



# Collaborative Quality Improvement

Division of Child Protection & Permanency



## 2023 BRIEF #2: YOUTH TRANSITIONING OUT OF FOSTER CARE, 2022

### OVERVIEW

The Division of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P) is New Jersey's child protection agency within the Department of Children and Families (DCF). CP&P is responsible for investigating allegations of child abuse and neglect and, if necessary, arranging for the child's safety and connecting families to appropriate services and supports.

CP&P serves a wide range of families and youth, including young adults, ages 18-21, who are transitioning out of the foster care system. At the juncture between adolescence and adulthood, young adults have unique developmental needs. CP&P is committed to supporting them in achieving economic self-sufficiency, interdependence, and healthy lifestyles. To do this, the Division conducts casework with youth, including transition planning and independent living assessments, and partners with community-based provider agencies to connect youth with comprehensive, specialized services and supports such as housing, life skills training, mentoring, career preparation and employment training, educational support, advocacy, and healthcare.



OFFICE OF  
QUALITY



## METHODS

DCF's Office of Quality (OOQ) conducts annual case record reviews to ensure that CP&P provides ongoing, high-quality support that meets the needs of youth transitioning out of foster care and to identify opportunities for Collaborative Quality Improvement (CoQI). The case record review assesses the quality of CP&P's work with young adults as it relates to documentation of outcomes achieved, including housing stability, education and employment enrollment, before youth transition out of foster care. It also assesses the quality of supervisory case conferencing, assessment of needs, and collection and integration of collateral information.

For the 2023 review, the Office of Quality assessed the cases of 74 youth, ages 18-21, that have cases closed with CP&P during the 2022 calendar year without achieving legal permanency.<sup>1</sup> Youth were 50% male and 50% female. The majority (60%) were 21 years old. Nearly one quarter (22%) identified as white non-Hispanic, 38% Black non-Hispanic, and 34% Hispanic of any race.

## AREAS ASSESSED

### Quality of CP&P Service Delivery

**Documentation:** CP&P maintains detailed and comprehensive documentation that reflects youth's housing, employment and educational status and CP&P's work to support these outcomes.

**Supervision:** Supervisory case conferences include discussions of the youth's needs as they transition into adulthood.

**Assessment:** CP&P accurately assesses the needs of the young adult to connect them to appropriate supports and services.

**Collateral Information:** CP&P collects meaningful collateral information to understand the young adult's progress toward goal attainment and preparation for adulthood.

### Youth Outcomes

**Housing:** Youth have housing prior to exiting care or there is documented evidence of consistent efforts to help youth secure housing.

**Education:** Youth is currently enrolled in a training or education program.

**Employment:** Youth is currently employed full or part-time or there is documented evidence of consistent efforts to help the youth secure employment.



OFFICE OF  
QUALITY

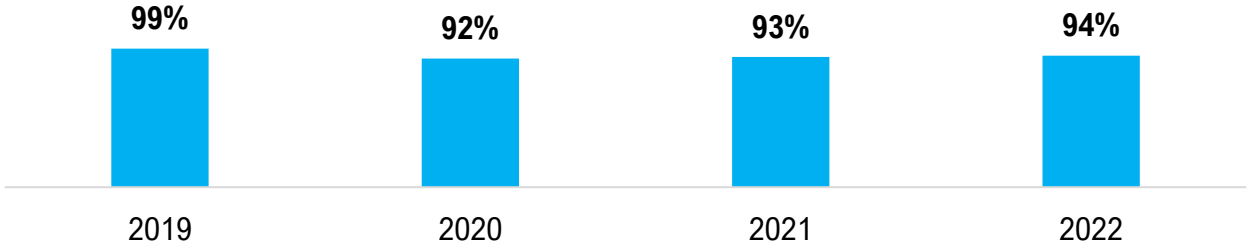
# FINDINGS & OUTCOMES

## OUTCOMES:



**94%** of youth were **stably housed** at the time of case closure,<sup>2</sup> an increase of 1% from 2021 (Figure 1). Youth primarily resided in their own apartments, with family or friends, or in housing provided through the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD).

**Figure 1.** Percent of Youth Transitioning out of Foster Care who were **Stably Housed**



**93%** of youth were engaged in **education or employment** at the time of case closure.<sup>3</sup> This percentage was similar to the prior year (Figure 2). Youth were either enrolled in college, post-secondary educational or vocational training programs, or employed full or part-time.

**Figure 2.** Percent of Youth Transitioning out of Foster Care Engaged in **Education or Employment**



## QUALITY OF CP&P SERVICE DELIVERY:

In **72%** of cases, CP&P’s documentation was current and illustrated a comprehensive summary of the youth’s housing, education, and employment status prior to case closure.

In over half of cases, CP&P’s accurate assessment (**55%**) of the youth’s needs and collection of meaningful collateral information (**59%**) to understand progress and inform planning were noted as strengths.

The review noted opportunities to further enhance documentation (**34%**) and supervisory case conferencing (**22%**).

# SUMMARY

Youth that leave the foster care system without achieving legal permanency are at heightened risk of experiencing poor life outcomes, including substance use disorder, unemployment, homelessness, and incarceration.<sup>4</sup> High quality casework and connections to appropriate services and resources can help to mitigate this risk.<sup>5,6</sup> The 2023 review highlighted strengths and areas for growth in CP&P's work with youth transitioning out of care. In the vast majority of cases reviewed, youth were housed (94%) and engaged in employment or education (93%). The review also produced evidence of high-quality casework. For example, in about three-quarters of the cases reviewed, CP&P's documentation was current and illustrated a comprehensive summary of the youth's housing, education, and employment status prior to case closure. In addition, there was evidence of linkages to resources that would allow for successful transitions towards adulthood.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

All CP&P local offices have launched CoQI and are in various phases of the [cycle](#). The results of the case record review are key inputs to each local offices' strengths and challenges analysis which is used to collaboratively identify priority areas for improvement.

Once the priority is identified, the teams will conduct root cause analyses, identify strategies for improvement, develop and implement their respective improvement plans, and monitor progress throughout the year.



OFFICE OF  
QUALITY

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup>There were a total of 82 older youth whose cases closed between January 1 – December 21, 2022. Eight achieved permanency with a relative prior to their case closing and were thus excluded from review.

<sup>2</sup> 66 cases were assessed for housing stability. Of the 74 older youth initially reviewed, 8 were either missing or incarcerated and housing could not be further assessed.

<sup>3</sup> 61 cases were assessed for education and employment. Education and employment could not be assessed for 13 youth who were missing, incarcerated, moved out of state or had a medical exemption.

<sup>4</sup> *Young adults formerly in foster care: Challenges and solutions*. Youth.gov. Retrieved from: <https://youth.gov/youth-briefs/foster-care-youth-brief/challenges>.

<sup>5</sup> Nuñez M, Beal SJ, Jacquez F. Resilience factors in youth transitioning out of foster care: A systematic review. *Psychol Trauma*. 2022 Apr;14(S1):S72-S81.

<sup>6</sup> Huang, H., Li, Y., & Campbell, J. M. (2022). Do independent living services protect youth aging out foster care from adverse outcomes? An evaluation using national data. *Child maltreatment*, 27(3), 444-454.

*All images were generated with the aid of Adobe Firefly.*