



Catholic Community Services



Oregon Foster Youth CONNECTION



OUR CHILDREN oregon

Youth VILLAGES. The force for families

NEW AVENUES for Youth

Prepare our Foster Youth for Success as Adults Support Oregon's Independent Living Program (ILP) and HB 2340

Every young person deserves the opportunity to learn the skills necessary to successfully transition into adulthood. Reaching milestones such as graduating from high school, renting a first apartment, finding employment and applying to college require long-term relationships and support.

Unfortunately, youth experiencing foster care often lack these resources. The current COVID-19 crisis is highlighting this disparity. Without emergency stabilization funds, Oregon youth may lose access to the very people they are turning to for support today. These providers have been raising private funds to support the ILP program and, due to the pandemic and without emergency support, some have already closed their programs, reducing access to these vital services for foster age youth.

In 2020, Oregon's Independent Living Program sent a survey to current and former foster youth to access and meet their needs because of COVID-19. So far 42.5% need financial assistance for bills, 37% need food, and 29% need employment/unemployment support.

Oregon's Independent Living Program (ILP) allows youth access to a coach to help them navigate the next phase of their lives as they exit the foster care system and attempt to manage the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 to their lives. In the last year, coaches are helping youth learn skills like:

- Filling out unemployment forms and job applications;
- Accessing resources for basic needs like food and food preparation;
- Finding housing when their college or university is closed;
- Accessing technology and internet to continue classes;
- Navigating mental health supports; and
- Understanding the eviction moratorium.

No youth is required to participate in the program, but Oregon's network of ILP providers see hundreds of young people seek these services to get the support they need to be successful adults.

The Problem:

In 2019 & 2020, the Oregon Legislature failed to act on a funding recommendation to stabilize ILP providers. ILPs across Oregon are vastly undercompensated for the costs associated with helping this unique population of youth. Currently, under half of eligible youth are receiving these services.

COVID-19 is highlighting former foster youth's need for support and connection.

The ask of the 2021 Legislature:

A coalition of stakeholders, including foster youth, advocates and providers, are requesting a focused investment in ILP during the 2021 legislative session with HB 2340. This allocation will help prevent homelessness, victimization, food insecurity and other adverse outcomes for these youth by stabilizing ILP providers so they continue their important work and expand services to more foster youth. This investment will result in more coaches providing vital services assisting youth suffering through COVID-19 in the ILP program statewide.

Children in foster care are our children — it is our responsibility to help them learn the skills needed to succeed as adults. Investing in this program is an important step to help make that a reality.

By expanding ILP services, we can prepare more foster youth for a successful transition into adulthood.

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Oregon's network of ILP Providers include:

