# Sub-strategy 1a: Postsecondary education

This snapshot accompanies Child Trends' 2022 Evaluation Report for the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation's Foster Youth Initiative. It highlights a sample of the Foundation's grantees' efforts, key data points, and ongoing barriers to strengthening postsecondary pathways for foster youth in Los Angeles (LA) and New York City (NYC). Snapshots are available for each of the Initiative's sub-strategies focused on foster youth and caregivers.

## Los Angeles

Highlights

	A myriad of reform efforts expanded foster youth's access to and success in postsecondary institutions. For example, **John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY)** and other grantees supported the following funding approved in the 2022-2023 state budget: $30 million in additional funding for community colleges to provide ongoing funding for the NextUp program, for a total of $50 million; $12 million for 22 California State University campuses' foster youth programs; and $6 million for nine University of California campuses' foster youth programs.[i]
	Grantees and subgrantees provide direct supports to young people applying to and enrolled in postsecondary education. For example, the **Greater Horizons' California College Pathways Pooled Fund** program provides grants to campus-based support programs for foster youth attending community colleges and universities, and **Coalition for Responsible Community Development (CRCD)** runs Project Tipping Point, a college access and persistence program for young people who may not be eligible for programs like NextUp, and is working to expand the program to additional campuses.
	Young people with foster care experience are involved in multiple grantees' efforts and programs. For example, **First Star** engaged Alumni Advisors in strategy development, advocacy, and communication efforts for the California Foster Youth Pre-College Collective. The Pre-College Collective is comprised of eight organizations including **First Star, United Friends of the Children, National Center for Youth Law,** and **JBAY** and focuses on advocating for sustainable public funding to support young people's high school graduation, post-secondary education, and career achievement efforts.
	Saving Innocence's Survivor Leadership Academy and Growth Group programs provide educational and other supports to youth who have been victims of exploitation. The **Alliance for Children's Rights** ensures expectant/parenting young people in the Healthy Teen Families program have access to educational services. **Friends of the Children LA's** Fostering Resiliency Project matches Black male mentors with Black boys and young men and includes a focus on education.
	The **Alliance for Children's Rights, Children's Data Network, Children Now** and other grantees are supporting the development of efforts such as California Cradle to Career data system, which will house education and workforce data. The **California Child Welfare Indicators Project's** Transition-Age Youth Research and Evaluation Hub will help the field build greater knowledge of postsecondary experiences and outcomes of foster youth.

Figure 1. Percent of youth enrolled in postsecondary education within 16 months of graduating high school, Los Angeles, 2014-2015 through 2016-2017
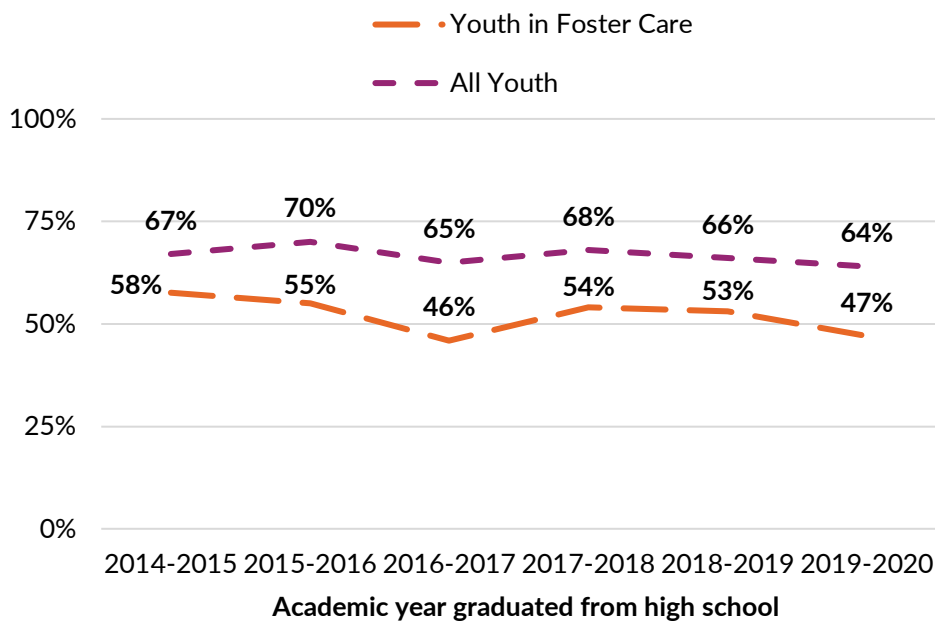
Postsecondary enrollment within 16 months of high school graduation has decreased for all students and for students in foster care over the last three years. However, the gap in enrollment rates between students in foster care and all students widened during the 2019-2020 school year. Postsecondary enrollment rates for students who graduated in the 2019-2020 school year have decreased for all racial and ethnic groups for students in foster care to 49 percent of African American students, 49 percent of White students, and 46 percent of Hispanic/Latino students.

Figure 2. Percent of foster youth enrolled in postsecondary education within 16 months of graduating high school Los Angeles, 2014-2015 through 2019-2020
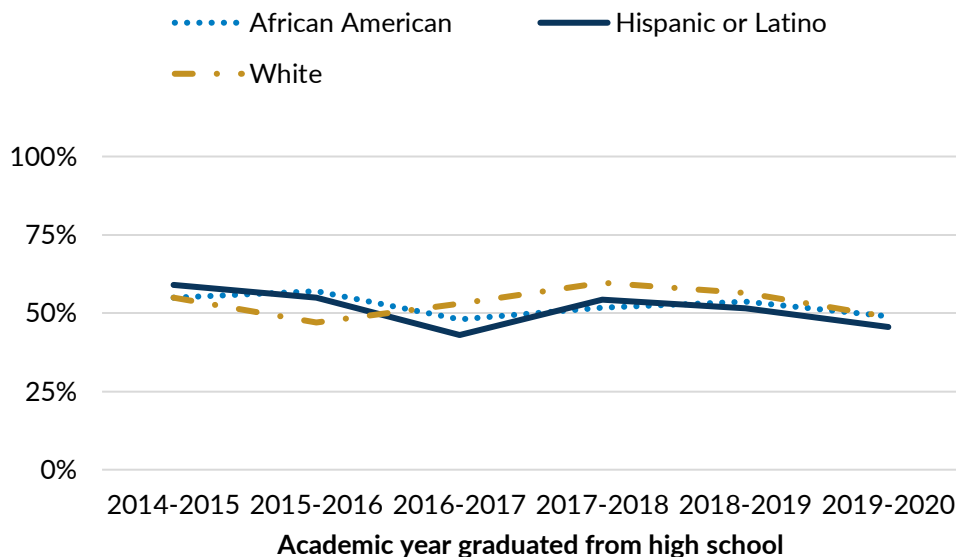
**Source**: California Department of Education Dataquest[ii,iii]

Barriers

Although there have been system reform efforts to support foster youth's access to and success in postsecondary education, grantees identified the need to continue supporting policy implementation (e.g., implementation of SB 12, which went into effect in 2018 and requires child welfare agencies to identify an individual to support each young person in care with college and financial aid applications).[iv] Grantees also plan to address systemic barriers, such as satisfactory academic progress policies[v] that disproportionately affect postsecondary completion and persistence for foster youth. Further, campus support programs at four-year universities face financial struggles impeding their ability to serve all eligible students and need sustainable funding. Grantees and young people on Child Trends' Evaluation Advisory Board also identified the need for support and funding for vocational and entrepreneurial pathways. Finally, more comprehensive data is needed regarding postsecondary outcomes for young people who have experienced exploitation, expectant and parenting youth, and LGBTQ+ youth.

New York City

Highlights

	NYC has invested $10 million in ACS's College Choice Program, which provides financial and programmatic supports. College tuition and fees are included if not covered by students' financial aid packages, and career counseling and tutoring services are offered by **NY Foundling** and **Fair Futures**.[vi]
	Grantees, including **Good Shepherd Services**, **Heartshare**, and **Children's Aid Society**, provide educational supports, including for postsecondary education, through **Fair Futures**, which supports young people up to age 26.
	Children's Aid Society's Fostering Youth Success Alliance and **Fair Futures** provide avenues for young people to advocate for resources and policies at rallies and legislative hearings.
	JCCA tailors their **Fair Futures** programming to support Black, Latino, and LGBTQ+ students.
	The **American Bar Association** conducted a nationwide scan of promising practices and interventions that support postsecondary access and attainment for young people, highlighting 15 that support students pursuing postsecondary education.

Figure 3. Percent of youth aging out of care who are enrolled in college or vocational/trade school, New York City, 2016-2021
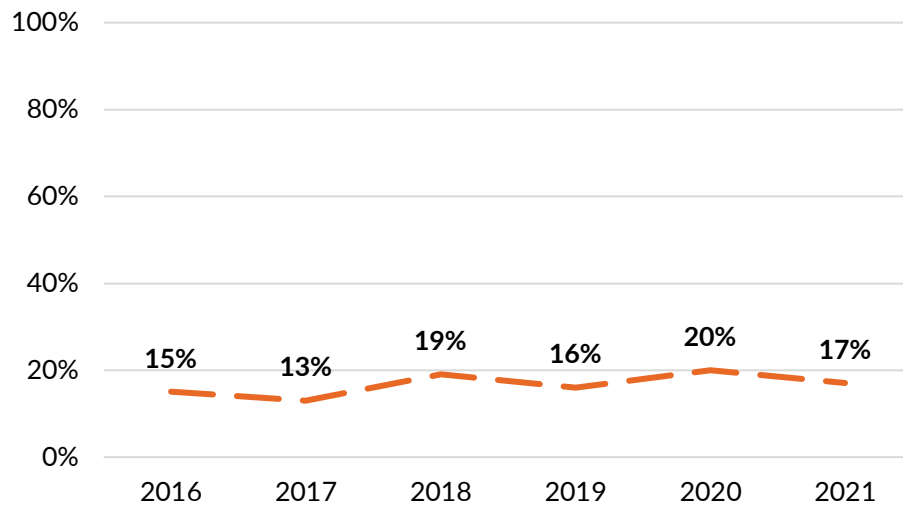
The percent of young people aging out of care who are enrolled in college or vocational/trade school fluctuated between 2016 and 2021. The most recent decrease occurred between 2020 and 2021 and may be due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic. When data are disaggregated by youth's race and ethnicity, the rates follow the same pattern for African American and Latinx youth.

Figure 4. Percent of youth aging out of care who are enrolled in college or vocational/trade school, New York City, 2016-2021
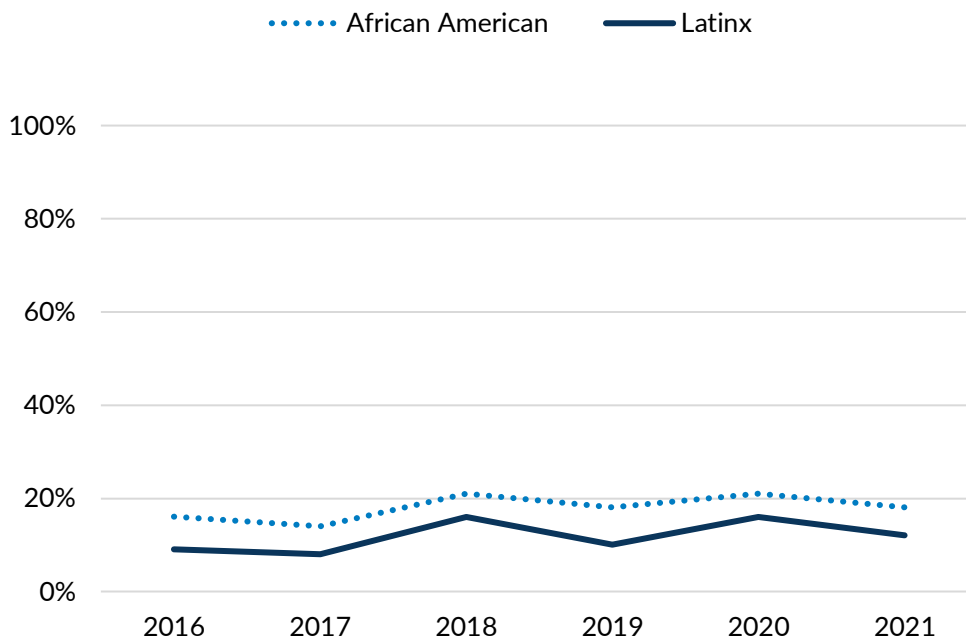
Source: NYC Administration for Children's Services' Report on Youth in Foster Care[vii,viii]

Barriers

Similar to LA, NYC provides support for postsecondary access and success, such as the recent expansion to ACS's College Choice Initiative; however, there is less support for young people to explore vocational or entrepreneurship paths. Grantees noted non-traditional higher educational opportunities and pathways (e.g., entrepreneurship programs, vocational and trade programs/schools) can be very expensive and may lead some young people to pursue higher education degrees not due to interests but due to available financial supports. Grantees also identified a lack of supports for young people who are balancing education and employment, and for students who are parenting and pursuing postsecondary education.

Endnotes

[i] JBAY (2022). 2022 implementation fact sheet: Foster youth college support. https://jbay.org/resources/2022-implementation-fact-sheet-fy-campus-support/.

[ii] Publicly available data from California Department of Education DataQuest. https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/DQCensus/CGRLoc.aspx?agglevel=County&cds=19&year=2019-20.

[iii] The College-Going Rate (CGR) is defined as the percentage of California public high school students who completed high school in a given year and subsequently enrolled in any public or private postsecondary institution (in-state or out-of-state) in the United States within 12 or 16 months of completing high school." (Source: California Department of Education, Information about the College-Going Rate (CGR)). "Student Group Status: Information about student group statuses (i.e., English learner, students with disabilities, socioeconomically disadvantaged, migrant, foster, and homeless statuses) is based on an annual determination for each student indicating that they belonged to the student group at any point during the respective reporting year of high school completion (see definition for High School Reporting Period), regardless of the school of enrollment associated with or responsible for submitting the student group status data to CALPADS." (Source: California Department of Education, College-Going Rate Report; see Report Glossary). Data include foster youth under the jurisdiction of a tribal court and those who entered care through a voluntary placement agreement; foster youth who experienced emergency removals are only included if the student is in placement for more than 7 days (Source: California Department of Education Foster Youth in California Schools, Foster Youth Definitions)

[iv] For more information on SB 12, see: https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB12.

[v] Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policies determine whether students are eligible to maintain their financial aid based on Grade Point Average (GPA) and course completion rates. For more information, see JBAY (2021). *The overlooked obstacle: How Satisfactory Academic Progress Policies impede student success and equity.* https://jbay.org/resources/overlooked-obstacle/.

[vi] NYC Office of the Mayor (2022). Mayor Adams, Administration for Children's Services announce "College Choice" program to help cover cost of college expenses for hundreds of students in foster care. https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/719-22/mayor-adams-administration-children-s-services-college-choice-program-help-cover. Hunt, M. (2022). New York City pledges new investment in foster youth college expenses. https://imprintnews.org/top-stories/new-york-city-invests-in-foster-youth-college-expenses/234033.

[vii] Among other data sources, this report uses Preparing Youth for Adulthood (PYA) data which are youth- or caseworker-reported and not verified with more complete administrative data. This data should be interpreted with caution. Source: New York City Administration for Children's Services. Report on Youth in Foster Care. (2021). https://www.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/2021/ReportOnYouthInFC2021.pdf.

[viii] Enrollment in college and vocational/trade school are reported as separate data points; however, Child Trends combined them for reporting. Data for Latinx youth enrolled in vocational/trade school upon exit from care are not included in this calculation, as the data are suppressed due to small sample size. Youth aging out of care are defined as 'youth between the ages of 18-20 that were discharged to self or reached the age of 21 in foster care.' Disaggregated data for White youth, Asian youth, and youth whose race/ethnicity is categorized as "other/unknown" are not shown as these subgroups included fewer than 30 foster youth. (Source: *ACS Report on Youth in Foster Care, 2021*).