

1-page summary: Connectedness to education and employment

Article Title Geiger, J. M. & Okpych, N. J. (2022). Connected after care: Youth characteristics, policy, and programs associated with postsecondary education and employment for youth with foster care histories. *Child Maltreatment*, 27(4), 658-670. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10775595211034763>

Research Questions

1. Do state-level policies (EFC, ETV, Tuition Waiver, FCIA) increase the odds of youth connectedness to education and/or employment at age 21?
2. At youth-level, do services and resources from policies (e.g., education and employment training, financial assistance, yrs. in EFC) increase the odds of connectedness?
3. Are there disparities by youth characteristics present in connectedness?

Data & Methods

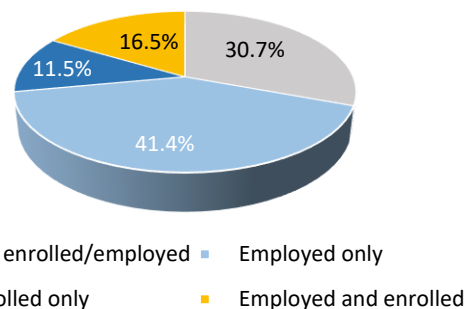
Sample: We analyzed data from the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD – 2014 cohort, n = 7,813 youth). This is a nationally representative sample of young people who were in U.S. foster care at age 17 in 2014. We linked NYTD Outcomes Data to NYTD Services data and AFCARS data.

Analytic methods: The main outcome is a measure of youths' connectedness at the time of their age-21 NYTD survey: enrolled in postsecondary education, employed, both enrolled & employed, or neither. We used multilevel regression modeling (youth nested within state) to investigate several sets of factors that may influence their connectedness at age 21. The main sets of factors were (1) state policies/programs (state has extended foster care [EFC], state has tuition waiver for foster youth, % of Chafee funds spent, % of Education and Training Voucher [ETV] funds spent) and (2) youths' receipt of services (years spent in EFC; received employment-related services, postsecondary education services, educational financial support). We also investigated youth demographics, foster care history, and other risk and protective factors as predictors.

Main Findings

- At age 21, more than two-thirds (69%) of youth were connected to education and/or employment. 31% were neither enrolled nor employed.
- States with tuition waivers available to all foster youth increased connectedness to postsecondary education.
- More time in EFC increased connectedness to education and employment, receipt of educational aid increased connectedness to education, and receipt of postsecondary ed. services increased connectedness to education and employment.
- There were also several youth characteristics that increased and decreased connectedness (e.g., males more likely than females to be employed only, Black youth more likely than White youth to be enrolled & employed). See the full report for more info.

Connectedness at Age 21



Implications

- This is one of the first studies to jointly examine education *and* employment, which is important because youths' involvement in one can influence their involvement in the other (e.g., if youth are going to school they may be less likely to be working).
- Simply having a state program in place (e.g., EFC policy) may not be as influential as youth receiving and benefiting from the program (e.g., time spent in EFC). State policies are important; however, it is critical to improve accessibility, participation, and completion of programs such as EFC, IL services, ETV.
- Participating in services and programs while in care (e.g., postsecondary ed. services, ed. aid, career prep. services) were found to increase connectedness to postsecondary education and employment. This underscores the importance of connecting youth in care early, intentionally, and consistently to education and employment services/programs to explore options, gain skills, and strengthen their networks.
- Tuition waivers available to all youth with foster care histories was found to be an important promoter of postsecondary education and employment. May help to remove economic barriers to higher education.