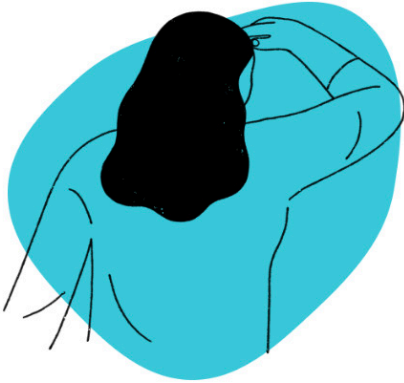


# 2022 Focus on Youth

## Canadians want more support for youth leaving care



### Every year, 2,300 young people across Canada “age out” of government care. What does that mean?

At the age of 18 (or 19 in some provinces), youth are on their own. They are no longer eligible for the type of support they received while living in foster care or group homes. Youth must establish their lives after care without the support of a family, without stable employment, without an education, or often without a support network of any kind.

For many youth in transition, these significant challenges are made worse by the ongoing impacts of childhood trauma with many feeling isolated, alone and unprepared to manage life on their own. Too many young people who leave the care of the child welfare system are unable to find the stability they need to build successful, happy lives.



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“The largest barrier for youth from care is lack of financial support. When you age out at 18, you can barely afford housing or food, and post-secondary education can fall into the background. Unlike many of my high school classmates who planned to attend post-secondary school, I did not have the savings from my parents to support my education. I knew that I needed to take on government student loans and get a job in order to make attending university a possibility. At times, the thought of having student debt or having to fit a work schedule around classes was worrying and I wondered whether I would be able to attend school while having all of these adult responsibilities.”

TAWNIA, advocate and former youth in care

# Canadians want more support for youth leaving care

An overwhelming majority of Canadians (88%) believe that youth leaving government care as young as 18 need more support and resources than they currently receive. According to a Children's Aid Foundation of Canada and Ipsos poll where Canadians were asked to reflect on their personal experiences, the results paint a clear picture – **the support system to help young people in Canada achieve independence is vastly different than what exists for youth transitioning from the child welfare system:**

88% of Canadians want more support for youth transitioning from care

## Independence

Canadians do not believe that the average 18-year-old in Canada is ready to venture out on their own without receiving additional support.

In fact, only 1 in 3 Canadians believe that 18-year-olds have the necessary skills and financial resources to live away from home and support themselves independently.



**Youth leaving government care** starting at age 18 have no choice but to venture out on their own. They are too often **set up for failure rather than success**, yet they deserve the same supports as their peers.

## Housing

Half of Canadians with an eldest child between the ages of 18 to 29 still have them living at home.

21 is the average age Canadians say their oldest child moved out of the family home.



Youth transitioning from care do not have a permanent family support system to provide them with housing assistance. In fact, they are **nearly 200 more times likely to experience homelessness than their peers.**

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### About this study

These are the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted online in June 2022. A sample of 1,001 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadians aged 18+ been polled.

## Family Support

Canadians believe that young people need help from their families with:

- Housing/Living expenses (67%)
- Emotional support (67%)
- Education-related expenses (58%)
- Job advice/networking assistance (53%)

7 in 10 Canadians agree that it is expected that children be supported by their parents beyond 18 years of age.

83% of Canadians agree that it is harder to get established as a young adult than it used to be.



Without having the benefit of strong family connections to provide emotional support, life skills development, and guidance, **youth from care are forced to navigate life on their own.** The absence of vital support networks makes their transition to independence more challenging as when **youth leave the child welfare system, less than 50% will have graduated from high school or have a job.**

## How Children's Aid Foundation of Canada helps youth transitioning from care

Children's Aid Foundation of Canada recognizes that increased support for youth leaving care is critical to their future success. Together with our community of donors, the Foundation is focused on three key areas for supporting youth transitioning from care: mental health and improving educational and employment outcomes. Some examples of our current programs for youth include:

**National Youth Mental Health Fund** - Most young people involved in child welfare suffer from unaddressed mental health issues due to significant traumatic early life experiences, which can be barriers to working towards their education and career goals. The fund pays for therapy, counselling and support programs to address complex mental health issues, with the aim of creating stronger and more resilient youth from care.

**Post-Secondary Education Program** - Through the ongoing generosity of donors, in 2021 the program awarded \$1.8 million in scholarships, bursaries, and grants to cover education-related expenses for 536 students enrolled in college, university or post-graduate programs. The program has had a significant positive impact on academic success and graduation rates and has proven the transformational power of support systems.

**Youth Works** - Aimed at providing youth from care with the skills, guidance and experience they need to find meaningful employment, the program is now running in six cities across Canada. To date, the program has reached 1,600 youth from care who have dreams of a brighter future.



TROY, Youth Works participant, and former youth in care

# What you can do to help

Regardless of where they live in Canada, youth deserve much more wraparound support as they leave care.

Earlier this year, British Columbia and Alberta announced they will establish programs for youth leaving care that provide longer transition times and more support for them into their mid-20s. This marks an important step forward, but even with these increased supports youth will still face significant barriers.

There are several ways Canadians can help youth transitioning from care:

## Become an ally

Sign up to be an ally to youth at [cafdn.org/focusonyouth](https://cafdn.org/focusonyouth), where you can get involved and keep up to date on issues affecting youth leaving care.

## Donate

Help youth receive the support they need to successfully navigate independence and create a bright future for themselves by donating at [cafdn.org](https://cafdn.org)

## Advocate

Contact your elected official to make them aware of the challenges facing youth leaving care and request more support for youth.

## Share

Share this resource with your network on social media, tagging @CAFDN and using the hashtag #FocusOnYouth to help spread the awareness of the challenges youth leaving care may face.



Guest with Troy, Kylie, and Eli, former youth in care.



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