

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation’s Foster Youth Initiative partners with organizations that advance access and provide services to improve the connections, skills and supports that enable transition-age youth in Atlanta, Los Angeles and New York City who have experienced foster care to lead healthy, meaningful and choice-filled lives. This work aims to erase disparities in education, employment and well-being that affect transition-age foster youth. The Hilton Foundation focuses on investing in direct services for foster youth and their caregivers; systems change efforts; building the field and prioritizing the voices of those with lived experience; and research and evaluation.

Ideal state

All transition-age foster youth, including the most vulnerable, have fair access to the resources and support needed to lead healthy, purposeful and choice-filled lives through pathways that provide meaningful connections, resources, support,

stability and skills to pursue educational and career opportunities. Disparities in education, employment and well-being outcomes between transition-age foster youth and their peers no longer exist.

History and background

The board identified foster youth as a program area in 2008 based on Conrad N. Hilton’s wish to support youth whose circumstances put them at a disadvantage. Phase I of the Foster Youth Initiative was approved in 2012. It focused on foster youth ages 14-26, also known as transition-age youth, through advancing innovative programs, strengthening systems and sharing knowledge with the field. Phase I supported three landmark studies that led to direct improvements in local and national foster youth policies, as well as comprehensive system reform efforts in Los Angeles County and New York City. This included California’s Continuum of Care Reform, a statewide effort to reduce the number of older youth placed in group homes and increase the availability of long-term family care. In New York City, Foundation investments helped seed the Home Away from Home initiative, a comprehensive citywide effort to develop state-of-the-art recruitment of caregivers for older youth and improve how foster and adoptive parents are licensed, supported and retained. In 2017, the board approved

Phase II to continue to prioritize career and college readiness. It also deepened focus on strengthening data coordination and system and policy change implementation. The Hilton Foundation helped set the agenda for improvements for older youth, including catalyzing sustained public investments, providing bridge funding to fill agency gaps and leveraging support from other funders. This helped improve educational and employment outcomes by supporting more than 12,000 transition-age youth who have experienced foster care—providing them with education, career readiness and employment services, including case management, mentoring and coaching, legal advocacy and connections to critical material resources.

Building on these successes and learning from our partners, Strategy25 expands the focus age range to 14-26 and provides a more comprehensive approach, including exploring upstream interventions for middle-school-age foster youth.

Five-year goals

75 percent of foster transition-age youth and 60 percent of key subgroups graduate high school in five years

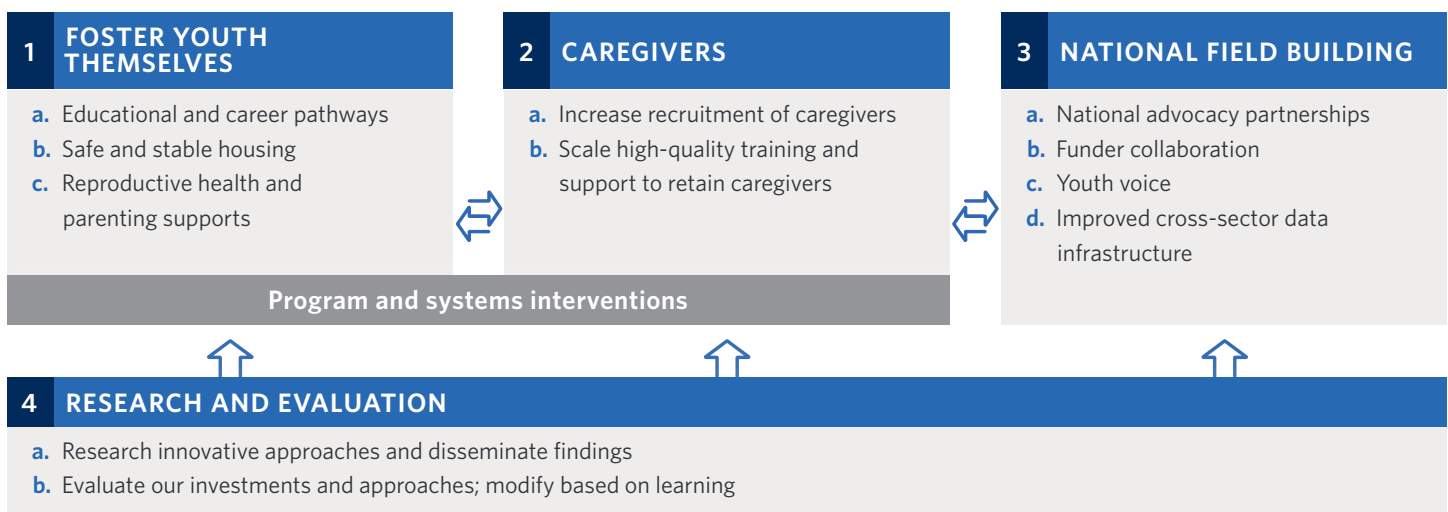
55 percent of foster transition-age youth high school graduates and 40 percent of focal subgroups are enrolled in post-secondary pathways within a year

75 percent of foster transition-age youth ages 14-17 are in family-based placements

65 percent decrease in the gap in high school graduation rates between foster and non-foster youth

Five other major U.S. jurisdictions are replicating initiative-tested approaches

Strategy architecture



WHERE WE WORK

EQUITY FOCUS



- Youth of color
- Youth who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation
- Expectant and parenting youth
- Support local organizations in serving their communities, particularly organizations led by people who reflect the community served and people with lived experience of foster care
- LGBTQ+ youth

OTHER KEY METRICS

- New York City maximum caregiver reimbursement rates for foster youth ages 12 and older increase by 20 percent
- Reimbursements for high-quality mental health services in Los Angeles county increase from \$5.4 million to \$12 million
- The Transition Housing Program-Plus is expanded to allow foster youth ages 13 and over to participate

PROGRAM COSTS



Phase I (2012-2016):

\$53,190,000

Phase II (2016-2020):

\$41,313,500

Strategy25 (2021-2025):

Est. \$141,000,000

CHALLENGES



- Public systems that serve transition-age foster youth face barriers in collecting and sharing reliable data, which prevents effective coordination and delivery of services
- Frequent placement and school changes, compounded by growing mental and behavioral health needs, continue to harm educational outcomes

OPPORTUNITIES



- Support partners in expanding and testing proven models, including coaching supports to middle-school-age foster youth to strengthen educational stability
- Expand the Small Grants Programs in each geography to increase capacity of local organizations led by people who reflect the community and have lived experience of foster care