

How Philanthropy Is Working Together to Help
All of America's Youth Connect by Age 25

safe passage



Youth Transition
Funders Group

chapter 2: the ytfg vision: connected by 25

“Our focused attention on older youth insists upon the inherent value of all youth, no matter how bumpy their roads to successful adulthood.”

Lisa McGill, Director, YTFG

The Youth Transition Funders Group (YTFG) began in 2001 as a funders’ network committed to ensuring that all young people between the ages of 14 and 24 become “Connected by 25” to caring adults, institutions, and support systems that will enable them to succeed throughout adulthood.

YTFG members work together to help America’s youth achieve five critical outcomes:

- Educational achievement in preparation for career and civic participation, including a high school diploma, post-secondary degree, and/or vocational training certificate.
- Gainful employment and/or access to career training to achieve life-long economic success.
- Connections to a positive support system—namely guidance and trusting relationships with family members and caring adults, as well as access to health, counseling, and mental health services.

- The ability to become a responsible and nurturing parent.
- The capacity to participate in the civic life of one’s community.

YTFG COLLABORATIVE SUPPORT FOR CRITICAL POINTS OF TRANSITION

While a set of complex conditions often contributes to the reasons that any one young person is unable to establish meaningful social and economic links by age 25, research shows that there are at least three primary transition points at which many youth become disconnected. YTFG has focused its efforts on increasing philanthropic investments for youth who experience transitions that put them at high risk of long-term disconnection from families and communities. The transition points are:

1 **Interrupted Education.** Youth who leave school prematurely are at very high risk of long-term disconnection and persistent poverty, especially when they are given no opportunity to re-engage in learning and complete their degrees. Conversely, nearly all youth who attend college—even for a short time—have better access to economic opportunity.

2 Court Involvement.

Incarcerated youth, many of whom are detained for “status” or other nonviolent offenses, face an especially high risk of long-term disconnection. Recidivism rates for youth are more than 50 percent, and incarceration reduces the odds that a young person will complete school and have favorable employment prospects.

3 Foster Care Placement.

Youth placed in foster care as teenagers are an especially vulnerable population. Most lack much-needed familial and social support, do not have adequate access to educational opportunities, or suffer from mental and physical health problems or substance abuse. Without adequate transition assistance, many foster youth drop out of school and/or become involved in the justice system.

The next few chapters explore the emerging philanthropic investments of YTFG members, part of an effort to address the challenges of youth who are out of school, involved with the courts, or in foster care. Each of these Connected by 25 investments is part of a larger initiative to address the critical transition points mentioned earlier and to identify specific strategies to help foundations, policy-makers, and elected officials help young people stay on the right path to successful adulthood.

YTFG GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Despite the diverse perspectives of YTFG grantmakers, our members and partners are in strong agreement that the following factors should guide philanthropic investments in our communities:

- **Youth Development Principles:** Integrating well-tested principles of youth development that have proven successful in working with at-risk youth.
- **Access to Education:** Promoting educational access, learning, high school graduation, and flexible postsecondary options for all young people, especially those in public care.
- **Promoting Physical and Mental Health:** Supporting the physical and mental health of young people as critical components of their ability to survive, thrive, and transition successfully to adulthood from school, foster care, the juvenile justice system, and other institutions.
- **Lifelong Connection to Family and Caretakers:** Advocating on behalf of policies and strategies that facilitate and strengthen the connections between youth and their birth, foster, or extended families.



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The Youth Transition Funders Group and its work groups include leaders from the following grantmaking institutions:

The Annie E. Casey Foundation
The Atlantic Philanthropies
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
The California Endowment
Carnegie Corporation of New York
Casey Family Programs
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
The Children's Trust
Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth
Eckerd Family Foundation
The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation
Eugene & Agnes E. Meyer Foundation
Edward W. Hazen Foundation
Girl's Best Friend Foundation
The James Irvine Foundation
JEHT Foundation
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative
Lumina Foundation for Education
Open Society Institute
Stuart Foundation
Surdna Foundation
The Tow Foundation
Walter S. Johnson Foundation
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
William Penn Foundation
W. K. Kellogg Foundation
Zellerbach Family Foundation