

# 2016-2017 Going Places Campaign Summary

## Introduction

Learning to drive in the teen years is a rite of passage to young adulthood for millions of youth. It brings new levels of independence and opportunities and enables young people to take themselves to school, work, pursue higher education and participate in extracurricular activities with their peers. However, teens in foster care as well as youth who age out of care often face significant barriers to obtaining a driver's license. These barriers can include: difficulty securing the typical parental or guardian permission needed to enroll in driver's education contracting for insurance, an inability to pay for the various fees associated with becoming a driver, and complete the practice hours necessary to obtain a license. Without a driver's license, young people in foster care often miss out on age-appropriate adolescent experiences and opportunities that contribute to success in adulthood.

Recognizing the high level of importance that a driver's license can have in the life of an adolescent or young adult in foster care, SPARC and its state partners launched a targeted policy campaign in early 2016 to encourage policymakers to take action to remove barriers and promote better access to driver's education and driver's licenses for young people in foster care.

## Background on Normalcy Issues and Current Policy Guidance

In recent years, policymakers have taken an active interest in removing barriers that keep young people in foster care from having normal growing up experiences. In particular, in 2014, Congress enacted the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (P.L. 113-183). This federal law addresses some of the well-documented barriers to "normalcy" that youth in foster care face and recognizes important insights from neuroscience and the child development field, which is that the absence of age-appropriate developmental experiences can contribute to the lack of preparedness for adulthood that too many young people in foster care currently struggle with.



The law directs state public child welfare agencies to train foster parents (and other caregivers) on the new "Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard" which aims to strengthen the ability of foster parents

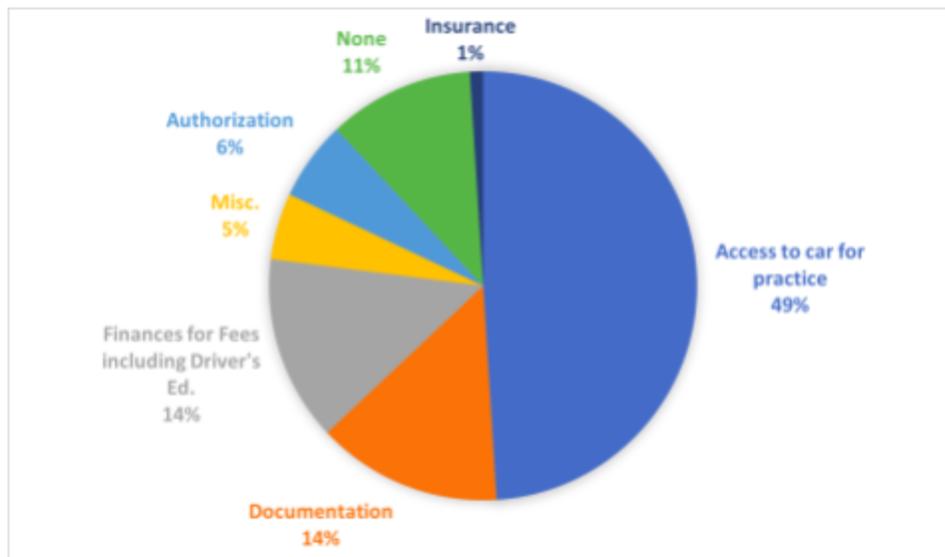
to make more decisions regarding the daily activities of children in their care with respect to their social, extracurricular, and cultural activities (i.e. sports, field trips and overnight activities). In implementing the act, some states provided further specificity about foster parents' decision-making authority to include authority for issues related to youth obtaining a learner's permit, learning to drive, and obtaining a license consistent with state law. The Strengthening Families Act requires that states provide youth as they age out of care a copy of their driver's license (or state identification card), among other important personal documentation.

### Data from Survey: What do Youth Think?

The Going Places Campaign surveyed foster youth and former foster youth from across the nation to find out what barriers they faced in obtaining their driver's license and state identification cards. We received feedback from youth between the ages of 15 and 21 years old, and they represented 12 different states: IA, VT, OR, CA, HI, ME, NE, NM, MN, MA, GA, RI.

Almost half of the respondents listed access to a car for driving practice as the number one barrier to getting their license. The youth also listed access to required documentation and finances for driver's license fees as other major obstacles. For those who received financial support for fees related to accessing their license, more than half stated that this assistance came from the county and local human services department or their Independent Living Program.

The survey results indicated that attaining the required practice hours for getting a driver's license is



difficult. Youth rely on foster family, extended biological family, friends, and social workers to allow them to use their car to clock the necessary driving hours. Additionally, they must rely on someone with a driver's license to help them with this practice. A percentage, 17.5 percent, of respondents were

able to access a driver's education course for their practice hours. Fortunately, more than half of those were able to access this course via their high school rather than paying a private course fee.

The final question of the survey asked about the benefits that youth have experienced since having their driver's license/state ID. Of the items listed, the number one benefit was having transportation to work. The second most listed benefit was that it gave them independence and allowed them to do things such as buy groceries and prove their identity. (See Appendix A)

### **Policy Landscape: State Legislation**

Several states have listened to foster youth and found some legislative solutions to some of the barriers that these youth are facing. The Going Places Campaign will continue to monitor the legislative proposals at the state and federal level

- In Arizona, Senate Bill 1314 expands existing law to permit minors who are: 1) at least 16 years of age, 2) have taken a driver safety course, and 3) are in foster care, to buy their own auto insurance. Arizona Senate Bill 1341 was signed by the Governor on May 2, 2017. The Children's Action Alliance has been helping to move by meeting with the Governor's office and Senate legislators. They recently held an event for legislators to hear from youth why driver's licenses are important for them and facilitated youth testifying for the bill.
- In Florida, House Bill 217 & Senate Bill 60 authorizes Florida's Road-to-Independence program to pay for a child in out-of-home care to complete a driver's education program and obtain a driver's license. The bill also revises Florida's Road-to-Independence Program to make it permanent. The bill by Senator Bean (R- Jacksonville) makes the Keys to Independence program permanent, providing children in the foster care system with the access and means to obtain their learner's permit and driver's license. During debate, Senator Gibson brought up findings from the pilot indicating low participation in six counties and asked about plans to increase it. Bean's response was that, "barriers are coming down with the approval of this bill" and explained participation is addressed by expanding the program to include children in out-of-home placements, allowing guardian ad litem to sign applications, and including this goal in the youth's file and transition plan that are reviewed by the courts. The bill was signed into law on May 2, 2017.
- In Indiana, Senate Bill 366 allows an individual who is at least 16 years of age but less than 18 years of age and is under the care and supervision of the department of child services to: (1) obtain an identification card, learner's permit, or operator's license without paying a fee; (2) contract for a policy of motor vehicle insurance; and (3) complete driving practice with individuals approved by the department. Senate Bill 366 was signed by the Governor on April 21, 2017.

- In Kentucky, House Bill 192 allows for foster youth under the age of 18 to apply for an instruction permit without the signature of a parent or legal guardian. The application may be signed by 1) an extended family member, 2) a foster parent, 3) an adult over the age of 18 who is willing to assume responsibility for the applicant, or 4) the applicant may sign for his/her self with proof of financial responsibility. Kentucky House Bill 192 was signed into law on March 10, 2017
- In South Carolina, Senate Bill 198 expands the list of people who may sign a driver's license or driver's permit for a minor. This includes: the biological parents of the minor, guardian of the minor, an individual who has custody of the minor, any person in loco parentis for the child, foster parents, and pre-adoptive parents. The bill was signed by the Governor on April 5, 2017 and went into effect on April 24, 2017.
- In Missouri, the Governor announced that foster youth will not have to pay a fee to access their birth certificates.

## **Federal Legislation**

This year Congressman Danny K. Davis (D-7-IL) introduced the Foster Youth and Driving Act, H.R. 2512, which aims to reduce barriers for youth in foster care in obtaining their driver's license. By building on the normalcy provisions of the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (P.L. 113- 183), H.R. 2512 seeks to address some of the barriers faced by youth in care and empowers youth and foster parents with the resources they need to help youth learn to drive and obtain a driver's license. Some of the key provisions of the bill include:

- Providing foster parents of appropriate aged children with training to help prepare a young person in their care to drive;
- Requiring case plans to include information for age appropriate foster youth on opportunities to obtain practice hours and requirements for obtaining a driver's license and car insurance;
- Creating a driver's license assistance program for youth, which would provide up to \$3,000 for driving expenses such as driver's education classes, fees related to obtaining a license, car insurance costs. Youth who were in care at age 16, currently between the ages of 21 and 26, and enrolled in post-secondary education or employment training program are eligible for the program

## **Network Efforts**

In coordination with the campaign, the SPARC Network hosts a working group related to Going Places Initiative. This workgroup has served as a resource hub for advocates to learn about current policies relating to driving policy in their states and current legislation being considered in state legislatures.

SPARC has also commissioned state scans of current policies and legal research on liability issues, facilitated conversations with states who have driver's license policies in place and transition-age youth experts, conducted a youth survey, and reached out to insurance companies and risk managers to learn more about how insurance premiums could be lowered for this population. States have also asked SPARC to advise on legislative activities for the next session and SPARC has weighed in on federal legislation on this topic as well.



As a part of the Going Places Campaign, SPARC launched a website titled “Youth Going Places” and has created social media toolkits to highlight the importance of the campaign. The website serves as a landing page for resources and a place for states to find their current state policies as well as newly introduced legislation. Additionally, SPARC has created a model legislation document for advocates to utilize within their own districts (See Appendix B).

### **Moving Forward**

A result of the Campaign's efforts has been the identification of barriers to meaningful legislation. The barriers include resistance by insurance companies to reduce liability costs for foster youth, a need for creative partnerships to understand the insurance process and players for each state, and a difficulty in securing funding for fees/car insurance for foster youth. By identifying these areas, the Campaign is better equipped to seek out the right partnerships and processes for moving forward.

The first year of the Going Places Campaign laid a great foundation of knowledge and resources for advocates who are passionate about helping young people in foster care obtain their driver's license/state ID. In doing so, the Campaign has brought awareness to both state and federal advocates across the country.

Appendix A

Going Places Youth Survey

Appendix B

Going Places Model Policy