

Prepare transition age youth for success in the workforce

Increase the number of youth served by extension of foster care services.

Less than half of eligible youth access these services. One reason is difficulty maintaining eligibility. The eligibility criteria for Extension of Foster Care under the Federal Fostering Connections legislation should be expanded to include youth who are working or **engaged in activities that lead to employment**. Programs should be promoted that assist these young adults with job readiness and job retention skills.



Supporting youth development through hands-on experience.

Programs that connect youth with job training, mentoring and internships offer a cost-effective way to support students before young people disconnect from school and jobs. These programs give youth what they most want: authentic experiences. In fact, 81 percent of students who did not complete high school responding to a survey said that having real world experiences that connected school with work would have helped keep them in school.² High-quality youth workforce development programs provide vital support systems that young people need, and they can dramatically improve young people's academic, social, and financial outcomes in numerous ways.

Moreover, participating in a youth employment program can **increase a participant's salary by as much as 11 percent** for up to as many as eight years after high school.³ Meanwhile, youth who do not work while in high school and do not enroll in post-secondary schools often face lower employment rates and earnings later on.

Each young person who disconnects from school or work costs an estimated **\$704,020** over their lifetime in lost earnings, lower economic growth, lower tax revenues, and higher government spending.¹

Fund more Resource Centers for youth participating in extension of foster care services in rural parts of the state.

Services provided in the Resource Centers for transitioning youth must reach underserved areas too. As described in Tennessee Code Annotated 37-2-603, the Resource Centers that currently exist in Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis and Nashville provide a **"one-stop shop" for foster youth and former foster youth**.

When assistance with continuing education, financial literacy, job search and life skills are provided in one place, it helps youth stay engaged and ensures that more of their needs are met. **Resource Centers and the services they provide are needed in the more underserved areas of Tennessee.**