

# Aging Out of Foster Care



Each year it is estimated that across this country, 20,000 kids in foster care are left to care for themselves because they are too old and no longer qualify for placement with foster families. Minnesota law does allow youth who are in foster care on their 18th birthdays to receive extended foster care services and payments in some cases. Six months prior to the youth's 18th birthday, the county will send a notice to the youth, their legal guardian, guardian ad litem and foster parents explaining options for the youth when they turn 18, which are: Continue in foster care up to age 21; Leave foster care when they turn 18, in which case a personalized transition plan must be developed during the last three months they are in foster care; In some cases, youth who left foster care at age 18 may be able to return to care.

As we all know, most 18-year-olds haven't yet developed strong-enough life skills to enable them to live on their own and youth aging out of foster care are typically even less prepared for independent living. A high percentage of these young people never finish high school and many don't have jobs. Their rates of arrest, health problems, and welfare dependency are far higher than those of the population as a whole - as is their rate of homelessness. They often wind up on the streets or in trouble with law enforcement. There are many fortunate ones, though, who find their way to HOPE 4 Youth.

Here, they have the chance to acquire the skills and knowledge they need to transition from being a homeless youth to an independent adult. Through ongoing efforts, we work to help them find jobs, learn basic skills to live on their own, and find them housing. We also make sure that they know we are here for them, working with them so they never land on the streets and become homeless again.

I want to thank all of you who continue to support our work and our youth with your financial support. With the opening of HOPE Place five months ago, our expenses have increased in that we are now a 24/7/365 program. You have my guarantee that we are being the best stewards with your hard-earned contributions as we can possibly be. And with our numbers higher than ever before as reflected in the increase from 369 youth served in 2015 to 732 in 2016, your support is needed now more than ever.

Please reach out to me if you would like a tour of our Drop-In Center or you would like to help with an event, assist us in our work to end youth homelessness, or if you have other thoughts or ideas. We do not do this alone and count on your support to keep our doors open for the young people aging out of foster care and all of the others who need us to be here. Thank you!

Lisa Jacobson

Executive Director