# FOSTERING Stimulus + Support for Older Foster Youth ADV@CATES Recommendations for Implementing the Youth. Speak. Change. ARIZONA Consolidated Appropriations Act

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, which became law on December 27, 2020, provides significant assistance to young people with experience in foster care during the pandemic by: (1) allowing young people to stay in foster care past age 21, (2) allowing young people who "aged-out" during the pandemic to re-enter foster care, (3) increasing funding to meet the basic needs of older and former foster youth—through age 26!, and (4) increasing funding for education and training vouchers.

Implementation is just getting started and FAAZ has recommendations!

#### Continuation of Placement + Services



- DCS cannot require a young person to leave foster care due to age...
- ...even if they are unable to meet extended foster care participation requirements (school, work, etc.) due to the pandemic
- Effective until September 30, 2021

...The Feds



- Provide additional supports to young people who will have to leave care on September 30<sup>th</sup>, so they are ready for independence in the context of COVID:
  - Financial capability coaching
  - o Information on pandemic relief, including how to access social safety net services
  - Peer support

## Re-entry into Foster Care

The Feds Say...

- Youth who left foster care due to age during the COVID-19 public health emergency (defined as January 27, 2020 until September 30, 2021) can re-enter care...
- ...even if they are unable to meet extended foster care participation requirements (school, work, etc.) due to the pandemic
- Effective until September 30, 2021



- Provide for immediate re-entry through every available door
- Remove requirement that young people must be "actively participating" in TILP (Transitional Independent Living Program) prior to re-entry
- Identify point people, preferably people with lived experience, to receive requests and help young people navigate the re-entry process
- Use Chafee funds to clear any back payments or debts incurred while young people were out of care—especially those who exited after the law was passed!





## Increased Funding to Support Basic Needs

- \$10.5M to Arizona! in increased Chafee funds
- Chafee funds can be used for all purposes currently allowed by the Chafee Act, including direct financial assistance, meeting basic needs, housing, education, and employment support
- Chafee funds can be used for costs related to obtaining a driver's license and driving
- Young people are eligible through age 26 until September 30<sup>th</sup>!

...The Feds

## FAAZ Says... Apply Now! dcs.az.gov/ chafee-funding

#### Get funds to young people 2 ways:

- 1. Provide a one-time \$500 stimulus check to all youth ages 18 through 26 who aged out of foster care
- 2. Provide targeted, needs-based assistance using an online application. DCS already has an application portal! FAAZ thinks the application process can be improved by:
  - Have clear eligibility and approval criteria and let young people know what they are before they apply!
  - Put all required information into the online application and eliminate follow-up phone calls with DCS. This is too time consuming, subjective, and some young people who need help won't seek it if they must interact with DCS staff
  - Get approved payments to young people in a week or less and have a way to expedite it if there is an emergency

## Increased Funds for Education + Training Vouchers

The Feds Say...

- \$1.5M in additional ETV funds to AZ!
- From April 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup>:
  - young people are eligible through age 26
  - enrollment and satisfactory academic progress requirements are waived
  - more flexibility in what funds can used for
- Maximum ETV award per youth is raised to \$12,000 through September 30, 2022
- Create the ETV 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance Plan to help young people re-engage in college!
  - Many young people who **stop out or drop out** are often faced with **debt to the** school
  - Unlike student loans, being indebted to the college prevents a student from enrolling in classes, or in some cases, even obtaining their transcript
- Consolidated Appropriation Act funds can be used to cover these debts and create a path for young people to re-enroll and move towards their educational dreams!



#### Need

Young people continue to have significant financial needs as a result of the pandemic

Well-being

Direct financial assistance is an effective way to improve economic status and wellbeing both of which have been compromised by the pandemic.

#### Normalcy

Providing direct financial assistance is a norm in crisis and disaster aid and is the type of assistance that predominates the last three COVID-19 relief bills

Intent Direct financial

assistance is what Congress intended

#### Self-Determination

Providing direct, no-strings financial assistance is respectful of the status of young adults who deserve to make their own decisions about their finances

#### reasons

for direct stimulus payments to older foster youth

Direct financial assistance is a highly effective way to reduce poverty and hardship

#### Access

Many young people with experience in foster care have not received other stimulus funds

Flexibilities extending eligibility for Chafee funds to age 27 end on September 30th. Stimulus payments will get support to young people quickly