



EXTENDING SERVICES AND INCREASING POSITIVE LIFE-LONG OUTCOMES: A POLICY ANALYSIS OF EXTENDED FOSTER CARE (AB12) IN CALIFORNIA

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About me

- Born in Ventura County
- Raised in Ventura County/Tulare County
- BA in Social Work & minor in Criminology & Spanish 2020 from Fresno State
- MSW 2022 from Fresno State



About me cont.

- Title IV-E in the MSW Program
- Interned at Fresno County Public Defender's Office Juvenile Hall, Tulare County, Kings County
- Employed with Kings County as a Social Service Practitioner in the Permanency Planning Unit



Why?

- My internship experience opened my eyes to a variety of programs that need to be improved or implemented
- Teen Population the most in need of love and support
- How do we expect them to succeed if we do are not supporting them
- Equity vs Equality in terms of education duration

Assembly Bill 12 (AB12)

Established to allow current and former foster youth to extend their foster care services voluntarily and remain in the foster care system until the age of 21 years as non-minor dependents of the court (NMD).

The main goal of AB12 is to increase positive outcomes for NMDs by providing the support and tools needed to transition into self-sufficient adults.

To improve NMD's educational outcomes, develop independent living skills, and alleviate the ongoing housing barriers that many NMDs encounter throughout their life (California Department of Social Services, 2020, as cited in Jones, 2019).

AB12

A longitudinal study of 732 former foster youth conducted by Okpych and Courtney (2019) found that for each additional year spent in foster care past the age of 18, foster youth had a higher expectancy of enrolling in college, thereby promoting a more hopeful future.

Overall, various research on AB12 has found a positive impact on the outcomes of California foster youth who were able to continue child welfare services until age 21 (Santhiveeran et al., 2020).

Literature Review

EMERGING ADULthood

- Ages 18-25
- Transitioning to adulthood does not stop at age 21
- More support is needed after age 21
- Foster youth outcomes vs. non-foster youth

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

- Vulnerability
- Early life exposure
- Emotional and behavioral functioning challenges

What is the Problem?

- Lacking support increases challenges in smooth and successful transition to adulthood.
- High rates of instability
- Age 21 is not sufficient time to complete higher education
- Emerging Adulthood, Ages 18-25 years old
- Providing a youth with only 3 years of extended assistance is not sufficient. They are being left vulnerable during the most crucial time in their adulthood

Population Affected

Foster youth are among the most at-risk groups in the United States, evidencing more severe and persistent vulnerabilities when they are compared to other at-risk groups, even those that are characterized by low socioeconomic status or minority group membership (Barrat & Berliner, 2013).

Studies have shown that more youth are staying home with the support of their parents up to the age of 26

Population Affected cont.

Former foster youth are not an exception of the need to have support through those years of age.

AB 12 youth and former foster youth have a very limited time gap of the availability of services provided to them.

Purpose

Every individual
experience their own
unique journey in
life

Ask Teachers that
work for the same
school to describe
their educational
journey

Foster care youth
experience a
variety of obstacles
that block their
path to education
and a positive
future.

Purpose cont.

Services are implemented to help decrease those obstacles.

Others might still need additional support to overcome those same obstacles in life.

Expanding AB12 services would benefit many former foster youth in all domains of their life

Conceptual Theoretical Framework

“Resilience Theory”

Has its roots in the study of children who proved resilient adverse childhood environments (VanBreda, 2011).

An individual's resilience at any moment is calculated by the ratio between the presence of protective factors and the presence of hazardous circumstances (VanBreda, 2011).


Youth in foster care tend to have fewer protective factors compared to other individuals, making their chances of resiliency challenging.

Significance of the Study

AB12 created to provide assistance.

Studies have shown outcomes of longer durations in foster.

Hopes to bring light to the need for the extension of AB 12 services. Emerging adulthood takes place between the ages of 19 through 25, this time period is vital to former foster youth and the time they need the most support.



Significance of the Study cont.

Support that is provided through foster care extension programs.

Providing additional years of support will not only benefit the youth but society as a whole. It costs less to pay for an education than incarceration.

Literature Review cont.

- Education
- Employment
- Incarceration
- Homelessness
- Parenthood

Literature Review: *Education*

- Assembly Bill 216 – Credit reduction
- Academically vulnerable population (Zetlin, 2006)
- On average, it takes roughly 4-6 years to complete and graduate from higher education.
- If former foster youth attends higher education at the age of 18 or 19, they will graduate between the ages of 23-25 – that a smooth path with no challenges

Literature Review: *Education* cont.

- AB 216 acknowledges and is aware of the struggles foster youth endure and lowered the credit requirement specifically for them, how is higher education any different?
- Being realistic, if a youth wanted to complete higher education, it is challenging to be done prior to their 21st birthday in order for AB 12 services to fully support them throughout the entire process

Literature Review:

Employment

- Multiple placements during their stay in foster care, this means they receive inconsistent schooling, mentoring, and support, and they face limited opportunities to work or save money due to disruptions in social and educational networks that can facilitate employment.
- Study by Stewart et al. 2014
- Although federal and state initiatives have focused over time on the extension of foster care to age 21, the findings of this study suggest that former foster care youth continue to struggle even up to age 30.

Literature Review:

Employment cont.

- Suggesting that extending foster care just to age 21 is not sufficient
- For young adults, longer durations of unemployment were associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms(Mossakowski, 2009). Feelings of depression can lead to substance usage to avoid those feeling, which is often associated with criminal activity. Criminal activity leads to incarcerations, and the slippery slope continues from there.



Literature Review: *Incarceration*

- Studies completed over time
- Foster youth aging out of care report high levels of engagement in delinquent behaviors and legal system involvement
- 15% of prisoners ages 18-21 reported being in foster care

Literature Review: *Homelessness*

- More likely than their peers to experience homelessness (Schelbe, 2018).
- Transition to adulthood is a gradual process.
- Social and emotional support
- Estimated 3.5 million young adults
 - one third foster care youth
- Midwestern Study - 31% “couch surfing

Literature Review: *Parenthood*

- Pregnancy among women in this population double national averages
- Protection against early pregnancy
- Approximately 30% - second child before age 20
- By age 26, half of young men are fathers compared to their peers

Implementation of Social Welfare Programs

-Laws enacted at multiple levels of government have recognized the responsibility and the need to promote the successful adult functioning of youth as they leave the foster care system (Kimberlin, 2008).

Programs:

1. ILP
2. Chafee Grant
3. THP & THP-Plus

Recommendation for Change

Extension of
AB12 services
to age 25

Feasibility
Study

Pilot
Program

Extension of AB12 Services to age 25

The intention of AB12 is to provide former foster youth assistance and support to increase favorable outcomes for non-minor dependents by preparing and supporting them in their transition into becoming self-sufficient adults. Additionally, extended foster care supports NMDs in advancing their education, increasing employment opportunities, and decreasing the risk of incarceration and homelessness. Therefore, if the purpose of AB12 is to increase positive outcomes in all domains of their life, then extending the age limit from 21 to 25 is needed.

Feasibility Study

A feasibility study can be conducted to consider all the factors needed to extend AB12 services from age 21 to 25. Some of the factors that need to be studied are the potential cost of extending AB12 service from age 21 to 25 years, the barriers, and risk assessment. In addition, this study can analyze the viability of this proposed recommendation to determine if it can be successful and beneficial in the long run.

Pilot Program

- Test out the efficiency of extending service and how beneficial it can be in the long run.
- A change in the original eligibility criteria by having it open for youth that are in college.
- Available to former foster youth that are at the age of 21 and still pursuing their education is an ideal starting point.
- Depending on the overall success, criteria can be extended to those that might not be pursuing their education but are currently employed and still need the services provided by AB12.
- If it proves to be overall providing beneficial support to this population, the permanent extension of AB12 services can be established.

Conclusion

- Assembly Bill 12 is pivotal in the lives of many individuals.
- Research conducted over the years
- Beneficial in the lives of those that participate
- Provided better positive outcomes of success for many former foster youths in all domains of their lives
- Need equity
- Extending AB12 services from age 21 to 25 and providing this population the opportunity to continue in services if they desire and need to can be what keeps them on their path to success.

Thank you, CCASSC!

I am beyond grateful for this opportunity, and I feel honored. Thank you for allowing me to present my research. I will truly never forget this experience.

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