

Impact on Ready by 21 — Adverse Child Experiences (ACEs) and Transition-age Youth (TAY)

Becoming an Adult Without Family Support

Youth in foster care ages 16 to 21, known as transition-age youth, or TAY, face unique challenges as they mature into young adults. Usually, youth have the financial and emotional support of their parents and other relatives to guide them through the maturation process.

But TAY may not have a permanent home or reunite with their families by the age of 21. Without consistent support, TAY can become more vulnerable to problems like homelessness, unemployment, substance abuse and developing or increasing mental health issues.

The Impact of Trauma and ACEs with TAY

As we help TAY become better prepared for adulthood, we must consider how trauma may have impacted their development through adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Higher ACE scores have been linked to a greater chance of school performance issues, substance abuse, physical and mental illness, unstable relationships and early death. [A recent study by Florida International Universityⁱ](#) shows that higher ACE scores can also lead to low impulse control. Building resiliency and identifying [protective factorsⁱⁱ](#) (such as [safe and stable relationshipsⁱⁱⁱ](#), strong communities and caregiver resilience) can mitigate the impact of trauma and ACEs.

Ready by 21 – Preparing Youth for Adulthood

To help all youth to be better prepared for success as adults, there's [Ready by 21^{iv}](#). Developed by [the Forum for Youth Investment^v](#), Ready by 21 involves a set of strategies for communities to make a vital difference in the lives of children and youth.

Ready by 21 teaches important life skills in areas such as:

- **Financial literacy** – Saving money, opening a bank account, understanding a credit score.
- **Housing** – Applying for an apartment, grocery shopping, understanding tenant rights.
- **Employment** — Creating a resume, applying for jobs, interviewing skills.
- **Health** – Medication compliance, understanding routine health care, healthy eating and exercise, identifying and maintaining healthy relationships.
- **Education** – High school equivalency certificate/GED[®] planning, driver's education, registering to vote, filling out the Free Application for Student Aid (FASFA).

What You Can Do

ACEs may increase the likelihood of challenging outcomes, [but they do not have to shape a youth's destiny^{vi}](#). Portland State University's Regional Research Institute for Human Services recommends four ways to help TAY become successful adults while, at the same time, addressing their trauma histories (Blaustein and Kinniburgh 2015).

1. **Develop a toolbox.** Most TAY don't have the necessary tools and skills for a healthy adulthood. To give them a better chance of success, they can learn skills such as the Ready by 21 skills,

along with resilience, managing emotions, making thoughtful choices and growing self-awareness.

2. **Identify long-term resources.** Permanency, safety and reunification are often the end goals for children and youth in child welfare, but it's important to take a wider view of a child or youth's well-being. Although reunification may happen, family integration has been disrupted and the family may not be able to help the child or youth achieve adult milestones. It is important to identify the permanent attachment resources in place to help and support TAY age out successfully.
3. **Create a network.** Instead of focusing on one agency or resource, build a network of agencies, service providers, and natural supports (such as friends and self-chosen family) for TAY to create a safety net of supports as they continue to mature.
4. **Provide intensive supports for the TAY who need them.** For those TAY members with severe mental health or behavioral health issues, the transition into adulthood requires more support. These intensive supports include increased quantity, frequency and duration of treatments, long-term congregate care and job skills training.

Resources

Blaustein, M. E., & Kinniburgh, K. M. (2015). "Focal Point" When Age Doesn't Match Stage. Retrieved November 7, 2019, from Pathways RTC website: <https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/focal-point-S1506>

Eidelson, R. Interview: Trauma-Informed Care with Transition-Age Youth. (2019, April 15). Retrieved November 7, 2019, from Psychology Today website: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/dangerous-ideas/201904/interview-trauma-informed-care-transition-age-youth>

Webinar 47: Trauma Informed Care Youth-/Young Adult-Serving Organizations—YouTube. (2019, January 23). Retrieved November 11, 2019, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46qvhlpZ9gc>

Hyperlinks:

ⁱ <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/florida-international-university-researchers-show-adverse-childhood-events-contribute-to-lower-self-control-among-teens-300951017.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.aappublications.org/news/2019/07/10/protective-factors-at-home-and-school-to-combat-adverse-childhood-event-scores-pediatrics-7-10-19>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ace/resilience.html>

^{iv} <http://www.readyby21.org/>

^v <https://forumfyi.org/>

^{vi} <https://www.nearathome.org/2019/07/balancing-aces-with-hope/>