

Foundations for the Future: Housing Policy *with and for* Transition-Age Foster Youth



Children's
Advocacy
ALLIANCE

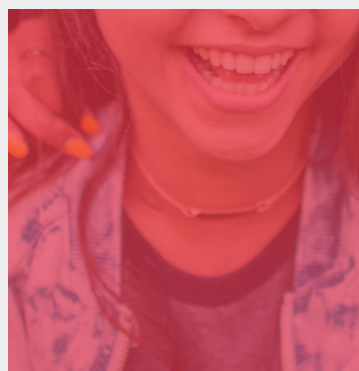
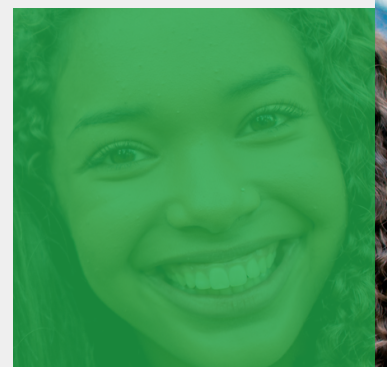
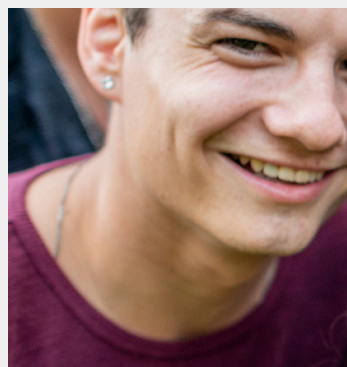
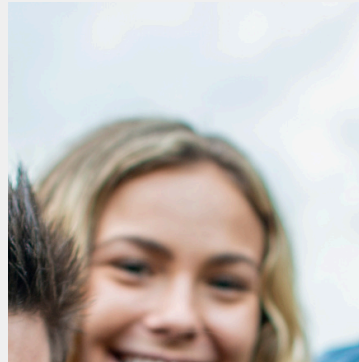


Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
NEVADA CONTEXT	7
PROJECT OVERVIEW	8
PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS	9
RECOMMENDATION ONE - Healing-Centered approaches incorporated into the housing structure	10
RECOMMENDATION TWO - Strong connections with higher education and vocational options	11
RECOMMENDATION THREE - Intentionally promoting autonomy and independence as a part of the housing program	12
RECOMMENDATION FOUR - Wrap around services and care coordination	13
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	14
RECOMMENDATION ONE - Incentivizing the acceptance of housing vouchers can provide more available housing options to TAY	15
RECOMMENDATION TWO - Landlord Partnership Model to build relationships and mitigate landlord risk	16
RECOMMENDATIONS THREE - Expanding Extended foster care in Nevada	17
A ROADMAP FOR IMPLEMENTATION	18
REFERENCES	20
APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY PARTNERS	21

About Children's Advocacy Alliance

Children's Advocacy Alliance (CAA) is an independent voice for Nevada's children. Our mission is to achieve public policy wins to advance systemic change in the areas of early childhood education, health, and child welfare. We accomplish this through research, policy analysis, advocacy efforts, community engagement, and collaboration to build collective impact to ensure every child in Nevada has the opportunity to thrive.

CAA focuses our work in three main program areas, which we refer to as “the three pillars”:

1. Early Childhood Education and Development:

CAA prioritizes high-quality early childhood education and care, recognizing the critical importance of these formative years in a child's life. Supported by funding from the Alliance for Early Success and the Pritzker Children's Initiative, the Children's Advocacy Alliance (CAA) spearheads the Strong Start Prenatal to Three coalition. This initiative convenes stakeholders from diverse backgrounds to collaboratively devise strategies aimed at enhancing Nevada's Early Childhood Systems. Additionally, our Child Advocacy Ambassador program, which is driven by parents, has garnered national recognition as an exemplary model for cultivating leadership within affected communities.

2. Children's Health: Ensuring access to quality healthcare services and promoting overall well-being for children across Nevada is a part of CAA's work. The Children's Advocacy Alliance stands at the forefront of advocating for children's healthcare in Nevada. Among our significant achievements are the successful extensions of Medicaid coverage under the Affordable Care Act in Nevada.

Additionally, we've played a pivotal role in expanding food assistance programs to encompass all Nevada children, regardless of immigration status. Most recently, our efforts led to the extension of postpartum Medicaid coverage from 60 days to 12 months. Currently, we are deeply involved in community education efforts regarding the phase-out of continuous Medicaid coverage mandated during the COVID-19 state of emergency. This transition, often referred to as the 'unwinding,' has already resulted in thousands of eligible families losing their health insurance. Furthermore, as the primary convener of a statewide coalition dedicated to children's mental health advocacy, we are fighting to enhance community-based services and insurance coverage for children grappling with behavioral and mental health challenges.

3. Child Welfare and Equitable Access: CAA advocates to prevent youth from entering the child welfare system and to improve support programs for youths throughout their time in care. System-involved youth are at greater risk for school dropout, underemployment, incarceration, and continuing cycles of abuse and neglect. Our focus includes augmenting foster transition support and bolstering educational resources; empowering youth through support groups and opportunities for civic engagement; advancing best practices to develop a comprehensive system for preventing child abuse and neglect; and providing necessary care and services for children and families affected by these challenges.

Executive Summary

In Spring 2024, Children's Advocacy Alliance (CAA) was awarded a grant to study the transitional housing needs of foster youth aging out of the child welfare system in Nevada. This project represents a crucial step toward identifying and addressing the systemic barriers that prevent successful transitions to adulthood for these young people.

Nevada's child welfare system has long struggled to provide stable housing placements, particularly for youth who are aging out without permanent family connections. Research indicates that 42% of youth exiting foster care experience homelessness within the first 12 months, and those with foster care histories face significantly lower high school and college graduation rates, which in turn affects their earning potential and ability to secure stable housing.

This project was designed as a one-year planning effort to conduct a comprehensive investigation into housing challenges, placement gaps, and policy barriers impacting Nevada's **transition-age foster youth (TAY)**. The study also seeks to generate policy recommendations to improve long-term housing stability, economic mobility, and support services for these youth.

Through this project, we are shaping a data-driven approach to improving housing stability for transition-age foster youth. The findings will serve as a blueprint for future initiatives and policy changes aimed at ensuring that every foster youth in Nevada has a secure and supportive transition into adulthood.

The specific goals of this project include:

1. Understanding the child welfare system, conducting informational interviews, visiting TAY-support organizations, exploring funding barriers, and identifying transitional housing and support services funding sources.
2. Engaging youth coalitions through listening sessions to gain access to the youth perspective on housing related challenges.
3. Generate recommendations for policy and practice that can be implemented in Nevada to improve TAY outcomes.

Project Description & Key Activities

Throughout the grant period, CAA has led a multi-phase approach to assess transitional housing needs though:

- *Stakeholder Partnerships & Data Collection:*
 - Engaging with state agencies, child welfare organizations, housing advocates, and youth advisory boards to identify gaps and barriers.
- *Site Visits & Observational Research:*
 - Conducting statewide and out-of-state site visits to evaluate successful housing models and potential best practices.
- *Coalition Convening & Youth Engagement:*
 - Establishing a Revitalized Child Welfare Coalition and ensuring youth voices are at the center of policy recommendations.
- *Comprehensive Report Development:*
 - Drafting and publishing data-driven findings and policy recommendations to inform future legislative and funding priorities.

CAA's role in Child Welfare

- Engage youth voices to ensure that solutions align with real-life challenges and needs.
- Work with the Child Welfare Network to raise awareness about the challenges faced by TAY in Nevada.
- Advocate for legislative and budgetary solutions to expand transitional housing and supportive services.
- Work with state and local agencies to implement pilot programs based on study recommendations.

Findings & Recommendations

CAA has identified the following key best-practice recommendations to improve Nevada's housing and support services for transition-age foster youth.

1. **Healing-Centered & Trauma-Informed Housing Programs** - Incorporating trauma-informed care and holistic healing in housing programs to ensure stability and emotional well-being.
2. **Building stronger Connections to Higher Education & Vocational Pathways** - Expanding college access, trade school opportunities, and workforce training to improve long-term economic stability.
3. **Promoting Autonomy & Independence** by developing youth-driven housing models that encourage self-sufficiency, financial literacy, and decision-making skills.
4. **Wraparound Services & Care Coordination** - Partnering with community agencies to provide mental health care, educational support, and employment resources in a one-stop-shop approach.
5. **Landlord Partnership Models** - Implementing a landlord liaison program to increase housing availability for foster youth and reduce discrimination in rental markets.

Introduction and Background

Children's Advocacy Alliance was first created in response to the closing of a transitional foster-youth home in Southern Nevada in which dozens of youths were left without housing. CAA's dedication to foster youth has continued for over 30 years, now focusing on transitional housing needs in Nevada for foster children who are aging out of the child welfare system with no place to go, with grant funding from the Walter S. Johnson Foundation.

This project is a strategic step toward addressing the urgent housing needs of foster youth in Nevada. The grant laid out a year-long planning effort focused on conducting a detailed investigation of systematic barriers impeding the welfare of foster youth in Nevada, with a particular emphasis on housing and placement challenges.

In effort to orient ourselves to the landscape of housing for transition-age youth (TAY), CAA engaged in training with Foster Success and other community partners, leveraged our connections with a SPARC lived experience cohort, visited an established TAY housing program, engaged coalitions of impacted youth, and interviewed invested community members. The data from these interactions was synthesized to form the policy and practice recommendations included in this report.

Our partnerships in this work are statewide stakeholders, including the Nevada Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS), educational institutions, local service agencies and advocacy organizations such as Eddy House, Rennervation, Olive Crest, St. Jude's, Foster Kinship, Foster Club, Nevada Partnership-Homeless Youth, Silver State Voices, WorkForce Development, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Boys Town, Legal Aid, and many more. We also leaned on the expertise and kindness of the Community Support Network in Santa Rosa, California.

These collaborations enable the development of tailored programs that directly address the unique needs of youth involved in foster care. From providing educational support and mental health services to offering life skills training and job placement assistance, our partnerships ensure a holistic approach to youth development. The explicit goals of this grant included site visits, youth engagement, and a landscape review, and the outcomes will have a lasting impact on the child welfare landscape in Nevada.

The resources from this grant were leveraged for the revitalization of the **Nevada Child Welfare Network (CWN)**. The CWN is a coalition of state-level leaders, nonprofit organizations, foster parents, and community members is dedicated to improving the lives of children and families involved in the State's child welfare care system. CWN is committed to working in partnership with stakeholders across the State to strengthen the foster care system and ensure that our youth receive the care, support, and resources necessary to thrive.

The Child Welfare Network was born in the mid-2000s and shuttered, like many coalitions, during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research from this project re-ignited this group and sparked discussions about policies and practices that impact TAY. By bringing together child welfare experts, service providers, and key stakeholders, the coalition works to address systemic challenges, promote innovative solutions, and advocate for policies that support vulnerable children. Through coordinated efforts, the coalition strives to create a comprehensive and effective system that meets the needs of youth in foster care and helps them transition successfully to adulthood.

Results

As a result of this information gathering, we have identified seven policy and practice recommendations that are poised to improve outcomes for TAY in Nevada.

Nevada Context

Nevada's foster care system serves a significant number of transition-age youth (TAY), defined as individuals between the **ages of 14 and 21** who are aging out of the foster care system. As of 2022, Nevada had **4,047 children in foster care**, with a substantial portion classified as TAY (Children's Bureau, 2022). Approximately **39%** of the **State's foster population** is between the ages of 14 and 21 (National Conference of State Legislatures [NCSL], 2023). These figures highlight the **growing need** for **targeted transition support services** that address **housing, employment, education, and mental health** for Nevada's aging-out foster youth.

TAY in Nevada experience **significant challenges** that impact their ability to transition successfully into adulthood. One of the most pressing concerns is educational attainment. Only **47.5%** of Nevada foster youth **graduate from high school**, compared to the **83.9% graduation rate for non-foster care students** (Legislative Counsel Bureau, 2023). This educational gap places transition-age youth at a disadvantage, **limiting their opportunities** for **higher education and stable employment**.

Another alarming issue is **housing instability**. Data indicate that **over one in three** foster youth aging out of care in Nevada will **experience homelessness by age 21**, a rate significantly higher than the national average of nearly one in five (Las Vegas Sun, 2017). The combination of **housing insecurity** and **limited employment opportunities** makes it **difficult** for transition-age youth to establish **financial independence**. Within four years of exiting the foster system, **50%** of former foster youth in Nevada reported having **no earnings**, and those who did earn income had an average salary of only \$7,500 annually (NCSL, 2023). This is **well below** the amount needed for basic living expenses. A studio apartment in Nevada requires an annual income of approximately \$46,624 (NCSL, 2023). The **disparity** between **income potential and housing costs** places foster youth at an **increased risk** for **chronic homelessness, poverty, and economic instability**.

Existing Policies Supporting Transition-Age Youth

Nevada has implemented several policy initiatives and programs designed to support transition-age foster youth. The **Independent Living Program**, administered by the Nevada Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS), provides **life skills training, housing assistance, and educational support** to youth currently in foster care as well as those who have aged out at 18 (DCFS, 2023). Additionally, the **Extended Foster Care Program**, which took effect in January 2024, allows youth to remain in the foster care system until age 21. Under this policy, youth continue to receive **financial support, case management, and access to Independent Living services** to help them transition successfully into adulthood (DCFS, 2022).

Despite these policies, there are **challenges with implementation and accessibility**. While extended foster care programs have been widely recognized as a best practice, their **success** depends on **effective outreach, enrollment, and participation**. Nevada still **lags** other states in fully utilizing available federal funding and ensuring that youth are aware of and able to access these critical support programs.

Project Overview

Nationally, youth with foster care involvement are at **higher risk** for experiencing homelessness. As of 2019, 42% of youth exiting foster care experience homelessness within the first twelve months for at least one night (Legislative Council Bureau, 2023).

School completion rates are also impacted by foster care involvement. The high school graduation rate in Nevada is 81.72% (Children's Bureau, 2022). When it comes to foster youth, the graduation rate plummets to 47.5% and only 3% of foster youth complete college (Legislative Council Bureau, 2023).

TAY are disproportionately impacted by low educational attainment, underemployment, and housing instability.

As fewer foster-involved youth complete high school and college, there are fewer qualifying job opportunities available to foster youth, impacting income and the ability to afford housing.

In Nevada, the annual income needed to afford a studio apartment is approximately \$46,624. For a one-bedroom apartment, the annual income needed is approximately \$64,203, which would be equivalent to working over 85 hours a week at the state's current minimum wage of \$12.00 per hour (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2025). This disconnect between income and housing costs leaves many TAY without a pathway to stability and independence (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2025).

Gaps in Services for Transition-Age Youth

Although Nevada has made strides in supporting transition-age foster youth, significant gaps remain in service accessibility, funding, and long-term housing solutions. One major gap is service utilization. It is noteworthy that Nevada serves a lower percentage of transition-age foster youth compared to the national average (39% vs. 47%). In other words, there are fewer TAY accessing available resources in Nevada, which suggests potential barriers to accessing services (NCSL, 2023). Factors such as lack of program awareness, inconsistent case management, and difficulty meeting eligibility requirements may contribute to this lower utilization rate.

Another critical gap is educational support. Lower graduation rates highlight the need for enhanced educational interventions for these youth to prepare them to exit high school college and career ready (Legislative Counsel Bureau, 2023). Programs that provide mental health support, mentorship, academic tutoring, and college or career preparation could significantly improve these outcomes.

Housing stability remains a major unresolved issue for TAY in Nevada. Despite the availability of some transitional housing programs, Nevada lacks enough affordable housing options for youth exiting care. Given that over one-third of transition-age youth experience homelessness, expanding rental assistance programs, housing vouchers, and landlord partnerships could help bridge this gap (Las Vegas Sun, 2017).

Finally, economic challenges persist. Low employment rates and earnings among former foster youth demonstrate the urgent need for more robust job training programs, career coaching, and workforce development initiatives targeting these youth (NCSL, 2023). Ensuring that TAY have access to paid internships, apprenticeship programs, and vocational training could significantly improve their economic stability.

Youth Voice and Engagement

TAY were centered in this project as a key source of information sharing their experiences and weighing in on the feasibility of the recommendations generated. CAA leveraged existing foster youth coalitions and relationships with foster youth advocates to gather feedback based on their experiences. Before the generation of the recommendations, youth were asked what they believed would offer the greatest supports. The suggestions from those focus group meetings were integrated into the recommendations explained later in this report. Youth were also given the opportunity to give feedback on the face validity of the recommendations and how they feel the recommendations could impact their outcomes.

Conclusion

Transition-age youth in Nevada face major barriers in education, housing, and employment, putting them at high risk for homelessness and long-term financial instability. While Independent Living and Extended Foster Care programs provide a foundation of support, service utilization remains low, and gaps in housing, education, and workforce training must be addressed. Expanding affordable housing programs, increasing educational support, and strengthening job placement services will be key to improving outcomes for Nevada's foster youth as they transition into adulthood. The recommendations below have been derived from interviews, observations, conversations with community partners and input from TAY.

Children's Advocacy Alliance is dedicated to exploring transitional housing solutions for foster youth aging out of Nevada's child welfare system without stable placements. This initiative marks a critical move toward understanding and addressing the state's pressing housing gaps for young people exiting care.

Practice Recommendations

The practice recommendations on the following pages are grounded in the lived experiences of transition-age youth (TAY) and reflect a vision for housing and support services that are healing-centered, developmentally appropriate, and equity-driven. They are designed to guide service providers, community-based organizations, and system partners in creating environments where young people feel safe, supported, and empowered. The following recommendations focus on the everyday practices and programmatic approaches that can transform how Nevada supports youth transitioning from foster care into adulthood, building not just shelter, but a foundation for long-term well-being and self-sufficiency.

Recommendation One

Healing-centered approaches incorporated into the housing structure

Healing-centered and trauma-informed care are approaches designed to recognize and address the complex impacts of trauma on individuals, particularly youth who have experienced foster care. Trauma-informed care involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of trauma by creating a safe environment where individuals feel seen, heard, and respected. This approach incorporates an awareness of how past traumatic experiences can influence behavior, mental health, and decision-making, fostering empathy and patience within care settings.

Healing-centered care builds on this foundation by focusing on the strengths, culture, and identity of the individual, moving beyond symptom management to support a holistic healing process. Rather than merely addressing the consequences of trauma, healing-centered care emphasizes resilience, empowerment, and the individual's capacity to thrive, creating a pathway toward self-sufficiency and personal growth.

Including trauma-informed and healing-centered principles in housing programs for youth exiting foster care is essential due to the unique challenges and traumas these young adults often face. Many foster youth have experienced instability, separation, and various forms of trauma that can leave lasting effects on their mental and emotional well-being.

A housing program grounded in trauma-informed care provides a supportive and stable environment that feels safe and nurturing, offering the stability they need to make positive life choices and avoid common pitfalls such as homelessness or criminal justice involvement. Additionally, healing-centered care fosters a sense of agency and self-worth, empowering young adults to build a positive sense of identity as they transition to independence. This comprehensive approach ensures that the housing program does more than just provide shelter—it offers a safe space for youth to heal, build resilience, and develop the skills they need to succeed in adulthood.

“If we could really do these, they would literally be amazing and change my life and my brother’s life” — S.E., 16, TAY

“There isn’t enough money. Gas prices, food, everything is going up even with a job. We need help so we can get a career” - S.E., 16, TAY

Recommendation Two

Strengthen connections with higher education and vocational options

For foster youth transitioning to adulthood, housing programs that offer connections to higher education and vocational training are crucial to breaking cycles of poverty and creating pathways to economic stability. Many foster youth face educational disruptions due to frequent moves, emotional stress, and lack of consistent support, which can make it challenging to pursue further education or meaningful employment after aging out of the system. By integrating higher education and vocational training opportunities into housing programs, these youth gain access to critical resources and mentorship that can help them develop essential skills, earn degrees or certifications, and secure stable employment. This connection not only improves their earning potential but also fosters a sense of purpose, identity, and personal achievement, which are essential for long-term success.

Linking foster youth housing programs to educational and vocational opportunities helps address the systemic barriers these young adults often encounter. Many foster youths lack the family support that peers rely on for guidance, financial assistance, and career advice.

Offering additional support equips foster youth with the tools to navigate application processes, access financial aid, and pursue career pathways that match their interests and strengths. Ultimately, embedding resources into housing programs allows foster youth to receive the mentorship, skill-building, and academic support they need to bridge educational gaps and pursue their goals.

In Nevada, this approach is reflected in the work of Olive Crest, which supports transition-age youth by building strong pathways to college and vocational opportunities. Olive Crest partners with local educational institutions and workforce programs to ensure that young people aging out of foster care have access to resources, guidance, and support to pursue higher education or enter career training programs.

This dual focus on stability and self-sufficiency helps youth envision and work toward long-term goals, while also connecting them to caring adults and mentors who walk alongside them in the process. With increased investment, Olive Crest could expand its reach and impact, helping even more young people transition into adulthood with purpose and possibility.

This can be achieved by establishing partnerships with local colleges, universities, and trade schools, as well as creating direct pathways to internships and apprenticeships. Partnerships can offer youth access to guidance counselors who understand the unique challenges of foster care alumni, support with financial aid applications, and opportunities to explore various career paths in a structured way. Offering workshops on topics like resume-building, interview skills, and navigating workplace dynamics further prepares them for independence and long-term economic stability. A focus on education and training not only enhances employment prospects but also cultivates confidence, resilience, and a sense of purpose, equipping youth for a successful transition to adulthood.

Recommendation Three

Promote autonomy and independence as a part of the housing program

Promoting autonomy within foster youth housing programs is essential because it empowers young people to build the confidence, decision-making skills, and self-reliance needed for independent living. Many foster youth have grown up in environments where their choices were limited or controlled, often resulting in a lack of practice with the responsibilities that come with adulthood. By creating a program that prioritizes autonomy, foster youth are encouraged to make their own decisions, whether it's managing finances, setting personal goals, or maintaining their living space, within a supportive structure. This approach allows them to learn from both successes and mistakes in a safe environment, helping them to develop resilience and critical life skills.

Furthermore, fostering autonomy helps these young adults build a strong sense of self-worth and ownership over their lives. When foster youth feel that they are trusted to make decisions and navigate challenges independently, it reinforces their confidence in their own abilities, a critical factor in their psychological and emotional well-being. Autonomy-driven housing programs can offer guided opportunities for choice and responsibility, such as managing a budget or planning personal and educational goals, with staff available to provide support and mentorship as needed. By encouraging autonomy, housing programs set youth on a path to become capable, self-sufficient adults who are better prepared to face the complexities of life beyond the foster care system.

Programs for transition-age foster youth can promote autonomy by providing opportunities for young people to make decisions about their lives within a supportive structure. This can include offering choices in housing arrangements, financial planning, and personal goal-setting, all with guidance from mentors or case managers who encourage independence while offering support as needed. Practical skills, such as budgeting, meal planning, and time management, are essential components that empower youth to take control of their day-to-day lives and responsibilities. Programs can also encourage self-advocacy by teaching youth how to navigate systems like healthcare, employment, and education, helping them feel empowered to advocate for themselves.

Nevada is home to programs that actively support youth in building autonomy and developing strong decision-making skills—critical components of a successful transition to adulthood. El Shaddai Village offers housing and support to young adults who have aged out of foster care, including job readiness training, life skills development, and parenting support. Their model centers the dignity and independence of youth, empowering them to take ownership of their future. Similarly, the Washoe County Human Services Agency provides a range of supportive services to transition-age youth, including independent living preparation, educational planning, and goal setting through its Youth and Family Services Division. These programs lay the groundwork for long-term self-sufficiency and stability. With additional investment and expanded capacity, they could reach even more young people in need of guidance, opportunity, and consistent support.

“For a lot of kids in kinship care and in foster care, when we leave and become adults, we struggle with having the confidence to make good choices” J.L., 20, TAY

Recommendation Four

Expanding wrap around services and care coordination

Partnering with agencies that provide wraparound services is essential for foster youth housing programs because these young adults often have complex needs that extend beyond housing alone. Many TAY have faced significant instability and trauma, resulting in challenges related to mental health, education, healthcare, and employment readiness. Wraparound services address these interconnected needs holistically by bringing together a range of supports — including counseling, life skills training, educational assistance, and medical care — into one cohesive support network. By collaborating with agencies that specialize in these areas, housing programs ensure that youth receive comprehensive, coordinated care tailored to their unique situations, reducing the risk of gaps in services and helping them build a stable foundation for independence.

Furthermore, wraparound services foster a sense of continuity and security, offering foster youth a dependable support system as they navigate the challenges of adulthood. By having a trusted network of professionals who understand their background and can respond to their evolving needs, youth are less likely to feel isolated or overwhelmed. This integrated approach allows them to build meaningful relationships with service providers, creating a community of consistent support that can significantly improve outcomes related to mental health, employment, and overall well-being. Partnerships with agencies that provide wraparound services also offer youth the opportunity to develop skills and resources in a structured, supportive way, setting them up for a more successful and sustainable transition into adulthood.

Programs for transition-age foster youth can create and utilize strong connections with wraparound service agencies by establishing formal partnerships and collaborative frameworks that integrate services into a unified support system. By building direct connections with mental health providers, educational support services, healthcare facilities, employment programs, and community organizations, housing programs can offer youth a seamless, accessible network of resources. Regular meetings and shared communication channels between program staff and service providers help ensure that each youth's needs are addressed holistically, allowing for coordinated and timely responses to challenges as they arise.

***“As a young adult, I feel the disconnect now that I have exited. Having a person would be beneficial because they can help with everything, finding a therapist, getting Medicaid, getting into school, everything. They can be close knit with the young adult”
— A.B., 21, TAY***

Recommendation Four Continued

Expanding wrap around services and care coordination

By bringing agency representatives on-site for workshops, counseling sessions, and informational events, programs can foster trust and familiarity, making it easier for youth to access and engage with the resources they need. This approach not only simplifies access to services but also strengthens the safety net around each individual, providing them with a comprehensive, supportive environment as they transition to independent living.

Nevada is home to several organizations dedicated to providing comprehensive, wrap-around services to support youth, particularly those transitioning out of foster care or experiencing homelessness.

Programs like R.I.S.E. Homes offer transitional housing coupled with counseling, job training, and transportation assistance, creating a supportive environment for young adults striving for independence.

St. Jude's Ranch for Children provides therapeutic residential services, nurturing environments, and trauma-informed care to abused and neglected children, emphasizing healing and empowerment.

The Eddy House serves as a central hub for homeless and at-risk youth, offering emergency shelter, counseling, life skills training, and workforce development programs to facilitate self-sufficiency.

By bolstering these programs with additional resources and support, Nevada can enhance its capacity to serve more youth, ensuring that vulnerable populations receive the comprehensive care and assistance they need to thrive.

Policy Recommendations

While the practice recommendations in this report focus on direct service delivery and program design for transition-age youth (TAY), meaningful and lasting impact also requires supportive policy infrastructure. The following policy recommendations are designed to complement and strengthen the implementation of healing-centered, autonomy-promoting, and coordinated care practices.

Recommendation One

Incentivize the acceptance of housing vouchers to provide more available housing options to TAY

Incentivizing the acceptance of housing vouchers can significantly expand housing options for youth transitioning from foster care by encouraging landlords to participate in rental assistance programs. Policies that provide financial incentives—such as tax breaks, signing bonuses, or damage mitigation funds—make it more appealing to open units to youth who may otherwise face housing discrimination due to limited rental history or income instability. Programs that reduce perceived financial risks, such as landlord risk mitigation funds, have been shown to increase voucher acceptance in states like California (California Department of Health Care Services [DHCS], n.d.).

Additionally, laws prohibiting discrimination based on source of income, including housing vouchers, can protect youth from being denied housing due to their reliance on subsidies. Cities like Seattle and states like Oregon have implemented these protections, mandating that landlords consider all lawful income sources (City of Seattle Office for Civil Rights, n.d.; Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries [BOLI], n.d.). Pairing such policies with landlord liaison programs, tenant education, and rapid response teams can build trust and reduce conflict—ensuring voucher programs benefit both youth and property owners.

Existing Models

1. **California’s Housing and Homelessness Incentive Program (HHIP):**
 - a. Provides funding to Medi-Cal managed care plans that invest in homelessness solutions, including landlord incentives and tenant supports (DHCS, n.d.).
2. **Seattle’s Source of Income Protection Law:**
 - a. Requires landlords to accept legal sources of income, including vouchers, and bans discrimination based on income type (City of Seattle Office for Civil Rights, n.d.).
3. **Oregon’s Statewide Source of Income Protections:**
 - a. Prevents landlords from refusing tenants solely because they use housing assistance (BOLI, n.d.).

“Access to affordable housing was a safety net for me and my child and I could avoid being system involved. It helped me get support to provide for my family and pursue my career.”

— A.M., 22, TAY

Potential Funding Streams

HUD Housing Choice Vouchers and FYI Initiative
State general funds earmarked for youth housing access
Philanthropic partnerships to launch pilot incentives

Cost Estimate and Funding Strategy

Costs depend on the scale and structure of the incentive package. California’s HHIP offers a model for how public health and housing systems can coordinate resources to expand landlord participation (DHCS, n.d.). A Nevada-specific cost estimate could be informed by existing housing voucher usage rates, rental market dynamics, and projected need among foster youth populations. Initial estimates suggest that landlord incentives can range from \$1,500–\$3,000 per unit, plus reserves for risk mitigation funds.

Recommendation Two

Establish a Statewide Landlord Liaison Program to Support Foster Youth Housing Stability

Implementing a Landlord Liaison Program (LLP) as a state policy in Nevada would significantly enhance housing stability for transition-age youth (TAY) exiting foster care. By establishing dedicated landlord liaisons within Regional Housing Authorities, the state can foster partnerships with property owners, mitigate potential risks associated with renting to young adults, and streamline communication between landlords and tenants.

This proactive approach addresses common barriers TAY face in securing housing, such as limited rental history or credit challenges, and promotes successful, stable tenancies.

Existing Models and Initiatives

New Mexico's Landlord Collaboration Program and resulting Landlord Partnership Model supports property owners who agree to rent to at-risk youth, including former foster youth. The program provides landlord incentives and a financial remedy pool, which reduces perceived risk and encourages greater housing access (New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority, n.d.).

Potential Funding Streams and Strategies

Funding for a Nevada-based LLP could come from a combination of sources:

1. **Federal HUD programs**, particularly the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) initiative, which provides housing vouchers to eligible youth exiting foster care (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.).
 - a.
2. **State dollars** through the Nevada Independent Living Program, which is designed to assist current and former foster youth in transitioning to adulthood.
 - a.
3. **Public-private partnerships**, including philanthropic investments and local business support, could supplement core funding and support flexibility in services.

Cost Estimate:

While program costs vary, New Mexico's model suggests that between \$50,000 - \$200,000 annually can support a landlord liaison role and accompanying risk mitigation funds (New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, 2023). A phased implementation, starting in counties with high rates of youth homelessness or housing instability, would allow for evaluation and scaling.

Establishing a Landlord Liaison Program in partnership with Nevada's Regional Housing Authorities would build on successful models and create a responsive housing strategy tailored to the unique needs of transition-age youth.

"Affordable housing would help me get an apartment near my school to help with transportation. I could work at least 40 hours a week, while being able to afford groceries and pay off my bills." — J.K., 19, TAY

Recommendation Three

Build Out Extended Foster Care

Nevada’s existing extended foster care program provides critical support to young adults transitioning out of care, but it remains limited in reach and scope. Nevada’s has an established foundation for serving TAY, but additional capacity and extended timelines are needed to address ongoing housing instability and unmet developmental needs.

Expanding the program to align more closely with successful models such as California’s Transitional Housing Program-Plus (THP-Plus) and Santa Rosa’s Sanctuary Villas would allow Nevada to offer a more comprehensive continuum of services through age 24. This expansion would provide stable housing, individualized case management, access to education and employment opportunities, and an intentional focus on autonomy development—ensuring that youth exit care equipped with the tools and support they need to thrive. This policy proposal aligns with current priorities in Nevada, including postsecondary access initiatives, the Child Welfare Network’s strategic goals, and the Department of Child and Family Services Family First Prevention Services work.

Existing Models in California

California’s THP-Plus: This state-funded program provides up to 36 months of housing and supportive services to former foster youth aged 18–24. THP-Plus focuses on housing stability, education, employment, and skill-building (John Burton Advocates for Youth, 2024).

Sanctuary Villas – Santa Rosa, CA: Operated by Community Support Network, this program offers stable housing and wraparound support for TAY, emphasizing mental health care, life skills, and academic achievement (Community Support Network, 2019).

“For me [this] would mean not having to stress as much about making enough money to keep my housing and knowing I can pay off any bills and avoid debt.” — J.A., 18

Related Initiatives in Nevada

Independent Living Program (ILP): Nevada’s ILP supports current and former foster youth with life skills, education, and employment preparation. However, the scope is limited and ends at age 21.

Clark County’s StepUp Program: Offers financial assistance, referrals, and housing support for young adults who have aged out of care.

Potential Funding Streams

1. **Federal Title IV-E Funds:** Available for eligible youth participating in extended foster care programs beyond age 18.
2. **HUD Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Vouchers:** Provides housing vouchers directly tied to youth exiting foster care.
3. **State General Funds & Philanthropic Support:** Particularly uplifting in rural and underserved areas.

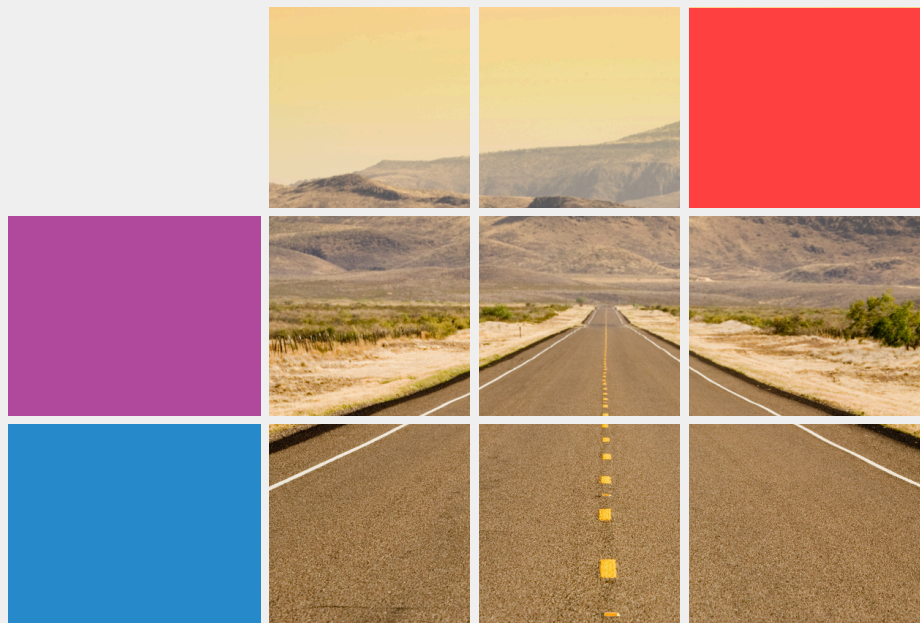
Cost Estimate and Funding Strategies

Based on similar programs in CA and WA, annual costs for comprehensive extended foster care with supportive housing range between \$30-40,000 per youth (John Burton Advocates for Youth, 2024). A phased rollout beginning in counties with the highest rates of TAY homelessness would allow for piloting and evaluation before statewide scaling. Funding should be braided across federal, state, and philanthropic sources to promote long-term sustainability.

A Roadmap for Implementation

This 5-year policy roadmap was developed by building on our core recommendations and grounding them in Nevada's current landscape for transition-age youth (TAY). It reflects both our direct knowledge of the challenges facing young people as they exit the foster care system and our commitment to healing-centered, equity-driven solutions.

Each recommendation has been translated into actionable steps that align with the unique structure of Nevada's policy environment, especially recognizing that our state legislature meets biennially. This roadmap is designed to guide both immediate advocacy and long-term systems change through strategic partnerships, community engagement, and policy development across legislative and non-legislative years.



PHASE 1: Foundation Building & Administrative Action (2025–2026)

Focus: Pilots, partnerships, and groundwork for future policy

Lead Entities: DHHS, child welfare network members, nonprofit partners, local housing authorities

1. Launch Healing-Centered Housing Pilots
 - a. Partner with nonprofit providers to pilot healing-centered housing models for TAY.
 - b. Train staff in trauma-informed and youth-driven practices.
 - c. Gather early data on youth outcomes and satisfaction.
2. Build Postsecondary and Workforce Bridges
 - a. Formalize partnerships with community colleges and workforce programs.
 - b. Ensure TAY in housing programs can access flexible education and vocational opportunities.
3. Develop Landlord Engagement & Voucher Incentive Models
 - a. Use ARPA or philanthropic funds to pilot landlord incentive programs.
 - b. Begin stakeholder conversations around a formal risk mitigation fund for voucher acceptance.

PHASE 2: Legislative Preparation & Model Refinement (2026–2027)

Focus: Data collection, stakeholder engagement, and 2027 bill drafting

Lead Entities: DHHS, CAA, housing coalitions, state-level TAY advisory group

1. Expand and Evaluate Landlord Partnership Program
 - a. Scale initial pilots, formalize mediation and risk mitigation support.
 - b. Use data to shape a policy proposal for 2027 that incentivizes broader landlord participation.
 2. Prepare Legislative Concepts for Extended Foster Care & Voucher Incentives
 - a. Draft legislative proposals to expand Nevada's Independent Living Program into a THP-Plus-style model.
 - b. Use evaluation data and national models (like CSN Sanctuary House) to justify long-term policy change.
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PHASE 3: Legislative Action & Policy Change (2027–2028)

Focus: Advance legislation and solidify sustainable structures

Lead Entities: Children's Advocacy Alliance, DHHS, advocacy coalitions

1. Introduce Legislation in 2027 Session
 - a. Incentivize housing voucher acceptance through tax/insurance benefits or a risk pool.
 - b. Expand extended foster care and supportive housing options for youth 18–24.
 - c. Institutionalize wraparound services and healing-centered supports.
 2. Establish a TAY Statewide Advisory Board
 - a. Codify a youth-led advisory body to guide implementation and evaluation.
 - b. Build accountability and elevate lived experience in future system design.
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PHASE 4: Implementation & Systems Alignment (2028-2029)

Focus: Scale, monitor, and strengthen interagency coordination

Lead Entities: DHHS, state interagency task force, nonprofit partners

1. Scale Housing and Wraparound Programs Statewide
 - a. Expand capacity using data from pilots.
 - b. Prioritize rural and underserved communities.
2. Sustain Policy Wins with Ongoing Evaluation
 - a. Conduct annual progress reviews.
 - b. Adjust programs based on youth outcomes, housing retention and education and employment indicators.

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Appendix

The work highlighted in this report would not be possible without the insight, commitment, and collaboration of community partners across Nevada and beyond. These organizations are on the front lines, supporting transition-age youth every day with housing, mental health care, education, and wraparound services. The following is a list of partners who contributed their expertise to this project. We share their contact information here to encourage continued connection, collaboration, and community-building around shared goals for youth success.



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