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Improving Career Outcomes for the City's Foster Youth

$10 million in New York City's 2020 fiscal budget will go towards providing the city's roughly 8,400 foster youth with full-time life coaches from middle school through age 26, an important step to improving career outcomes for this vulnerable population. The Center for an Urban Future pointed out in our 2011 "Fostering Careers" report that an alarming share of young people who age out of the city's foster care system are failing to obtain and hold on to jobs.

by Rachel Wolfe

Earlier this summer, New York City took an important step to improve career outcomes for the thousands of young people in the city's foster care system, allocating $10 million in the 2020 fiscal budget to provide the city's roughly 8,400 foster youth with full-time life coaches from middle school through age 26. These coaches will provide foster youth with guidance on education, housing, and career prep as they age out of the system – a transition that has historically been marred by a profound absence of institutional and social support.

As the Center for an Urban Future's research has showed, this type of investment is long overdue. In our 2011 *Fostering Careers* report, we found that an alarming share of young people who age out of the city's foster care system are failing to obtain and hold on to jobs, and that part of the problem is that city government has not adequately focused on ensuring these young adults have access to career advice, training and support. The tragic result is that an unacceptably large number of foster care alumni to go from being minor wards of the state to adult wards of the state, with far too many ending up unemployed, incarcerated, and homeless.

In our report, we called on city government to "invest in better educational and workforce outcomes for foster youth" and offered a range of recommendations for how it could do so.

The city's laudable decision to fund career coaches for foster youth is consistent with the research findings and recommendations from our Fostering Careers report, but it would not have occurred if not for the highly effective Fair Futures advocacy campaign. The campaign was organized by a number of nonprofit leaders and child welfare advocates, funded by the New York Community Trust, the Hilton Foundation and Redlich Horwitz, and supported by City Council Member Stephen Levin, who chairs the General Welfare Committee.

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