

Georgia EmpowerMENT

Nothing about us, without us.

ABOUT US

EmpowerMENT was founded by former and current foster youth in Georgia who are working with community leaders to change the foster care system. EmpowerMENT's motto is "Nothing about us without us," and our primary goal is to equip youth to be proactive in shaping both their present and their future. EmpowerMENT is a part of the Georgia Youth Opportunities Initiative, a state-wide, public-private, youth-adult partnership working to improve outcomes for youth transitioning from foster care.

POLICY & PRACTICE PRIORITIES

Georgia EmpowerMENT supports policy and legislation that promotes the EmpowerMENT priorities identified by young people.

- Improved educational stability, learning opportunities, and access to services
- Continued monitoring of access to Medicaid benefits up to 26th birthday
- Improved access and support to obtain drivers' license, state I.D. and driver's insurance
- Continued efforts to improve relationships with case manager
- Monitoring of implementation of 2013 Juvenile Justice Reform legislation
- Monitoring of implementation of **CB21** policy and practice

HB972

HB972 is the Division of Family and Children Services' strategic plan (also known as CB21) to legislatively support extension of foster care beyond 18 for young people choosing to stay in care.

- Updates state law to reflect Division policy extending foster care services to age 21 for youth opting to stay in state custody.
- Accounts for adolescent brain development research which shows the brain is not fully developed until late twenties.
- Provides for greater flexibility for services for older youth in care.
- Allows access to federal funds to support extension of care services and provides long-term cost savings; 24 states have already accessed funding



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WHY HB972

Education

Young people who remain in foster care beyond 18 are more likely to have attained high school diplomas and accessed aid for post-secondary training.*

“We would never turn our backs on our own children at 18, why do we do it with our youth in care.”
–Adult Supporter

Housing

Young people who remain in care past 18 are less likely to be homeless.*

Programmatic Support

Allows for access to additional funds and flexibility and supports appropriate development.

“We all need different things....at different times...just like other youth not in care.”
-Young adult

“How can you decide what age it is? People with two or even single parents still have supports, sometimes into their 30’s.” – Young adult

“Those from a “normal” family are allowed to make mistakes at this age, but we don’t allow our youth to make mistakes.”
–Adult supporter

Young Parents

Young people who are in foster care beyond 18 are more likely to delay becoming a parent.*

*Foster Care to 21: Doing it Right. Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2011.