

# Untapped Potential: Economic and Social Costs of Colorado's Foster Youth

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Just a small fraction of the state's foster youth have an outsized impact on the economy. The lifetime social and economic costs range from \$66 million to \$73 million for the single group of 213 youth aging out of the foster system in an average year.

Over ten years, this will equal \$660 million to \$730 million in lost economic and societal costs.

**Bottom line:** Coloradans are paying the societal and economic costs on the back end of a foster care intervention that did not lead to permanency. Policies which pay for performance at the front end and invest in high school graduation are key.

## OUTCOMES FOR FOSTER CARE VS. GENERAL POPULATION



**Early parenthood** - 13 times higher for women aging out of the foster care system.



**Homelessness** - 6 times greater risk than the population at large.



**High school graduation** - 30% of foster youth graduate from high school.

- Youth experiencing homelessness graduated from high school at nearly twice that rate, 55.4%.



**Incarceration** - 26% of former foster youth in Colorado aged 21 in 2021 had been incarcerated in the last two years compared to 0.06%, for young people up to 21 years old in the general population.

## LIFETIME SOCIETAL AND ECONOMIC COSTS

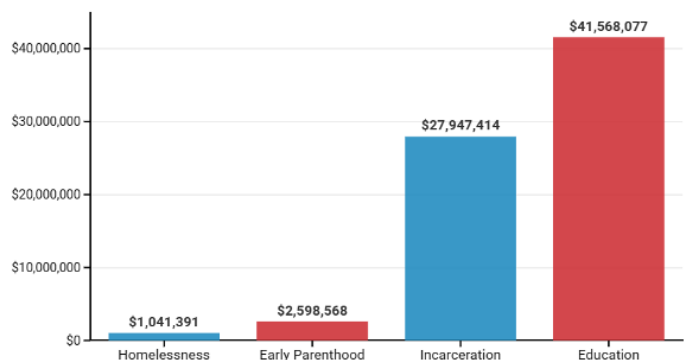
**Incarceration** - Costs related to incarceration ranged from \$21 million to \$28 million, or \$99,776 to \$131,209 per person.

**Education** - In 2022, only 30% of the foster care youth in Colorado schools graduated from high school. The costs of not graduating high school amounted to \$42 million, or \$195,155 per person.

**Early Parenthood** - Costs of early parenthood amounted to \$2.6 million, or \$12,200 per person.

**Homelessness** - Costs linked to homelessness ranged from \$528,985 to \$1 million, or \$2,483 to \$4,889 per person.

**Lifelong Costs for Negative Outcomes of One Year of Colorado Foster Care Age-Outs**  
Costs shown are the higher cost estimates for 213 youth - the average number of age outs between 2017-2021.



Source: Common Sense Institute

A full set of recommendations can be found in the report, "**Untapped Potential: Economic Costs of Colorado's Foster Youth**," at [CSInstituteCO.org](https://CSInstituteCO.org).