

## Celebrating the Extended Foster Care Program in Idaho: Progress for Foster Youth Transitioning Into Adulthood

In 2021, the Idaho Legislature unanimously passed House Bill 336, legislation that would allow the state to better support successful transitions out of foster care and into adulthood. Thanks to the legislation, Idaho implemented the Extended Foster Care Program this summer and began providing foster youth the option to extend care until they turn 21.

The choice of whether to extend care is entirely up to foster youth, as long as they meet certain eligibility requirements such as attending high school or college or working. By choosing to stay in care, youth are able to draw down all of the benefits that come with being in foster care, including living expenses, work and training resources, and access to an independent living coach.

Thanks to House Bill 336, there are a total of 15 youth across Idaho currently taking advantage of the extended foster care program and receiving support to transition into adulthood for the first time. Studies show that youth in extended care receive more independent living services, progress further in their education, have more access to health and mental health services, and experience less economic hardship and involvement in the criminal justice system than did those who left care at age 18.

As a former foster youth and chair of the Idaho Foster Youth Advisory Board, Ivy Smith explained, “If we invest in foster youth early on, we will show them that we want to give them a chance, we care about them, we want them to be a part of our community, and we want them to succeed.”

### Colin, Twin Falls-----Age 19

*After years in foster care and multiple placements in foster homes, treatment centers, and congregate care, Colin is participating in Idaho’s extended foster care program and living with a foster family. He provided the following thoughts on the program:*

“Extending foster care kept me from being homeless or in a halfway house of some sort and has helped me to finish up my schooling and get a job and move on with my life. I’m going to graduate high school in 2.5 months!

In the next couple of years I’m going to start college get a better job and do my best to stay stable, also I want to get a car. I’m applying for scholarships and grants. Extending foster care has helped me navigate all of this, write a resume and get all of my forms and identification and everything needed.

They definitely should have support for rent and should definitely increase the payments to foster care families cause I know mine kind of struggles occasionally feeding everyone cause there are 12 people in the house which gets a bit hectic and should offer a few more grants I would say.”



**Ethan, Boise -----Age 18**

*Ethan is participating in Idaho’s extended foster care program and living with a foster family. He provided the following thoughts on the program:*

“Extended foster care has really impacted my life for the better. The most impactful thing they’ve done is probably help me figure my future and helped me make that plan real and more manageable.

In the future my plan is to go to the University of Idaho and study criminology. After that I will get my degree and get a professional job. Thanks to the extended foster care program, I’ve been receiving help with scholarships for college. They have also helped me transition into the adult life.

Moving forward, I think more scholarships for foster kids would be better. Most foster kids won’t have the opportunity to go to



college and having scholarships for these kids will change their lives for the better. Increasing the payments to foster parents would be for the better too. A lot of kids don’t get the opportunity to have nice things in their lives, but increased payments would make these kids a lot happier and let them have the lives they always wished they had.

Foster care has helped me become a better person but I think the foster parents are the real heroes and the real change that kids need.”

**Tyshawn, Pocatello -----Age 18**

*Tyshawn is participating in Idaho’s extended foster care program and living with a foster family while she completes high school. She provided the following thoughts on the program:*

“I’m thankful to be in extended foster care because it is allowing me to continue with high school. I don’t have to worry about where I will live or how I’m going to pay my bills. I’m able to focus on graduating high school – which I’m going to do!

I plan to work at a child care center this summer, and then I want to get an associate’s degree to be able to work with older people in assisted living. I really want to help people.”

