New Study Provides Insights into Pregnancy and Parenting among Youth who Age-Out of Foster Care

Des Moines, Iowa – October 9, 2018 – The Youth Policy Institute of Iowa, in collaboration with researchers at Iowa State University, recently completed a study on pregnancy and parenting among young people in Iowa who are transitioning from foster care to adulthood.

“Pregnancy and Parenting among Iowa Youth Transitioning from Foster Care: Survey and Focus Group Results” was authored by a research team at the Child Welfare Research and Training Project at Iowa State University. The report presents findings and recommendations from a survey of eighty-one young people and two focus groups that were conducted in late 2017.

State and national data show that young people who have been in foster care are much more likely to become parents at a young age than their peers. The new study offers insights into the factors contributing to that trend, exploring issues of pregnancy prevention and reproductive health education, sexual experiences, and parenting supports among young people in Iowa who have aged out of care.

The next step is to apply what was learned through the study to improve how the system addresses these issues with young people who experience foster care. “Findings from this study clearly show the need for earlier and more proactive efforts to educate youth in foster care about reproductive health and pregnancy prevention,” stated Carol Behrer, Executive Director of YPII. “We also need to do a better job of ensuring that young parents, both mothers and fathers, have access to the supports they need to be successful parents.”

The study was funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in cooperation with the Center for the Study of Social Policy. The research project was designed to inform the development and adoption of new or revised policy, program, and practice recommendations to address the high rate of unintended pregnancies and early parenting among Iowa youth transitioning from foster care.

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About Youth Policy Institute of Iowa

Founded in 2000, the Youth Policy Institute of Iowa (YPII) works to expand and improve the delivery of services and supports for Iowa youth by partnering with public and private entities throughout the state. YPII is involved in a wide range of initiatives, but specializes in policies and programs affecting youth transitioning from adolescence to adulthood, particularly those who have been involved in child welfare (foster care) or juvenile justice systems. YPII also provides coordination, outreach, and evaluation support to the Iowa Aftercare Services Network.

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