



# Independent Living Services for Foster Care Youth

## *An Analysis of the National Youth in Transition Database-Reported Services for Washington State*

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*To the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services Children's Administration, Barb Putnam, LICSW, Well-Being Unit Supervisor, Rick Butt, MSW, Independent Living Program Manager*

THE WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES' (DSHS) Children's Administration provides Independent Living Services (ILS) for youth aged 16 to 21 years in foster care to assist the youth in making the transition from foster care to self-sufficiency. According to Public Law 106-169<sup>1</sup> youth may choose to receive one or more ILS services such as educational support, employment preparation, financial assistance, and services teaching youth important life skills. The law requires the states to report on ILS services to the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) twice a year.

Children's Administration (CA) asked the DSHS Research and Data Analysis Division to analyze NYTD-reported data to gain a better understanding of Washington youth receiving ILS services. The data for the study came from the November 2011 NYTD submission, the state's only second such submission. The services were documented by ILS providers: ILS contractors, social workers, and CA's tribal partners. At the time of the data collection, the state was transitioning to full documentation of ILS services. The study population includes all youth who participated in at least one independent living service paid for or provided by CA at any time between April 1 and September 30, 2011 ( $n = 1,707$ ).<sup>2</sup> This report provides descriptive and summary information about documented ILS services received by the youth overall and in relation to their age, sex, and race or ethnicity.

### Key Findings

- **58 percent of youth receiving Independent Living Services are 18 years old or less.** Older youth are less likely to be currently participating in ILS.
- **54 percent of ILS participants receive 3 or more services;** 25 percent receive 5 or more services.
  - 56 percent receive educational support services;
  - 50 percent receive employment preparation services;
  - 60 percent are learning skills in financial and home management, risk prevention and health, and/or healthy marriage.
  - 33 percent receive financial assistance for education, housing, or other needs.
- **57 percent of ILS participants are female.** Older participants are more likely to be female. Females are more likely to receive ILS services geared toward older ILS youth such as post-secondary educational support, life skills services, and to receive multiple ILS services. Males are more likely to participate in employment programs or receive vocational training.
- **50 percent of ILS participants are minority race or ethnicity.** Older participants are less likely to be minority. Minority youth are more likely to receive academic support services, financial assistance, and multiple services than White non-Hispanic youth.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. "About NYTD." [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/systems/nytd/about\\_nytd.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/systems/nytd/about_nytd.htm).

<sup>2</sup> The count is higher than for the actual November 2011 NYTD submission ( $n=1,536$ ), because additional participant data have been entered.

## HIGHLIGHTS | Participants in Independent Living Services

- 46 percent of the youth in the study received one or two Independent Living Services while 54 percent received 3 or more Independent Living Services. 25 percent of ILS participants received 5 or more services.
- 46 percent of ILS participants received career preparation services, the highest share among all ILS. 13 percent received vocational training or participated in other employment programs. Overall, 50 percent received one or both employment-related services.
- 43 percent of ILS participants received academic support services, the second highest share. 23 percent received post-secondary educational support. Overall, 56 percent received one or both education services.
- Life skills-building services each drew between 23 and 33 percent of ILS participants. Overall, 60 percent received one or more life skills-building services.
- 33 percent of ILS participants received financial assistance for education, housing, or other needs. Financial assistance for other needs went to the largest share: 27 percent.

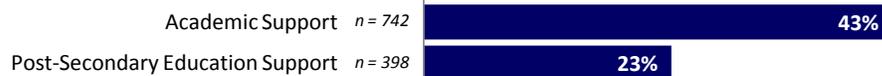
### NUMBER OF INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES RECEIVED



### FOSTER CARE TO INDEPENDENCE



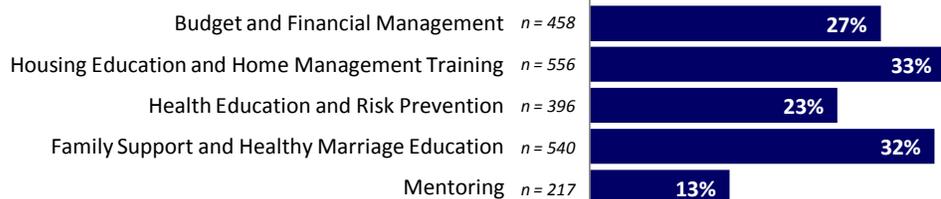
### EDUCATION SERVICES



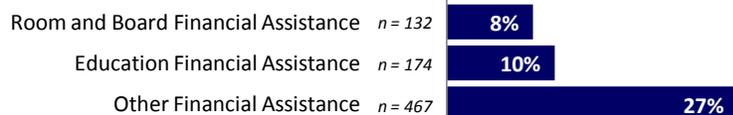
### PREPARING FOR EMPLOYMENT



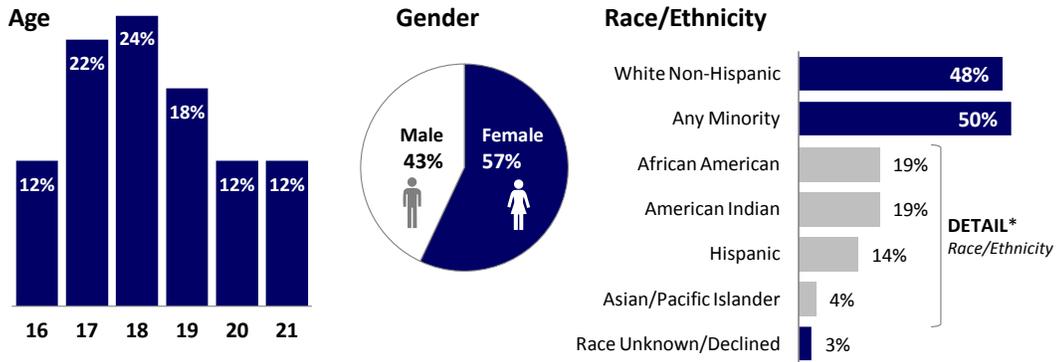
### OBTAINING LIFE SKILLS



### FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

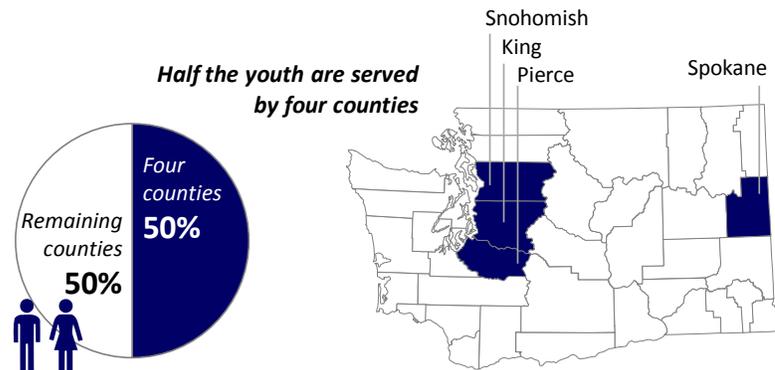


**DEMOGRAPHICS** | 58 percent are 18 years old or less. 57 percent are female. Half are minority race or ethnicity. Older participants are more likely to be female, less likely to be minority. Half are served in four largest counties.



\* Since a person can be a member of more than one minority group, the percents for individual racial categories will sum more than percent shown for "Any Minority." "White, Non-Hispanic" and "Any Minority" sum to 100 percent.

- **58 percent of youth receiving Independent Living Services are 18 years old or less.** 18-year-olds represent nearly a quarter of all youth, the largest segment.
- **57 percent of youth receiving ILS are female.** Older participants are more likely to be female. Females comprise 47 percent of youth 16 years old, compared to 68 percent of those 21 years old.<sup>3</sup>
- **50 percent of youth receiving ILS are racial or ethnic minority,** 48 percent are White non-Hispanic, and 2 percent have not identified their race. Older participants are less likely to be minority. Minority youth comprise 63 percent of youth 16 years old, compared to 48 percent of those 21 years old.
- **African-American and American Indian youth are the largest racial minority groups among ILS recipients, 19 percent each.** 14 percent of ILS recipients are Hispanic; 4 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander youth.<sup>4</sup>
- **Half of the youth receiving ILS are served by four largest counties** (King, Pierce, Snohomish, or Spokane). Among the rest, about one third of counties serve fewer ILS youth than expected given their total populations of 16- to 21-year olds. These are mainly agricultural counties in central, eastern, and south-eastern Washington. Another third of counties, mainly rural and/or remote ones, serve more ILS youth than their populations of 16- to 21-year olds suggest. (See *Technical Tables*, p. 8 for data detail).



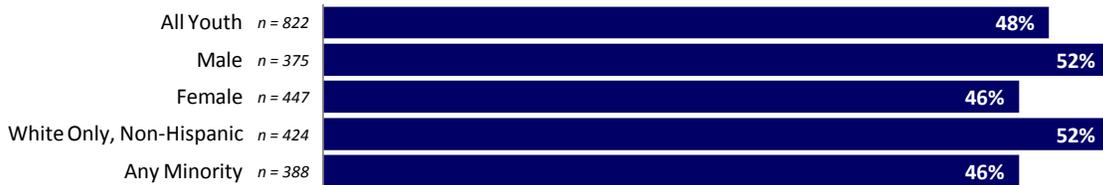
<sup>3</sup> Here and throughout the report, see *Technical Tables* for data detail by age.

<sup>4</sup> Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander youth represent only 1 percent of all youth receiving ILS services while Asian youth represent 3 percent of all youth. Due to small numbers, the data for these two groups are analyzed together.

## FOSTER CARE TO INDEPENDENCE | 48 percent of youth are in foster care, 27 percent have had an independent living needs assessment in the last 6 months

Independent Living Services are provided both to youth in foster care and to youth who have emancipated from foster care. Independent Living Needs Assessment<sup>5</sup> is designed to identify basic skills, emotional and social capabilities, strengths, and needs of the youth. As a result of the assessment, the youth are matched with appropriate independent living services.

### ► Foster Care



- **48 percent of youth receiving ILS were in foster care** at some point during the reporting period. Understandably, older participants are less likely to be in foster care. While 73 percent of 18-year-olds are in foster care, the rate is only half as high for 19-year-olds (39 percent). Just 14 percent of 20-year-olds and only 3 percent of 21-year-olds were still in foster care.
- More than half of youth in foster care were females (447 youth) while less than half were males (375 youth), likely, due to higher attrition of male participants. However, for males remaining in ILS, the proportion in foster care was higher than for females (52 percent and 46 percent, respectively).
- More than half of youth in foster care were White, non-Hispanic (424 youth) while less than half were racial or ethnic minority (388 youth). Additionally, a higher share of White, non-Hispanic youth were in foster care than minority youth (52 percent and 46 percent, respectively). The difference was especially pronounced for younger participants: among youth 16 years old, 94 percent of White, non-Hispanic youth were in foster care compared to only 57 percent of minority youth; among 17-year-olds, the shares were 65 percent and 54 percent; among 18-year olds, the shares were 78 percent and 68 percent, respectively.

### ► Independent Living Needs Assessment



- **27 percent of youth participated in Independent Living Needs Assessment** during the reporting period. The share was slightly higher among younger participants (28-30 percent) and declined to 21 percent for those 21 years old.
- More females than males received the services. Additionally, a higher share of females than males received the services at any age but the youngest and the oldest; overall, 28 percent of females and 25 percent of males participated.
- Minority youth were as likely as White, non-Hispanic youth to participate in Independent Living Needs Assessment (both at 27 percent).

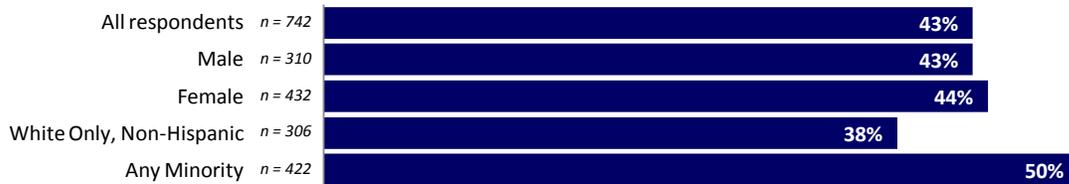
<sup>5</sup> Here and throughout the report, definitions of services or programs rely on the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Guide to the Data Elements (issued February 28, 2011).

**EDUCATION SERVICES | 56 percent of youth receive education services - academic support services (43 percent) and/or post-secondary educational support (23 percent)**

Youth receiving academic support services work toward obtaining high school diploma or General Equivalency Degree (GED); they may receive academic counseling, tutoring, study skills training, help accessing educational resources, and other services. 13 percent of ILS recipients ( $n = 216$ ) reported having completed 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Among those, 22 percent were 18 years old or less, 33 percent were 19 years old, and 45 percent were 20 years old or more. (Here and below, see *Technical Tables* for data detail).

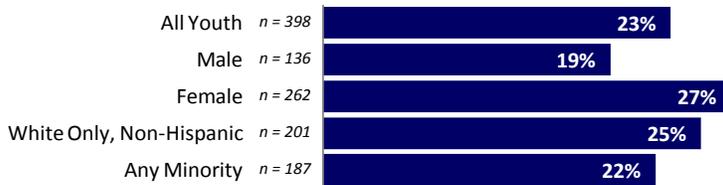
Post-secondary educational support services are designed to help a youth enter or complete a post-secondary education and may include classes for test preparation, counseling about college, financial aid, scholarships, or tutoring while in college. 13 percent of ILS recipients ( $n = 223$ ) reported having completed at least a semester at a college or university, and 1 percent ( $n = 18$ ) - other post-secondary education or training. Among those, 93 percent were 19 years or older.

► **Academic Support**



- **43 percent of youth received academic support services** during the reporting period. The share was close to 50 percent for youth 19 years old or less, compared to 33 percent for those 20 years old or more.
- More females than males received the services, likely, due to higher attrition among males. The share of males receiving the services was lower than for females at every age but 21 years.
- **Racial or ethnic minority youth were significantly more likely to participate in academic support services** than White, non-Hispanic youth (50 percent compared to 38 percent).<sup>6</sup>

► **Post-Secondary Education Support**



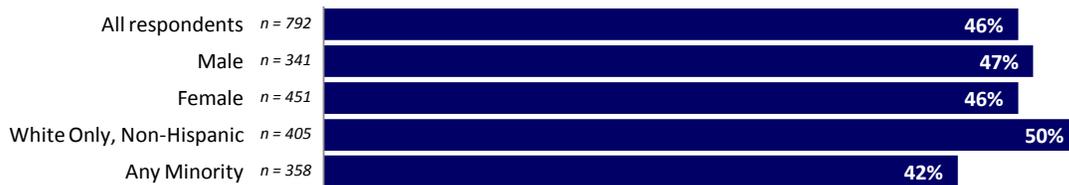
- **23 percent of youth received post-secondary education support services** during the reporting period. The rate was higher for youth reaching college age: 21 percent of 18-year olds, 36-37 percent of those 19 to 20 years old, and 33 percent of youth 21 years old received the services.
- **Females were significantly more likely to receive post-secondary educational support** than males (27 percent and 19 percent, respectively).
- White, non-Hispanic youth were slightly more likely than minority youth to participate in post-secondary educational support (25 percent compared to 22 percent).

<sup>6</sup> Here and elsewhere, “significant(ly)” means the difference is statistically significant as determined by a chi-square test (p-value < 0.05 or better).

**PREPARING FOR EMPLOYMENT | 50 percent of youth receive employment services - career preparation services (46 percent) and/or employment programs or vocational training (13 percent)**

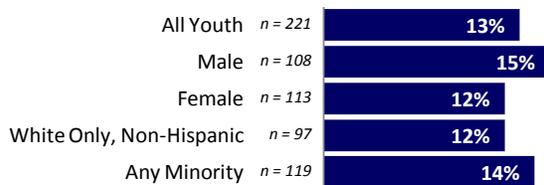
Career preparation services are designed to help youth find, apply for, and retain appropriate employment. Youth may participate in vocational and career assessment, job seeking and job placement support, as well as retention support, including job coaching, understanding workplace values, and understanding authority and customer relationships. Youth who are in an employment program may participate in an apprenticeship, internship, or a summer employment program. Youth in vocational training work toward getting skills and certification in trades such as auto mechanics, building trades, cosmetology, computer science, and others.

► **Career Preparation**



- **46 percent of youth received career preparation services** during the reporting period. The participation rate was the highest among 18-year-olds (52 percent). Younger and older youth were less likely to participate.
- More females than males received the services although overall rates were almost the same (46 percent for females and 47 percent for males). Among youth 18 years old and less, a higher share of females than males received the services. Among youth 19 years old or more, a higher share of males than females received the services.
- **White, non-Hispanic youth were significantly more likely to participate in career preparation services** than minority youth (50 percent compared to 42 percent).

► **Employment Programs or Vocational Training**

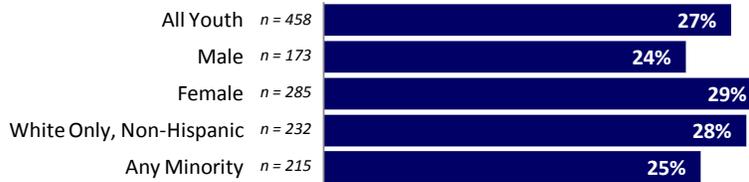


- **13 percent of youth participated in employment programs or vocational training** during the reporting period.
- **Males were significantly more likely to participate in employment programs or vocational training** than females (15 percent and 12 percent, respectively).
- Minority youth were more likely than White, non-Hispanic youth to participate in employment programs or vocational training (14 percent compared to 12 percent).

**OBTAINING LIFE SKILLS** | 60 percent of youth receive one or more life skills-building services—between 23 percent and 33 percent receive each service

► **Budget and Financial Management**

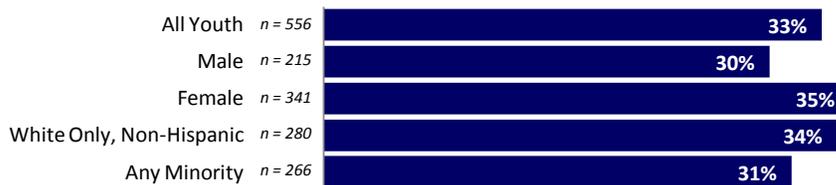
Youth may get training and help with living within a budget, using a bank account, developing smart shopping skills, accessing information about credit, loans and taxes, and filling out tax forms.



- **27 percent of youth received training in budget and financial management** during the reporting period. Older youth were more likely to participate (33-35 percent of youth 19 years old or more).
- **A significantly higher share of females than males received the services** (29 percent and 24 percent, respectively).
- A higher share of White, non-Hispanic youth than minority youth received the services (28 percent compared to 25 percent).

► **Housing Education and Home Management Training**

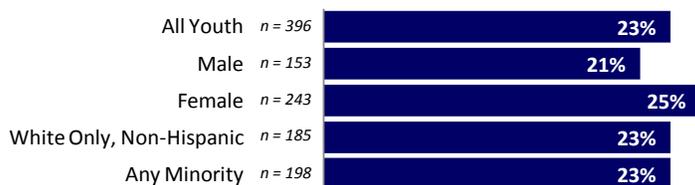
Youth learn about locating and maintaining housing, tenant’s rights and responsibilities, food preparation, housekeeping, living cooperatively, basic maintenance and repairs, and other topics.



- **33 percent of youth received housing education and home management training** during the reporting period. Older youth were more likely to participate: 49 percent of youth 20 years old received the training compared to 15 percent of youth 17 years old or less.
- **A significantly higher share of females than males received the services** (35 percent and 30 percent, respectively).
- A higher share of White, non-Hispanic youth than minority youth received the services (34 percent compared to 31 percent). However, older minority youth were more likely to participate: 46-52 percent of minority youth 19 years old or more received the services compared to 42-49 percent of White, non-Hispanic youth.

### ► Health Education and Risk Prevention

Youth learn how to maintain and improve health, access health care resources, remain free from disease (including sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS), as well as about pregnancy prevention and family planning, and substance abuse prevention and intervention.



- **23 percent of youth received health education and risk prevention training** during the reporting period.
- A higher share of females than males received the services (25 percent and 21 percent, respectively).
- White, non-Hispanic youth were as likely as minority youth to participate in health education and risk prevention training (both at 23 percent).

### ► Family Support and Healthy Marriage Education

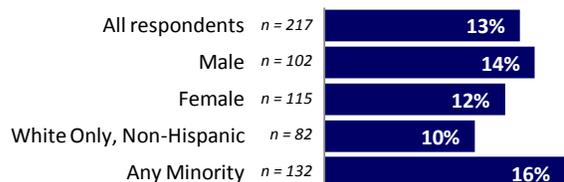
Youth learn about safe and stable families, healthy marriages, spousal communication, responsible fatherhood, childcare skills, teen parenting, and domestic and family violence prevention.



- **32 percent of youth received family support and healthy marriage education services** during the reporting period.
- **A significantly higher share of females than males received the services** (34 percent compared to 28 percent).
- Racial or ethnic minority youth were more likely than White, non-Hispanic youth to receive the services (33 percent compared to 30 percent).

### ► Mentoring

A youth receiving mentoring has been matched with a screened and trained adult for a one-on-one relationship that involves the two meeting on a regular basis. Mentoring can be short-term, but it may also support the development of a long-term relationship.

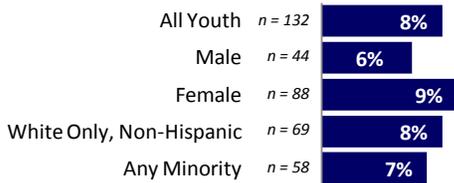


- **13 percent of youth received mentoring services.**
- Males were slightly more likely than females to have a mentor (14 percent compared to 12 percent).
- **Minority youth were significantly more likely to have a mentor** than White, non-Hispanic youth (16 percent compared to 10 percent).

**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE** | 33 percent of youth receive some financial assistance.  
**Minority youth are more likely to get assistance for education, other needs.**

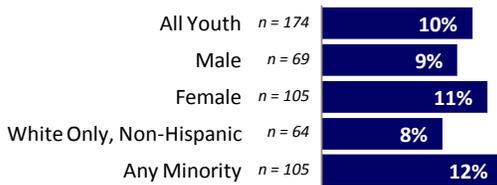
Room and board financial assistance service provides payments for rent deposits, utilities, and other household start-up expenses. Education financial assistance may be used to purchase educational supplies, for tuition assistance, for GED and other educational tests; it may include vouchers for tuition, for vocational education, or tuition waiver programs. Other financial assistance covers other needs.

► **Room and Board Financial Assistance**



- **8 percent of youth received room and board financial assistance** from the state during the reporting period. Nearly all youth receiving such assistance were 19 years old or older (94 percent).
- **A significantly higher share of females than males received the assistance** (9 percent compared to 6 percent).
- Racial or ethnic minority youth were almost as likely as White, non-Hispanic youth to receive room and board financial assistance (7 percent compared to 8 percent).

► **Education Financial Assistance**



- **10 percent of youth received education financial assistance** from the state during the reporting period. Females were slightly more likely to receive such assistance than males (11 percent compared to 9 percent).
- **Racial or ethnic minority youth were significantly more likely to receive education financial assistance** than White, non-Hispanic youth (12 percent compared to 8 percent).

► **Other Financial Assistance**

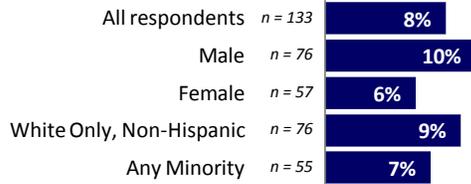


- **27 percent of youth received financial assistance for other needs** from the state during the reporting period. Older youth were more likely to receive the assistance: 37 percent of youth 19 years old, 40 percent of youth 20 years old and 48 percent of youth 21 years old received it.
- Females were more likely to receive other financial assistance than males (28 percent compared to 26 percent).
- **Racial or ethnic minority youth were significantly more likely to receive other financial assistance** than White, non-Hispanic youth (31 percent compared to 24 percent).

## OTHER INFORMATION | Criminal justice involvement among youth

Since transition to independence is likely to be more difficult for juvenile delinquents, the topic is briefly discussed here. While efforts have been made to document juvenile delinquency, the resulting data may not be complete.

### ► *Adjudicated Delinquent*



- **8 percent of youth were adjudicated as juvenile delinquent** for violating criminal law. The rate is the highest for youth 18 years old: 12 percent.
- **Males were adjudicated as delinquent at a significantly higher rate than females:** 10 percent compared to 6 percent.
- White, non-Hispanic youth were adjudicated as delinquent at a higher rate than racial or ethnic minority youth: 9 percent compared to 7 percent. At 18 years of age the rate for White, non-Hispanic youth is twice as high as for minority youth (17 percent compared to 8 percent).

#### TECHNICAL NOTES

##### NATIONAL YOUTH IN TRANSITION DATABASE (NYTD) DATA

The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (P.L. 106–169) required the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to develop and implement a data collection system to perform two functions: (1) track the independent living services States provide to youth; and (2) develop outcome measures that may be used to assess State performance in operating their independent living programs.

States were required to begin collecting NYTD data on October 1, 2010 (Federal Fiscal Year 2011); they report data to ACF semiannually. The six-month reporting periods are: October 1 to Mar 31 and Apr 1 to Sep 30. States must submit data files to ACF within 45 days of the end of the reporting period (i.e., by May 15 and Nov 14).

*Served population* includes all youth who participate in at least one independent living service paid for or provided by the State CFCIP agency or an agent of the State during a six month reporting period. States collect and report information on youth in the served population on an ongoing basis for as long as the youth participate in services.

The analysis pertains to Washington youth who participated in NYTD-reported ILS services at any time between Apr 1 and Sep 30, 2011 (n = 1,707). This matches most closely with the timing of the conclusion of the first NYTD survey in Washington State of the baseline youth population (youth in foster care that reached age 17 in FFY 2011).

##### RACE-ETHNICITY DATA

A youth's race is determined by the youth or his/her parent(s); they can report more than one race for the youth. The NYTD records the following races:

- An African American youth has origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.
- An American Indian or Alaska Native youth has origins in any of the original peoples of North or South America (including Central America), and maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
- An Asian youth has origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- A Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander youth has origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa or other Pacific Islands.
- White youth has origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.
- A youth is of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity if he/she is of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.
- The youth/parents may decline to identify or be not able to communicate the youth's race. The race may also be unknown.

The report presents data for Non-Hispanic White (one race only) and Any Minority. Data for African-American, American Indian, Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and Race Unknown/Declined categories are presented in *Technical Tables*.

##### TECHNICAL TABLES

A full set of tables providing detailed information on youth receiving Independent Living Services and tabulated by age by sex and race/ethnicity, including detailed subcategories of persons in the Any Minority category, is provided as a technical appendix to this report.