

Talking Points



These strategically framed talking points can be used across messengers and channels to change the conversation about transition age foster youth. To learn more about why these talking points are structured as they are, check out the annotations.

Here are a few ideas on how to get started with this list of talking points:

- Incorporate them into written and spoken communications.
- Consider them when asked a “what,” “who,” “where,” “when,” “how,” or “why” question about transition age foster youth.
- Use the points separately or in combination as a given situation allows.
- Repeat them as is or put them into your own words.
- Practice them out loud so you are ready to deliver them when you need to.
- Weave them into a new “elevator speech” about your work.
- Revise existing communications (e.g., website, literature).
- Post them in the comments section of a news article or blog post.
- Build them into responses to frequently asked questions.
- Share them with colleagues, advocates, experts, and communications professionals across the field.
- Partner with transition age foster youth to develop their own communications in well-framed ways.



Who are transition age foster youth?

1. Transition age foster youth are young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are transitioning out of the foster care system as they reach adulthood.

People do not immediately understand the term “transition age youth.” Although the term connotes a certain period of life—adolescence—it doesn’t explain the circumstances specific to these young people. This context is easily introduced by incorporating the term “foster.”

Advancing Wellbeing: Our Shared Imperative

2. Programs and policies for transition age foster youth can and will support their healthy development—and advance their wellbeing.

People view adolescents’ healthy development as a collective issue. Putting the focus on healthy development helps overcome “othering” or “pull yourself up by the bootstraps” mentalities by linking youth support programs to this collective imperative.

3. When we support the healthy biological, psychological, and emotional development of transition age foster youth, we help them thrive as adults.

By talking about healthy development as a whole, versus singular focus on education or financial success, you spur thinking about the range of supports needed to ensure foster youth thrive.

4. When we support transition age foster youth, we are also supporting communities. Our communities are stronger when we make sure that everyone, including transition age foster youth, is connected to each other.

5. Programs that offer not only financial assistance and life skills but also access to the full range of health services and ongoing, supportive relationships improve the wellbeing of transition age foster youth for the long term.

Supporting a Steeper Climb

6. All of us need support on the journey to adulthood. We need help with things like paying for college or finding a job, and we need supportive relationships we can rely on as we find our place in the world.

• A universal message moves away from a sense that transition age foster youth are permanently damaged toward thinking about how we can address their needs.

7. Transition age foster youth often face a steeper path to adulthood because they don't have the same connections other young people have. We need strong programs to ensure that transition age foster youth receive the supports that all young people need to thrive.

8. Because the climb to adulthood can be particularly steep for transition age foster youth, we need to equip them with the resources they need to navigate that path and make sure they have supportive, encouraging guides to help them find their footing.

• With the shared experience of becoming an adult established, it's easier to convey the additional supports that transition age foster youth need.

Expanding Opportunities by Reducing Inequality

9. Everyone should have the opportunity to succeed regardless of their start in life, but young people leaving foster care are not plugged into the networks, resources, and supports they need to succeed once they reach adulthood.

10. When foster youth turn 18 (or 21 depending on the state), the foster system generally stops supporting them and leaves them disconnected from the resources that all young people need to do well—things like stable housing, educational resources, and supportive relationships.

11. Racial and social inequities, including discrimination and economic inequality, are reflected in our foster care system. Racism, poverty, and prejudice shape our social welfare system, which means that transition age youth are more likely to be people of color or otherwise marginalized.

Advocate that supporting transition age foster youth can collectively address social inequality and increase support for policies and programs to that end.

12. We need to sharpen our focus on the inequities that transition age foster youth experience before, during, and after they are in the foster care system if we want to fully support them as they become adults.

Plugging in Transition Age Foster Youth to a Grid of Support

13. As teenagers become adults, they need to be plugged into networks of support that power their growth and success.

Most teenagers can stay plugged into the networks they need through relationships with their families.

The “Plugged In” metaphor can be used to describe the material and emotional needs of transition age foster youth—and the practical steps to ensure all young people have access to the grid of supports that will help them.

14. But many young people leaving foster care are suddenly unplugged from all networks of support. We can ensure that all young people leaving foster care are plugged into the resources they need—such as financial assistance, strong health care services, and supportive relationships—by creating a system that makes these resources accessible.