



JIM CASEY
YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES
INITIATIVE

Success Beyond 18 in Maine:

Building a better path for young people transitioning from foster care to adulthood

“MAINE IS LUCKY to have the things we have for kids who leave foster care, compared to other states, but there’s more to do to keep kids from falling through the cracks.”

— *Josh Calcia, 22, spent a decade in foster care and is about to graduate from York County Community College*

All young people deserve guidance, support, stability, and opportunities to succeed in life. The Maine Youth Transition Collaborative is partnering with the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative’s national *Success Beyond 18* campaign to give young people who have experienced foster care the same building blocks for success enjoyed by their peers.

WHAT’S AT STAKE

In Maine, about 150 young people leave foster care each year when they turn 18. After leaving care without a permanent home, many struggle to find housing and jobs, pay for medical care, or finish their education – costly consequences that leave a heavy burden on our communities.

A BETTER PATH

We know who these young people are and we can help them. Through *Success Beyond 18*, we are transforming foster care services in Maine, and improving the odds for adolescents and young adults in care. Our efforts are based on research, experience, and direct feedback from young people.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

We can't wait to act, and we don't have to. Through *Success Beyond 18*, the Maine Youth Transition Collaborative is bringing communities together to help young people in foster care build better adult lives. If we all do our part, we can build a state that reflects our values, where all young people are safe and have a chance to reach their full potential.

Help us change the status quo and give young people in foster care better opportunities to succeed in family, work, and life.

To make a financial contribution, volunteer, or learn about other ways you can help, contact Marty Zanghi at 207-780-5867 or martyz@usm.maine.edu.

MAINE YOUTH TRANSITION COLLABORATIVE (MYTC): *Success Beyond 18* Goals & Progress

- **Success Beyond 18 GOAL 1:** Young people are not on their own at age 18, without family or supports.
- **OUR PROGRESS:** Since 1972 Maine has extended care (V-9 program) for young people to age 21. In 2012, the program was redesigned to better meet young people’s needs, including expanded eligibility to include youth who are adopted after age 18 and continued efforts to find a family for a youth even after age 18.

- **OUR WORK AHEAD:** Because we know how important supports, connections, and family continue to be for any young person moving into adulthood, MYTC is considering a campaign for extending the V-9 program to include youth to age 23. MYTC is also creating pathways to educational success, employment opportunities, and safe affordable housing through campus-based supports for foster care youth to help them succeed and graduate, chances to be trained and prepared for jobs that will lead to economic success, and access to safe affordable housing.
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- **Success Beyond 18 GOAL 2:** Young people have a voice and a say in their future.

- **OUR PROGRESS:** Since 1998, young people who participate in The Youth Leadership Advisory Team (YLAT) meet with administrators, legislators, and caseworkers to make recommendations for system improvement, identify barriers to successful transition to adulthood, and advocate for youth priorities in decision-making and planning in their lives. When youth participate in their Family Team Meetings, they are able to provide feedback about how included they feel in the decision-making process.

- **OUR WORK AHEAD:** All young adults learn by making their own decisions and, sometimes, their own mistakes. Many youth in foster care do not have any caring adults to turn to for assistance and solutions. MYTC envisions all youth participating in their Family Team Meetings and decision-making about their lives; MYTC would like to see more young people in foster care connected to caring adults in their communities – adults that youth can count on when they face a difficult situation, need help making a decision, or would like a champion to help celebrate an achievement.
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- **Success Beyond 18 GOAL 3:** Judges, child welfare agencies, or others responsible for the well-being of young people in foster care recognize them as emerging adults, with unique and evolving needs.

- **OUR PROGRESS:** In Maine, young people provide training to Guardians ad Litem (GALs) about their needs as emerging adults. In 2009, Court Forums were held across eight sites in Maine for judges, attorneys, GALs, and caseworkers; the event included a keynote speaker from New York’s Judicial Commission on Justice for Children. Tools such as the Youth Bill of Rights and the Answers Handbook inform youth about their rights and the resources available to support their involvement in the court process.

- **OUR WORK AHEAD:** Maine youth in foster care are developing a guide for new GALs on how they can better support them as emerging adults. MYTC envisions a time when all youth understand their rights in the legal process and are active participants in decision-making about their lives as they move into adulthood.

Connect with MYTC online:



www.maine-ytc.org or
www.facebook.com/MaineYTC