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# State struggles to connect kids aging out of foster care with educational, vocational opportunities

By [STATESIDE STAFF \(/PEOPLE/STATESIDE-STAFF\)](#) • 19 HOURS AGO

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*Michigan ranked last in the nation in getting kids who age out of the foster care system connected to educational and vocational opportunities.*

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A recent national report (<https://www.aecf.org/resources/fostering-youth-transitions/>) from the Annie E. Casey Foundation found that Michigan is behind the rest of the country in helping young people move out of the foster care system and onto a successful adult life. In West Virginia, 70 percent of youth transitioning out of foster care got education financial assistance. The national average was 23 percent. Here in Michigan? It was just one percent.

**Matt Gillard** is the president and CEO of the advocacy group Michigan's Children (<https://www.aecf.org/resources/fostering-youth-transitions/>), which works to improve Michigan's child welfare system. Gillard says that the problem starts way before kids transition out of the system. He says there isn't enough support when kids are still in foster care, either.

"What's important for people to know is, it's not like they figured it out in other states, and we just don't have the answer. We know what needs to be done and what can be done. It's just a matter of our elected officials prioritizing it, and recognizing that these children are the responsibility of the citizens of the state of Michigan and the government of the state of Michigan," Gillard said.

Listen to the full interview to hear why Gillard thinks better access to mental health services could help children who age out of foster care succeed, and how universities are taking matters into their own hands.

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