The Road to Independence will develop a plan for systemic and community wide intervention strategies to end homelessness among youth and young adults with foster care experience.

Approximately 300 youth exit foster care at age 18. Of those, 30% reported experiencing homelessness within the first year.

**PROJECT GOALS**

1. Conduct data analysis to refine target population and identify youth most at risk of homelessness.

2. Assess current services; conduct gaps analysis and community readiness assessment.

3. Develop a referral and selection process.

4. Identify evidence based approaches or promising practices.

5. Develop an implementation plan to strengthen Independent Living Services.

Most young people placed in foster care achieve permanency through reunification, adoption or legal guardianship but some will remain in foster care until they age out at 18. Young people aging out of foster care are forced to find and maintain stable housing with little or no supports.

In October 2013, the Department of Human Services was awarded a $720,000 two-year planning grant to build on the capacity of state and local systems to prevent long-term homelessness among at-risk youth with foster care involvement.

Tulsa and Oklahoma City metropolitan areas are the primary focus of the project. The project is being funded by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Family and Youth Services Bureau.
AREAS TO BE ADDRESSED
The grant will focus on developing a systemic and community wide plan that will focus on improving the following core outcomes for youth exiting foster care:

- **WELL-BEING**
- **EDUCATION**
- **EMPLOYMENT**
- **HOUSING**
- **PERMANENT CONNECTIONS**
- **WELL-BEING**

The grant will also evaluate current independent living services and homeless services as well as evaluate the use of state and federal dollars for the target population.

PROJECT TIMELINE

- **FEB-JUL**
  - Data matching and analysis
  - Community Key Informant Interviews
- **JUL-NOV**
  - Identify youth most at-risk of homelessness
  - Conduct comprehensive readiness assessment
- **NOV-JAN**
  - Community planning teams convene
  - Finalize system recommendations
- **JAN-APR**
  - Develop implementation plan
  - Design evaluation

TARGET POPULATION

- **14-17 years old**
  - currently in DHS custody
- **17-18 years old**
  - transitioning out of DHS custody
- **18-21 years old**
  - currently homeless with foster care experience

OKLAHOMA PARTNERS
The Road to Independence is bringing together public and private partners in a truly collaborative process to address system needs and build capacity at the local level to provide the services Oklahoma’s youth need as they transition out of foster care. Areas represented:

- Child Welfare
- Housing
- Mental Health
- Youth Services Organizations
- Local Nonprofits
- Community Leaders
- Volunteers
- Youth Advocacy groups
- Academic Researchers

For more information:
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