



FOSTER PROGRESS

# Our Agenda

1. Intro to Foster Progress
2. Intro to foster care
3. The barriers to college completion
4. Recommendations for mitigating barriers



Thank  
you!

# Foster Progress

Empowering youth who have experienced foster care to attain a college degree and transition into adulthood successfully through mentoring, advocacy, and educational opportunity.

Mentoring &  
Scholarships

Traverse

Training &  
Advocacy

Y-CAP

# Y-CAP

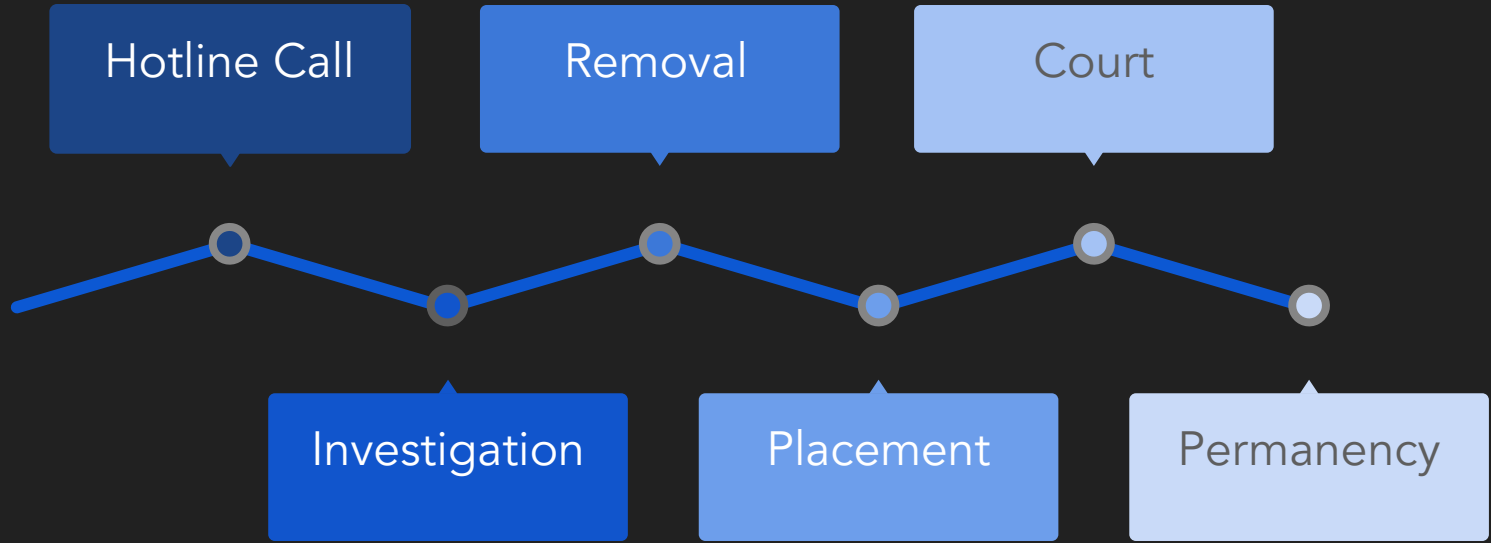
Youth in Care  
College Advocate Program

Peer advocates on college campuses running supportive groups for youth who have experienced foster care

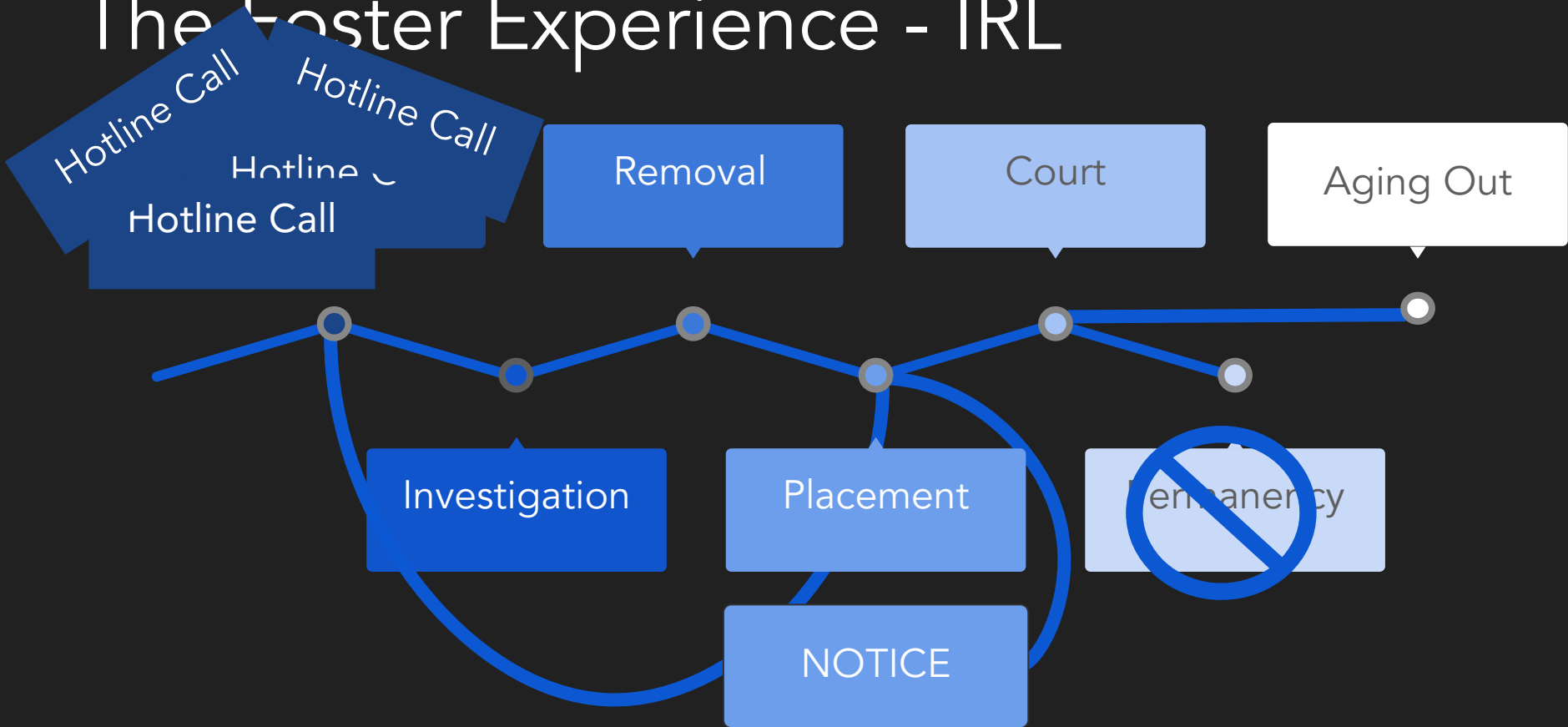
- Kishwaukee
- Lewis and Clark
- Parkland
- City Colleges (Harold Washington)

Supported by US  
in collaboration with YOU

# The Foster Experience



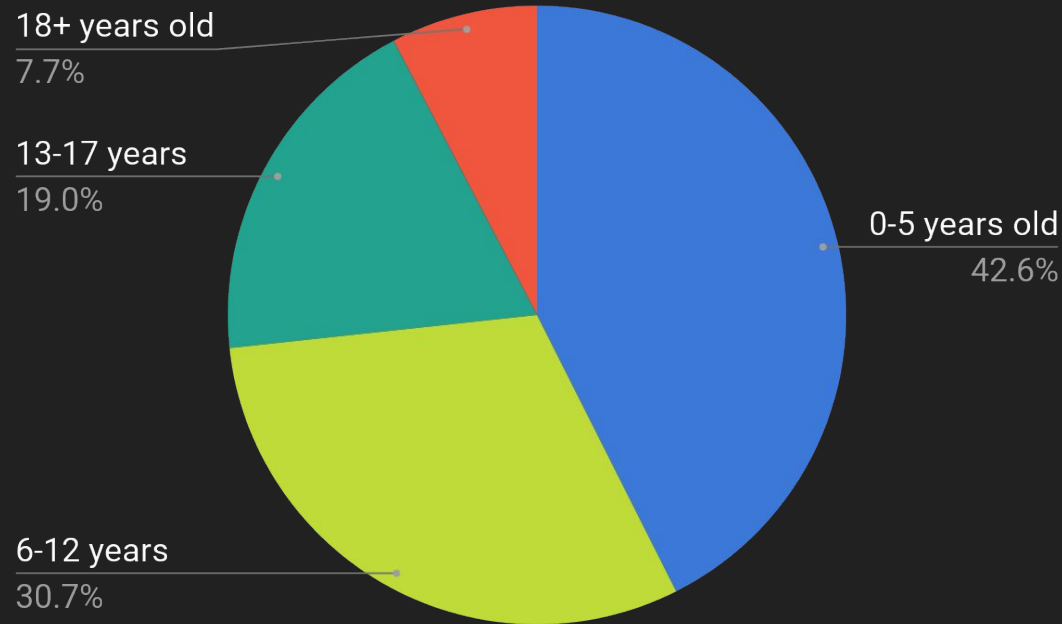
# The Foster Experience - IRL



# Youth in Care

There are approximately 21,000 children in foster care in Illinois.

32.3% of them, or 6,783 youth, are teens and young adults.





# Aging Out



28,000 youth “age-out” of foster care each year in the US between the ages of 18-21.

In 2011, Illinois had the **third highest rate** in the country of youth aging out.

In 2011, around **50%** of youth in Illinois exited foster care by aging out.

# Outcomes for Youth Aging Out

Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning  
of Former Foster Care Youth at age 26, 2011



# Degree Attainment



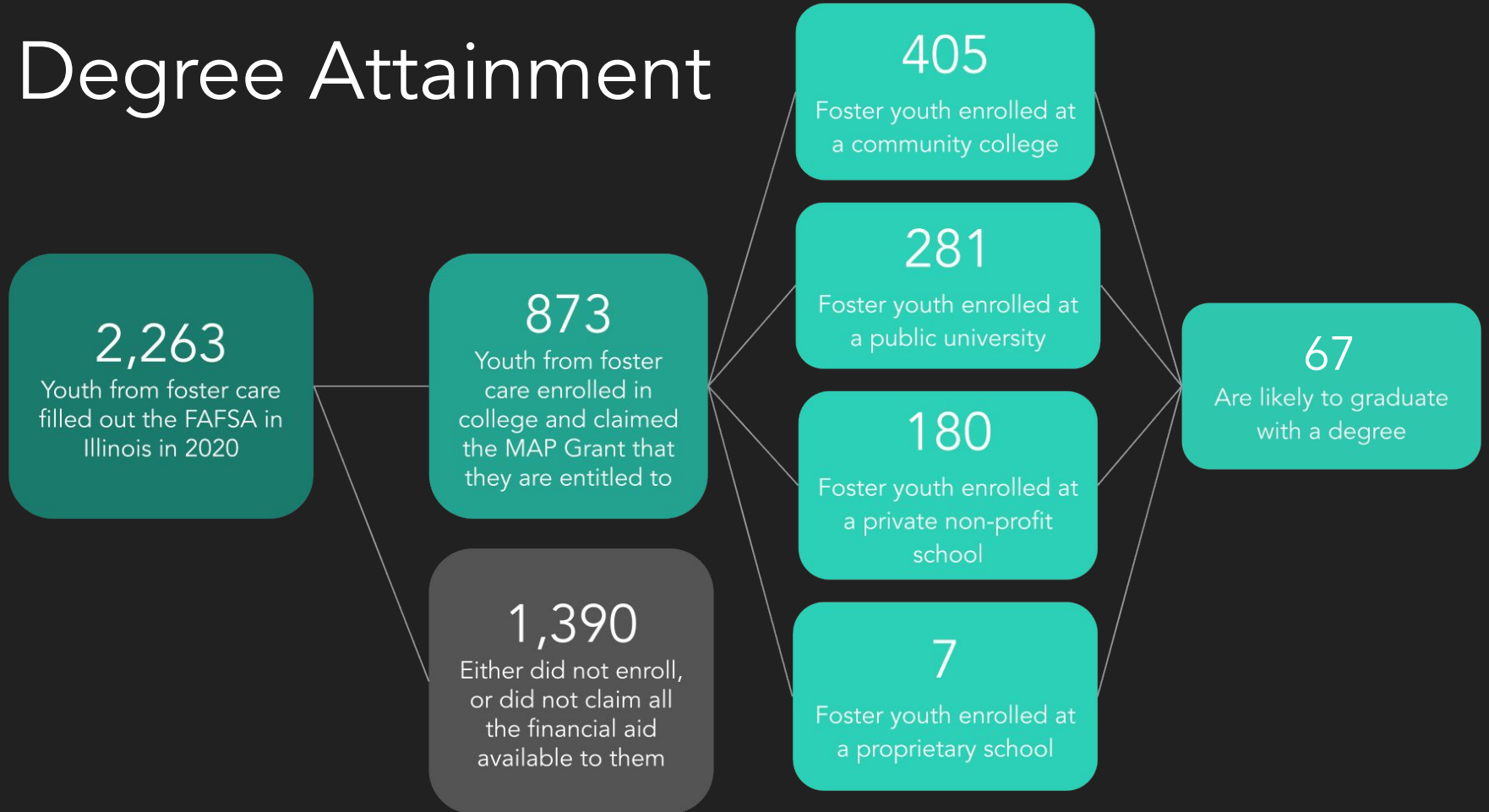
86%

Youth from foster care  
who say they want to  
attend college

3%

Youth from foster care  
who earn a college  
degree

# Degree Attainment



# Barriers Our Students Face

trauma

medical  
issues

biases

mental/  
emotional  
health

educational  
deficits

early  
parenthood

financial  
instability

lack of  
caring  
adults and  
family ties

housing  
insecurity

burdensome  
documen-  
tation

## Barrier: Finances

- No/limited income
- Inadequate Financial Aid
- Insufficient or incorrect information about accessing financial aid
- No financial safety net
- No supportive adult
- Small fees are insurmountable
- Student loans may be inadvisable

## Solution: Financial Aid

- Generous Financial Aid packages, not including loans
- Easy access to emergency funds
- Correct, thorough, easily digestible information at students' fingertips
- Quick pathways to high earning jobs
- Part-time flexibility
- Stackable credentials



## Barrier: Lack of Support

- Protected, confidential status
- No/limited permanent family support
- No one to turn to for emotional support or advice
- No ride to campus on move in day
- No one to celebrate successes

## Solution: Foster Connections

- Create opportunities to self-disclose status to others, such as “Meet & Greet”
- Identify a DCFS Liaison on campus
  - Multi-pronged marketing (flyers, website, social media, announcements, etc.)
- Establish a Y-CAP Program on your campus

# Barrier: Housing Insecurity

Youth at this age are typically living in one of three places:

- With foster parents
- ILO - Independent Living Options
- TLP - Transitional Living Program

When they move to on-campus housing, they join a program called "Youth In College" which is a different "placement."

# Solution: Housing Stability

- Provide campus housing
- Keep housing open during breaks
- Create a "home for the holidays" program like you may have for international students



# Barrier: Burdensome Documentation

- Birth certificate
- State ID/Driver's License
- Proof of Wardship/Status as Foster Youth
- Required questions about parent/guardian
- Independent Status on the FAFSA
- Tax Transcript/Verification of Non-Filing

Youth often don't have access to these documents or understand what they are and how to find them.

# Solution: Minimize Requirements

- When possible, have staff verify students' status in foster care.
- Only require what is federally mandated
- Train staff to use plain language, not technical terms, and to give clear instructions on where to find documents
- Require verification only one time
- Don't call something "mandatory" if it's not

Stay in touch!



# FOSTER PROGRESS



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[twitter.com/fosterprogress](https://twitter.com/fosterprogress)



[instagram.com/foster\\_progress](https://instagram.com/foster_progress)

# Further Reading

*Campus Coaches Make Crucial Difference to Foster Youth in College, [Youth Today](#)*

*College Campus Support Programs Are Strong Model of Services Helping Foster Youth, [Youth Today](#)*

*Getting by and getting ahead: Social capital and transition to college among homeless and foster youth, [Children and Youth Services Review](#)*

*Increasing Competency, Self-Confidence, and Connectedness Among Foster Care Alumni Entering a 4-Year University: Findings from an Early-Start Program, [Journal of Social Service Research](#)*

*Experiences and outcomes of foster care alumni in postsecondary education: A review of the literature, [Children and Youth Services Review](#)*

*Developing an on-campus recruitment and retention program for foster care alumni, [Children and Youth Services Review](#)*