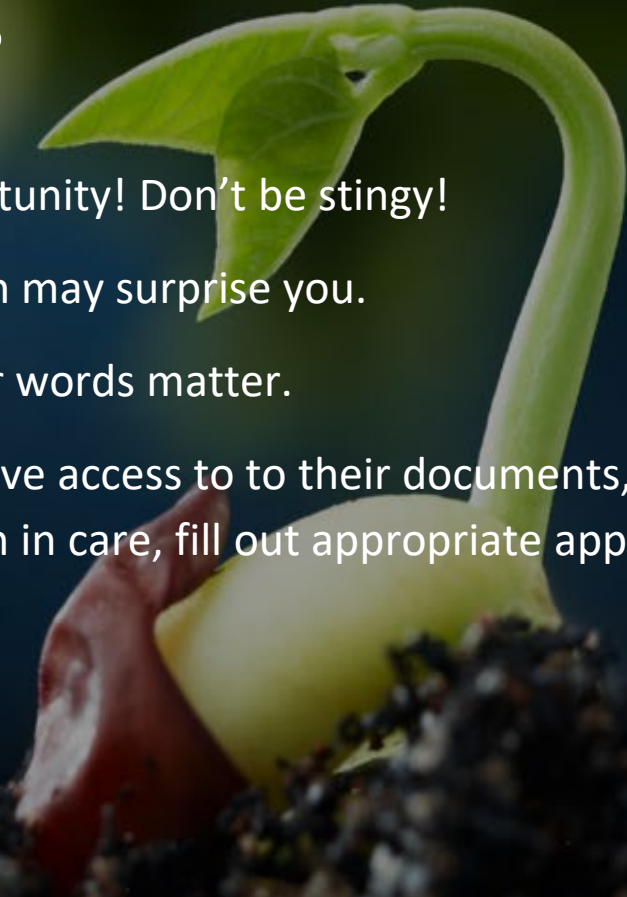
- Providing information and connections to youth, their caregivers, and DCFS/child welfare workers EARLY and FREQUENTLY
- Creating a culture of postsecondary education and training and normalizing this experience
- Organizing documents, knowing options (schools/programs), financial aid, social supports, and living arrangements
- Developing a plan and executing it (know what's expected, what are deadlines)



**JANE ADDAMS
COLLEGE
OF SOCIAL WORK**

What Can Workers Do?

- You are the gatekeepers of opportunity! Don't be stingy!
- Have hope - remember that youth may surprise you.
- Plant the seed of inspiration. Your words matter.
- Practicalities: Make sure youth have access to their documents, write their letter documenting their status as youth in care, fill out appropriate applications in a timely way, etc.



Financial Aid for Foster Youth

Students who were in foster care after age 13 will fill out the FAFSA as independents.

This will give them maximum access to financial resources available, like Pell and MAP.

DCFS

Postsecondary
Programs



DCFS Youth In Scholarship (YIS)

- This is actually a **tuition waiver** and it must be used at a **public school in Illinois**.
- It does not cover room and board.
- Does include a **monthly stipend** and medical insurance card. Students who go to private schools or out of state can get the stipend and not use to the tuition waiver.



DCFS Tuition & Fee Waiver

- If the student is not selected for Youth in Scholarship, they are still able to take advantage of this tuition waiver.
- This must also be used at a **public school in Illinois**.
- It does not cover room and board.
- It does not include the monthly stipend or medical card.
- All youth who ever experienced foster care are eligible (except those returned home.)



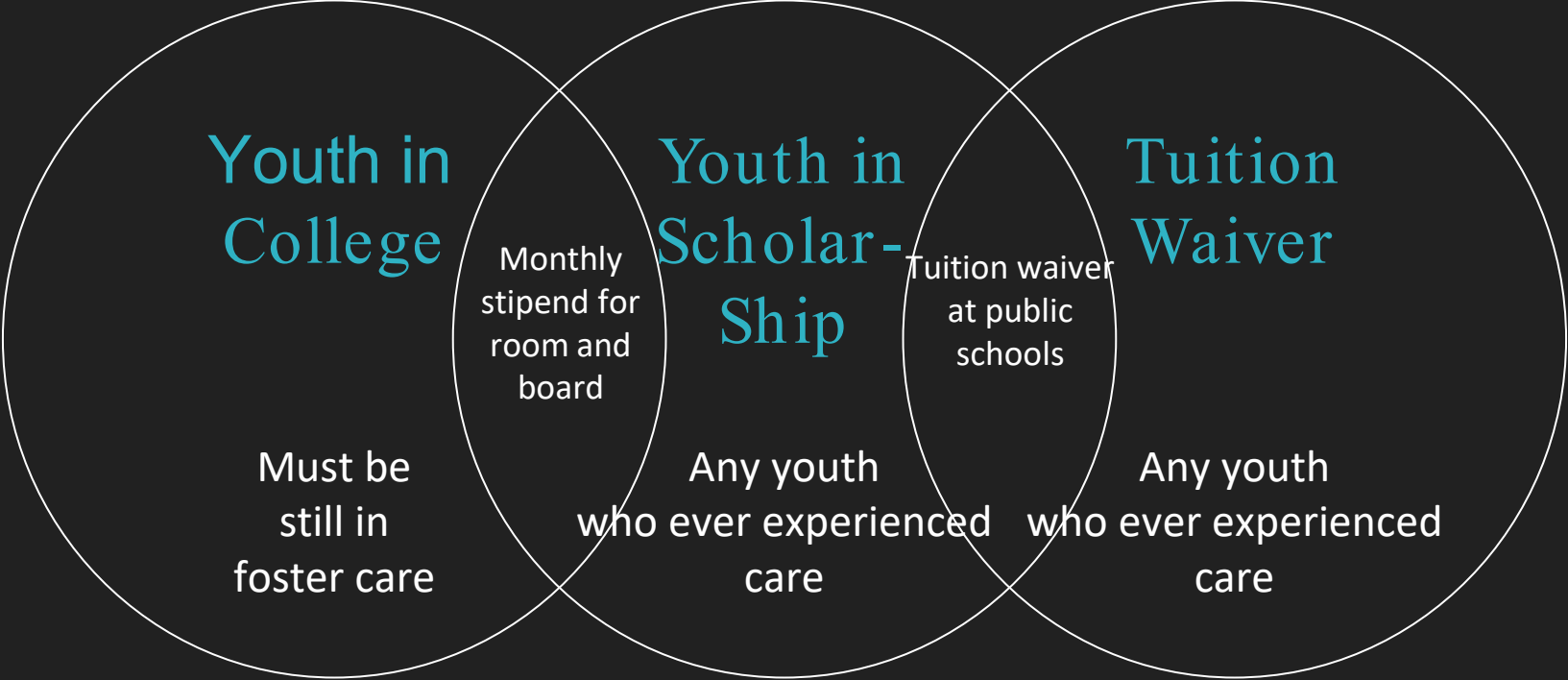
ETV

- Administered by Illinois DCFS but Federal program
- Up to \$5,000 per year, usually don't get that much
- Only for students who are still in care or left care after the age of 16



Youth in College

- Considered a placement, meaning you must leave any previous placement to receive this benefit
- Monthly stipend
- You are expected to use this money toward room and board



**Youth in
College**

Must be
still in
foster care

**Youth in
Scholar-
Ship**

Monthly
stipend for
room and
board

Any youth
who ever experienced
care

**Tuition
Waiver**

Tuition waiver
at public
schools

Any youth
who ever experienced
care

Youth in College

Must be
till in
foster care

Monthly
stipend for
room and
board

Youth in Scholarship

Any youth
who ever
experienced care

Tuition waiver
at public
schools

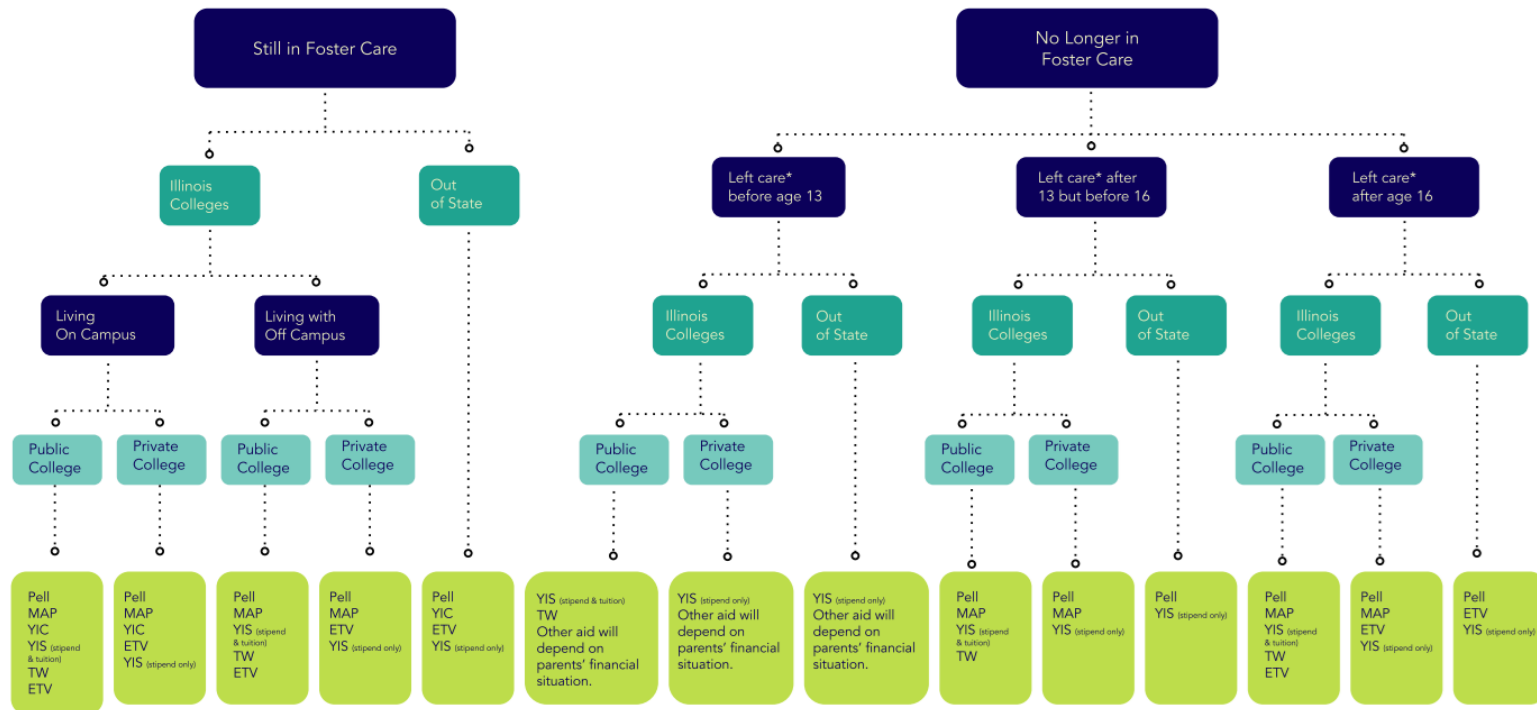
Tuition Waiver

Any youth
who ever
experienced care

ETV

Still in care
at age 16+

In Illinois, if you experienced foster care, you can qualify for several programs and many thousands of dollars in federal and state financial aid for college, depending on your individual situation. Considerations include whether you are still in care, or at what age you exited care; whether you stay in Illinois or go to school out of state; and whether you attend a public or private school. Use this guide to help you determine which programs you might qualify for, and then... go get it!



KEY - DCFS Programs

YIC Youth in College Program
 YIS Youth in Scholarship Program
 Keep in mind the scholarship program is competitive! You must apply and be accepted.

KEY - Financial Aid

Pell Federal Pell Grant
 MAP Illinois Monetary Award Program
 TW Tuition and Fee Waiver
 ETV Education and Training Voucher

Important Considerations

- *Left care via aging out, subsidized adoption, or subsidized guardianship
- Most aid and programs have applications and requirements such as **good academic standing** and **full time status** as a student.
- Most colleges will also offer need-based financial aid. You may also qualify for loans, which we have not included, and merit-based scholarships.

2023-2024 Annual College Cost

Community Colleges & Illinois Public Universities

State Funded Schools	Tuition & Fees	**Max MAP Grant	***Max PELL Grant	Balance after MAP & PELL to be waived	Room & Board	YIC Board Payment 12 months of \$1506	Room & Board after YIC
Community College (High Estimate)	\$7,978.00	\$1,600.00	\$7,395.00	(\$517.00)	N/A	\$18,072.00	
Chicago State University	\$15,726.00	\$8,400.00	\$7,395.00	(\$69)	\$10,290.00	\$18,072.00	(\$8,272.00)
Eastern Illinois University	\$15,806.44	\$8,400.00	\$7,395.00	(\$11.44)	\$10,862.00	\$18,072.00	(\$7,851.00)
Governors State University	\$13,696.00	\$8,400.00	\$7,395.00	(\$2,099.00)	\$12,056.00	\$18,072.00	(\$8,115.00)
\$\$ Illinois State University	\$15,479.00	\$8,400.00	\$7,395.00	(\$316)	\$11,584.00	\$18,072.00	(\$6,804.00)
Northeastern Illinois State University	\$12,838.00	\$8,400.00	\$7,395.00	(\$2,957.00)	\$9,742.00	\$18,072.00	(\$11,287.00)
Northern Illinois University	\$12,700.00	\$8,400.00	\$7,395.00	(\$3,095)	\$12,800.00	\$18,072.00	(\$8,367.00)
Southern Illinois University - Carbondale	\$14,690.00	\$8,400.00	\$7,395.00	(\$1,105.00)	\$12,114.00	\$18,072.00	(\$7,063.00)
Southern Illinois University - Edwardsville	\$12,922.00	\$8,400.00	\$7,395.00	(\$2,783.00)	\$10,271.00	\$18,072.00	(\$10,323.00)
\$\$ University of Illinois - Chicago*	\$12,470.00	\$8,400.00	\$7,395.00	(\$3,325.00)	\$14,600.00	\$18,072.00	(\$6,797.00)
University of Illinois - Springfield	\$12,262.00	\$8,400.00	\$7,395.00	(\$3,533.00)	\$12,088.00	\$18,072.00	(\$9,517.00)
\$\$ University of Illinois - Urbana Champaign	\$17,334.00	\$8,400.00	\$7,395.00	(\$1,539.00)	\$13,938.00	\$18,072.00	(\$2,595.00)
Western Illinois University	\$17,442.00	\$8,400.00	\$7,395.00	(\$1,647.00)	\$11,640.00	\$18,072.00	(\$4,785.00)

\$\$ - These state funded universities have additional grant funding for youth with 'zero' EFC. UIUC has Illinois Promise funding, UIUC has Access grants.

ISU has Access Grant. Other schools may have other funding. Contact FA Department at schools for information.

*Tuition based on academic program - this figure uses lowest amount charged.

** MAP used only towards tuition & mandatory fees, based on 15 CH per semester & current funding. - Note- MAP has early deadline - Can get '0'

*** PELL based on 12 CH per semester, current funding, & entitlement grants

**** ETV is used towards tuition and fees - housing costs if youth is receiving YIC or YIS are calculated after considering board payment amount

Resources for Workers, Youth, & Foster Parents

Financial Aid for Foster Youth: www.foster-progress.org/financial-aid/

College Checklist for Foster Youth: <http://www.foster-progress.org/college-checklist/>

Mentoring and Scholarship Program Application: <http://www.foster-progress.org/mentoring/>

Stay in Touch

- Refer students to our programs
- Become a mentor, spread the word
- Reach out for individual questions or coaching
- Schedule further workshops for trauma-informed practice or supporting the academic ambitions of foster youth

FOSTER 
PROGRESS



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instagram.com/foster_progress

Trauma

10 1

Trauma 101

“Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.”

SAMHSA - Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration



Three Categories of Trauma



- **Acute:** A single incident, like a car accident

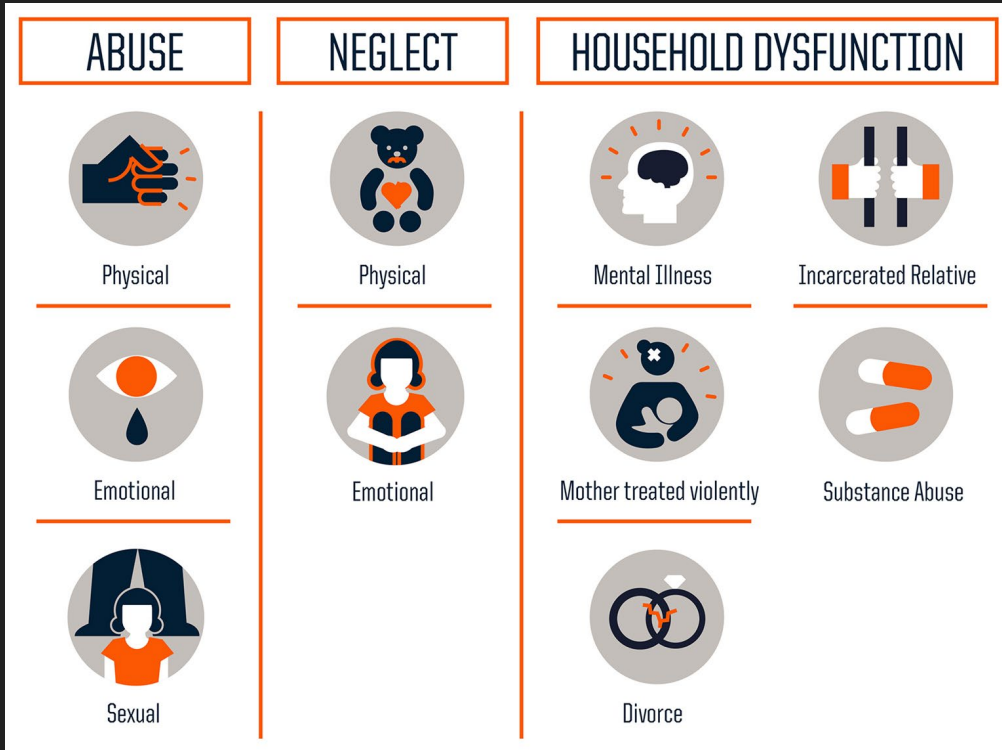


- **Chronic:** prolonged and repeated incident such as domestic violence, or childhood abuse.



- **Complex:** Combination of varied incidents of trauma.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)



“Are potentially traumatic events that can have negative, lasting effects on health and well-being. These experiences range from physical, emotional, or sexual abuse to parental divorce or the incarceration of a parent or guardian.”

https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Brief-adverse-childhood-experiences_FINAL.pdf

ACEs Assessment Example

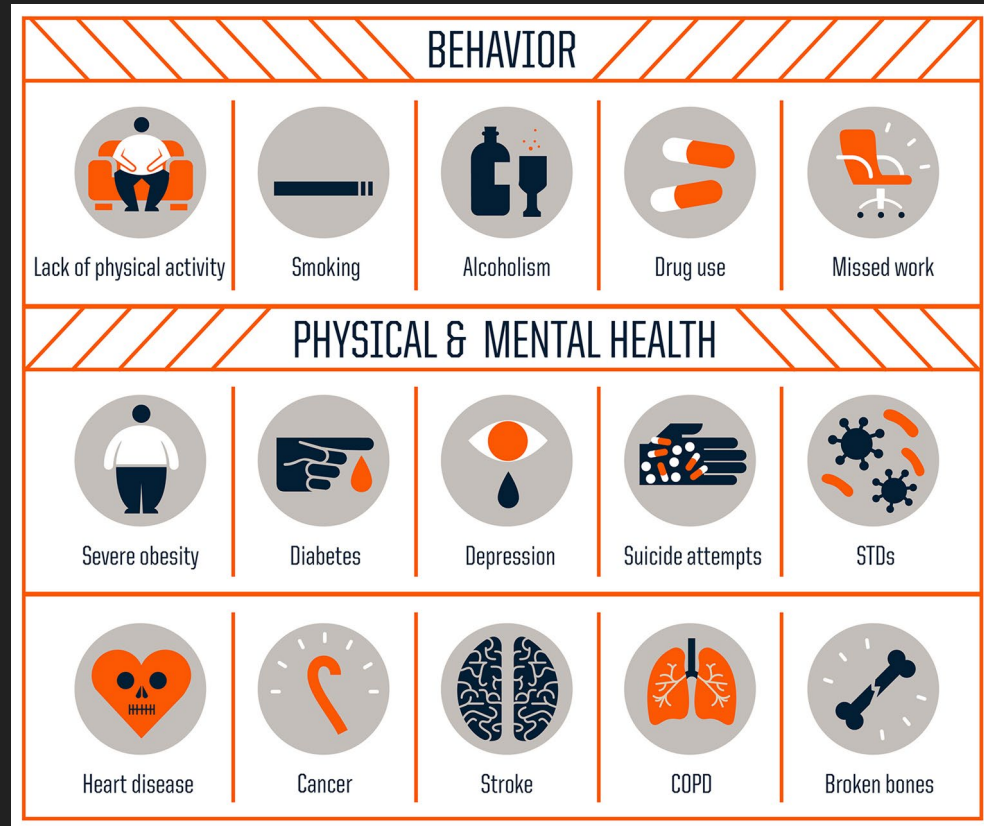
Take a few moments to take the ACEs quiz. Keep in mind that it can be a heavy experience for some.

Spoiler alert: there's hope! Even when we experience a lot of ACEs, we may also have a lot of **protective factors!**



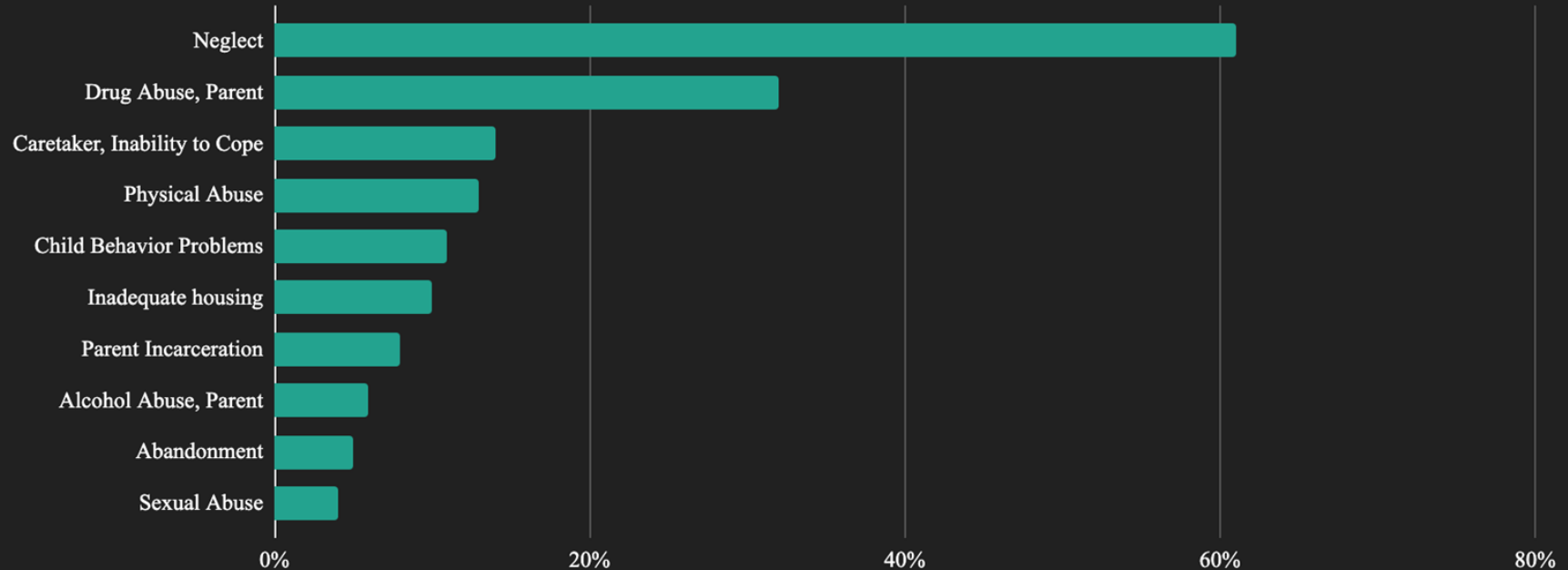
<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2015/03/02/387007941/take-the-ace-quiz-and-learn-what-it-does-and-doesnt-mean>

ACES Increase Health Risks



ACES that Foster Youth Experience

Reasons Children Come into Care



Protective Factors

“Protective factors are conditions or attributes in individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that mitigate or eliminate risk, thereby increasing the health and well-being of children and families.”

What protective factors did you have in your own life?



Protective Factors

Intrinsic vs External

- Individual
- Family
- Communities



Individual and Family Protective Factors

Children who...

- have positive friendships and peer networks
- do well in school
- have caring adults outside the family who serve as mentors/role models
- there are strong social support networks and positive relationships with the people around them
- caregivers engage in parental monitoring, supervision, and consistent enforcement of rules

Families where...

- safe, stable, and nurturing relationships are created
- caregivers can meet basic needs of food, shelter, and health services for children
- caregivers have college degrees or higher
- caregivers have steady employment
- caregivers/adults work through conflicts peacefully
- caregivers help children work through problems
- engage in fun, positive activities together
- The importance of school is encouraged for children

Community Protective Factors

Communities where families have access to....

- economic and financial help
- medical care and mental health services
- safe, stable housing
- nurturing and safe childcare
- high-quality preschool
- safe, engaging after school programs and activities

Communities where...

- adults have work opportunities with family-friendly policies
- strong partnerships exist between the community and business, health care, government, and other sectors
- residents feel connected to each other and are involved in the community
- violence is not tolerated or accepted

Resilience



Definition: the ability to mentally or emotionally cope with a crisis or to return to pre-crisis status quickly.

If despite our efforts we live in a world where youth can not be protected from life's traumas then we have a responsibility to help youth learn to live with and recover from these traumas.

Reaching the goal of graduation

How can we mitigate risks by instilling protective factors?

Extrinsic (Support System)

- Mentors
- Community
- Financial support
- Health
- Safety

Intrinsic (Social/Emotional Development)

- Teaching
- Modeling
- Therapy



For Further Study

Trust Based Relational Intervention - [TBRI for Teachers](#)

What Happened to You? Dr Bruce Perry and Oprah Winfrey

[SAMSHA's Trauma and Violence resources](#)

[CDC's ACES resources](#)

[Childwelfare.gov's resources](#)