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Report: Michigan Shortchanging Its Foster Children



Michigan appropriates \$750,000 a year for college scholarships for foster children, an amount that doesn't meet the overall need. (WallyIR/Morguefile)



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LANSING, Mich. — Too many foster youth in Michigan struggle in their transitions to adulthood - trying to go to school, get a job and find a place to live - according to a [new report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation](#).

Bobby Dorigo Jones, policy and outreach associate with the nonprofit Michigan's Children, said many young people, especially children of color, get bounced around in foster homes. And that disrupts their relationships with family, friends and counselors - and can make it harder to graduate from high school.

"In Michigan, by their 21st birthday, about 90 percent of all young people will have a GED or high school diploma," Dorigo Jones said. "But that number for young people transitioning out of foster care is about 66 percent."

The report said nationally, 23 percent of foster kids get help with college or career training, but in Michigan, it's just 3 percent.

Dorigo Jones noted the state limits its [Fostering Futures college scholarship](#) only to kids who are in the system after age 13. He said he'd also like to see the Michigan Legislature pass the [Children's Assurance of Foster Care Quality Act](#). It would to give foster children more say in their cases and make it easier to follow up on complaints.

Leslie Gross, director of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, said the system needs to better support kids' families of origin, or at least find more permanent placements for teenage foster children, so they can have someone to rely on long-term.

"I can't emphasize enough how young people need adult support," Gross said; "just thinking about making everyday decisions, things like how to sign a lease for an apartment, how much money to spend on groceries, how to apply to college, how to pay for college, getting connected to jobs."

The report also found that 40 percent of foster children in Michigan have experienced homelessness by age 21. Nationwide, that number is 30 percent.

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