



ACF: Life Skills

The **John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood** delivers critical support to current and former foster youth navigating the path to independence. This essential funding equips states to empower youth with the tools they need to thrive—including life skills assessments, financial literacy classes, education, employment, and leadership opportunities.

The pending **Fostering the Future Act** is an opportunity for the Administration for Children and Families:

- To provide support, encouragement and accountability for states, leveraging key federal resources (Chafee, ETV, FYI, WIOA).
- To maximize impact and measurably improve outcomes for young people in and from foster care.

Three Recommendations:

1. Address the Underutilization Crisis: The GAO Report (GAO-25-107154) revealed that in a single fiscal year, 12 states returned Chafee funds and 28 states returned Education and Training Voucher (ETV) funds, totaling **nearly \$9 million in unutilized support**. When slow-moving states fail to draw down these resources due to administrative red tape, they distort the national funding outlook. Crucially, they risk capping future federal appropriations, which unfairly penalizes high-performing states that actively deplete their allocations and are desperate for redistributed funds to serve their youth.

2. Drive a Sense of Urgency for Youth-Focused Spend-Down: A comprehensive child welfare strategy cannot treat transition resources as secondary. ACF must instill an immediate sense of urgency across state agencies to spend down Chafee and ETV allotments. This spend-down must be explicitly youth-focused—prioritizing measurable, long-term youth outcomes in housing stability, financial literacy, and career pipelines rather than allowing funds to get caught in bureaucratic stagnation.

3. Complete the Continuum of Care: Adoption and transition-age readiness are not mutually exclusive. Whether we as foster youth are reunified, adopted, entrusted to kinship care, or age out – we all need to be empowered with life skills to navigate emerging adulthood. Child welfare leadership requires that we protect children in the system and thoroughly equip young adults (ages 14 to 21) with the tools required for independent, tax-paying adulthood.