

What is Project Everlast?

As of March 2010, 4,380 youth were involved in Nebraska's foster care system. This figure represents a decrease overall, but the number of young people aging out continues to increase. On average, 200 youth will age out each year. Sound relationships and financial security do not come easily for a young person aging out of foster care, their safety net disappears.

This is why in 2002, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation created a unique youth-led council that provides voice and opportunities for youth with foster care experience. The success of these young people and the surrounding work led to an intensive, youth-driven planning process involving more than 40 public and private partners to develop the Omaha Independent Living Plan, which eventually became the catalyst for Project Everlast statewide.

Why do many older youth who leave foster care need our help?

According to the Midwest Evaluation of Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth, we know that 40% of youth are likely to be street-dependent or couch-surf at least once before their 24th birthday. If that statistic holds true in Nebraska, of the 999 youth who have aged out of foster care system since 2006, 400 of them have been homeless or unstably housed at least once (Source: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, March 2011). And the number of young people aging out is on the rise. In fiscal year 2010, 224 youth aged out of the child welfare system as opposed to 183 in 2006.

When compared with their peers, young people aging out of care are, on average:

- less likely to have a high school diploma
- less likely to pursue higher education
- less likely to be earning a living wage
- more likely to experience economic hardships
- more likely to have had a child without being married
- more likely to become involved with the criminal justice system

Results from a survey taken by foster care alumni who participated in the Opportunity Passport program in Omaha, show that just 30% of respondents, age 18 or older, report earning a living wage, defined in Omaha as earning at least \$8.62/hour for a single adult.

Older youth who leave foster care need our help to overcome the odds, to not be just another number to add to these harsh statistics.



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How does Project Everlast make a difference?

Project Everlast aspires to create supportive communities which help youth, ages 14-24 with foster care experience, establish connections to supports and lifelong relationships.

By promoting the use of community resources to improve a youth's opportunities and networks for their daily life, employment, education, health and overall belonging, we can help them achieve their life's greatest potential.

What has Project Everlast accomplished?

Highlights:

- Project Everlast developed a statewide permanency plan with over 250 stakeholders and youth. Resources and partnerships are committed to enhance permanency for older youth through youth voice, healthy relationships, community resources and awareness, policies and practices, and funding.
- In 2011, Metro Area Continuum of Care, Heartland Family Services and Project Everlast, obtained \$445,280.00 to work with existing programs to offer rental assistance and support for youth exiting care who would otherwise be homeless.
- 220 youth, through Project Everlast, are enrolled in Opportunity Passport™, an economic asset-building program including training in financial management and a matched savings account that can be used for housing, education, transportation and business start-up needs.
- 381 youth are members of the Project Everlast Council across the state.
- 168 brothers and sisters from across Nebraska attended Project Everlast's Camp Catch-Up and built stronger bonds and lasting memories together.

How can you get involved?

For more information on how you can support youth in care, contact Wendy McCown at 402.817.2002 or wmccown@nebraskachildren.org or visit ProjectEverlast.org.



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