Voting Access and Preparation for Youth in Foster Care: Strategies for Supporting Civic Engagement
Civic Engagement for Youth in Foster Care

"And as a former foster youth, I see no party or particular politician who is fully focused on the policies and legislation that will protect and defend the humanity of current and former foster youth. Escapism is a familiar refuge for foster youth – escaping abuse and neglect, escaping strangers and unfamiliar adults, escaping a system that does more harm than good most of the time."

Governor signs bill that encourages foster youth to vote

Ivory Bennett, youth voice contributor. Photo courtesy Ivory Bennett.
The Midwest Study

*The Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth* (Midwest Study):

- A longitudinal study following a sample of young people from Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois as they transition out of foster care into adulthood.
- Data were collected at age 17/18, 19, 21, 23/24, and 26
- Questions on voting were added at age 21
Midwest Study Data on Voting

The Field Center

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age 21</th>
<th>Age 23/24</th>
<th>Age 26</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered to Vote</td>
<td>Voted in most recent Presidential election</td>
<td>Registered with no political party</td>
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- Age 21: Registered to Vote (70), Voted in most recent Presidential election (60), Registered with no political party (70)
- Age 23/24: Registered to Vote (70), Voted in most recent Presidential election (40), Registered with no political party (60)
- Age 26: Registered to Vote (70), Voted in most recent Presidential election (60), Registered with no political party (70)
Midwest Study Data on Voting

Compared with a nationally-representative sample of young people from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, young adults in the Midwest Study were:

- Less likely to report trusting the government
- Less likely to register to vote or vote
- More likely to be uncertain or ambivalent about their political ideology and party identification
- More likely to register Democratic