

Contributors to Post-Secondary Education of Foster Youth Making the Transition to Adulthood: Results from Projects Funded by State Government, NIH, NIJ, and Several Foundations

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Policy research that benefits children, families, and their communities

My Purpose Today

Summarize what we know about how foster youth fare educationally during the transition to adulthood using data from the Midwest Study

Present findings of a study analyzing predictors of post-secondary education transitions

Illustrate the potential of projects like the Midwest Study to engage large interdisciplinary teams of scholars and students

**How do foster youth fare
educationally during the
transition to adulthood?**

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Midwest Study Design and Sample

Largest prospective study of foster youth making the transition to adulthood since the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999

Collaboration between state child welfare agencies and the research team

Foster youth in Iowa, Wisconsin and Illinois who:

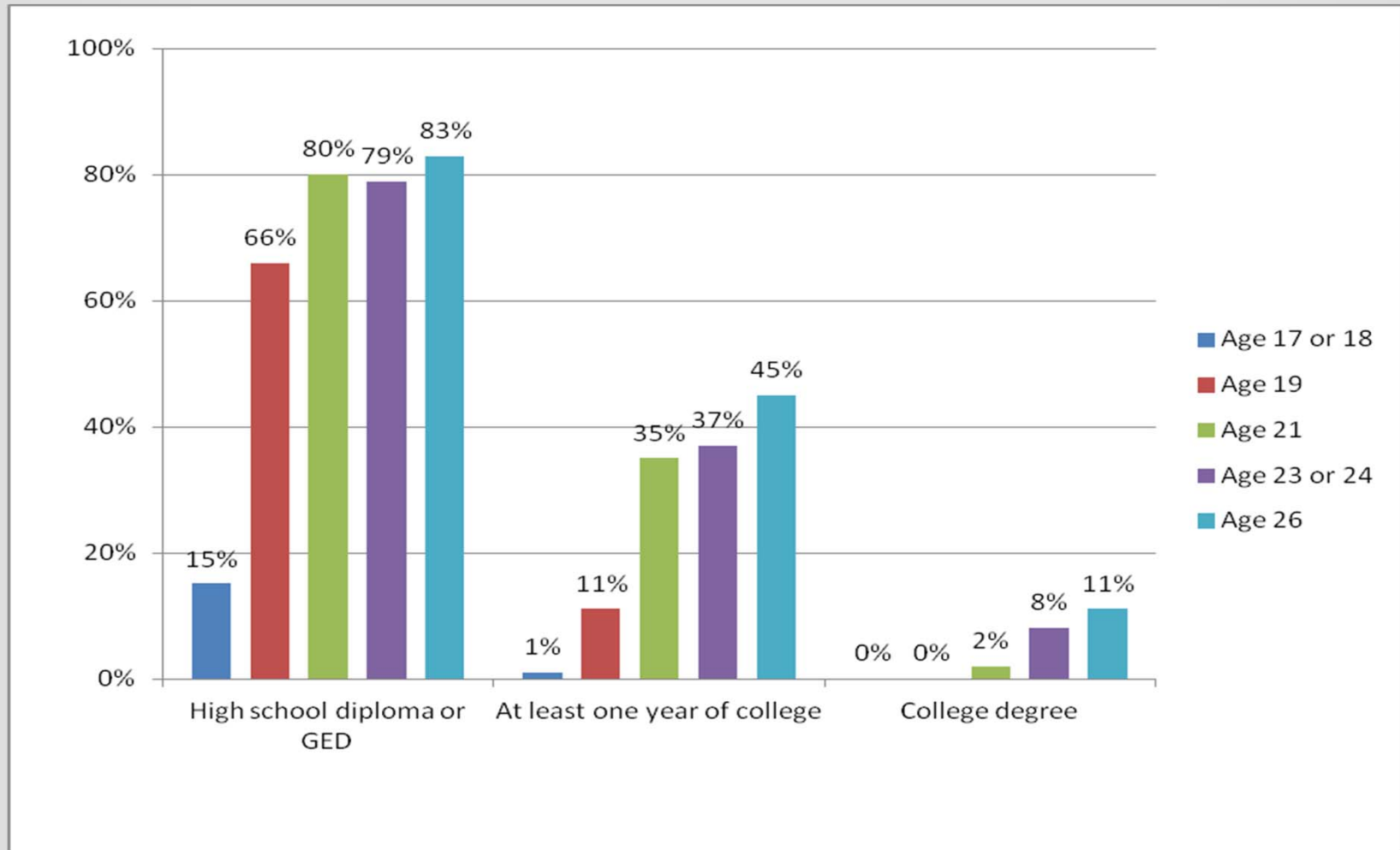
- Were still in care at age 17
- Had entered care before their 16th birthday
- Had been placed in care because they were abused, neglected or dependent
- Not originally placed because of delinquency

Data from in-person interviews (structured and in-depth qualitative) and government program administrative data

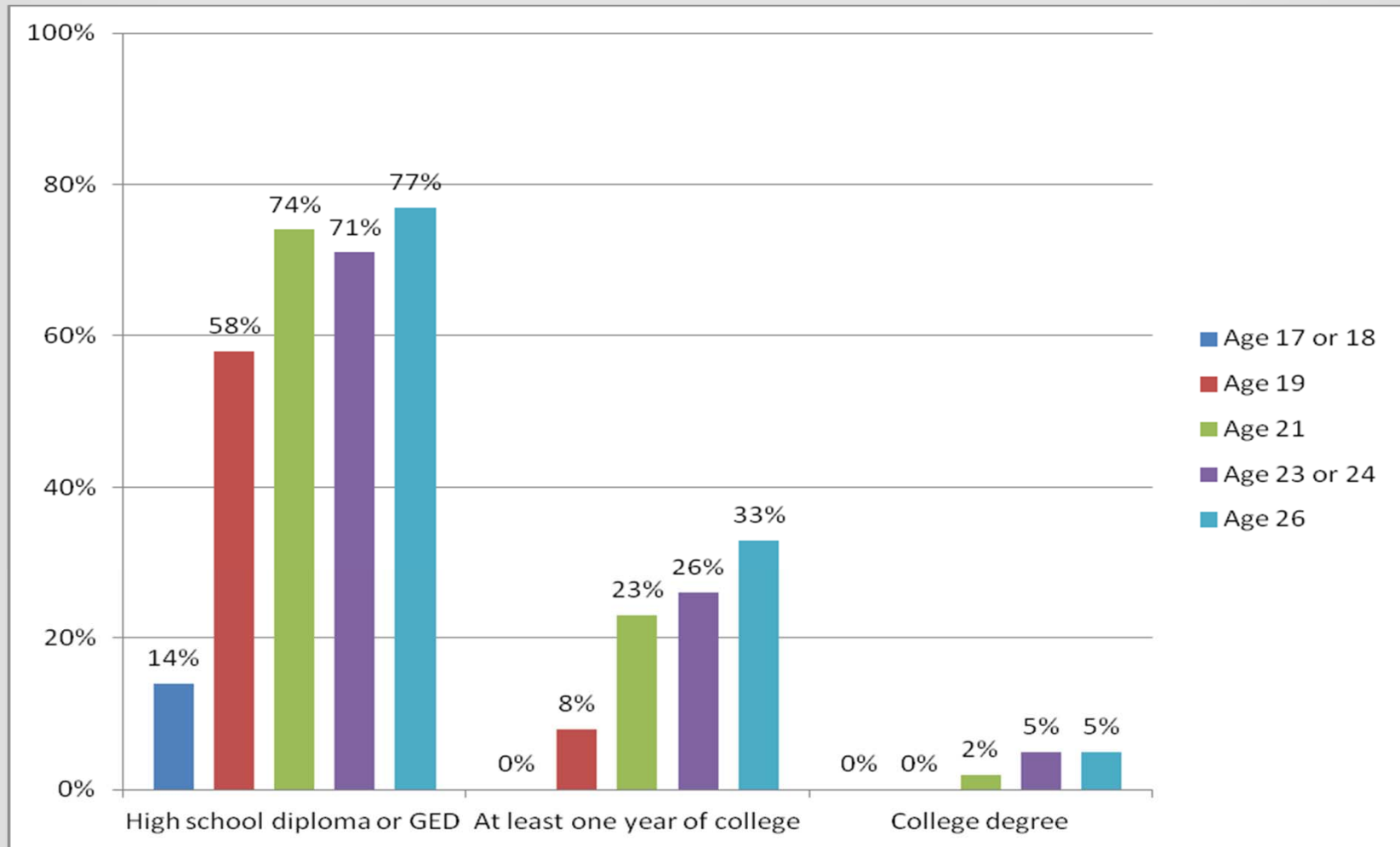
Study Design and Sample (continued)

Wave	Year	Number Interviewed	Response Rate	Age at interview
1	'02 – '03	732	96%	17 – 18
2	'04	603	82%	19
3	'06	591	81%	21
4	'08	602	82%	23-24
5	'10 – '11	596	83%	26

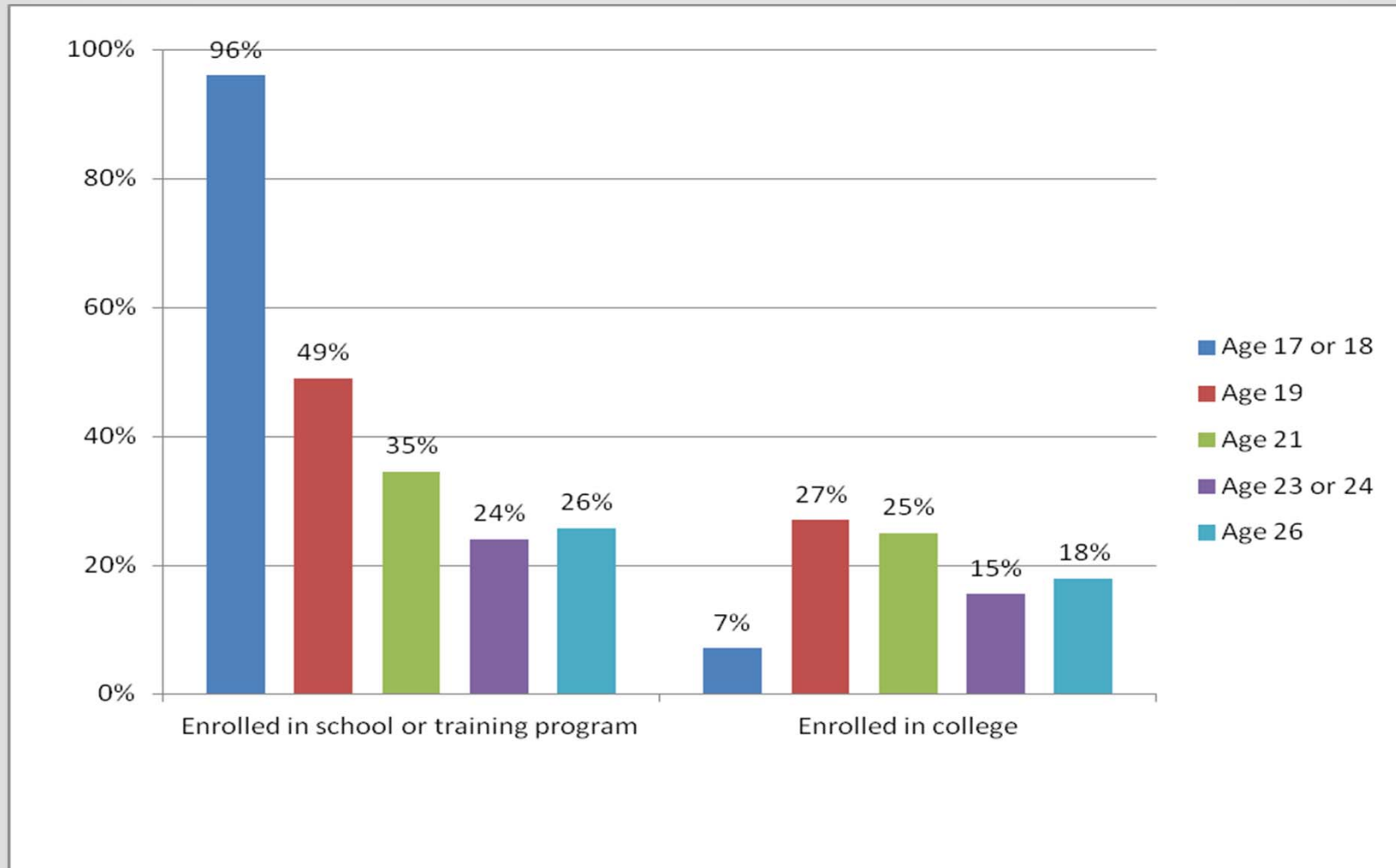
Young Women's Educational Attainment



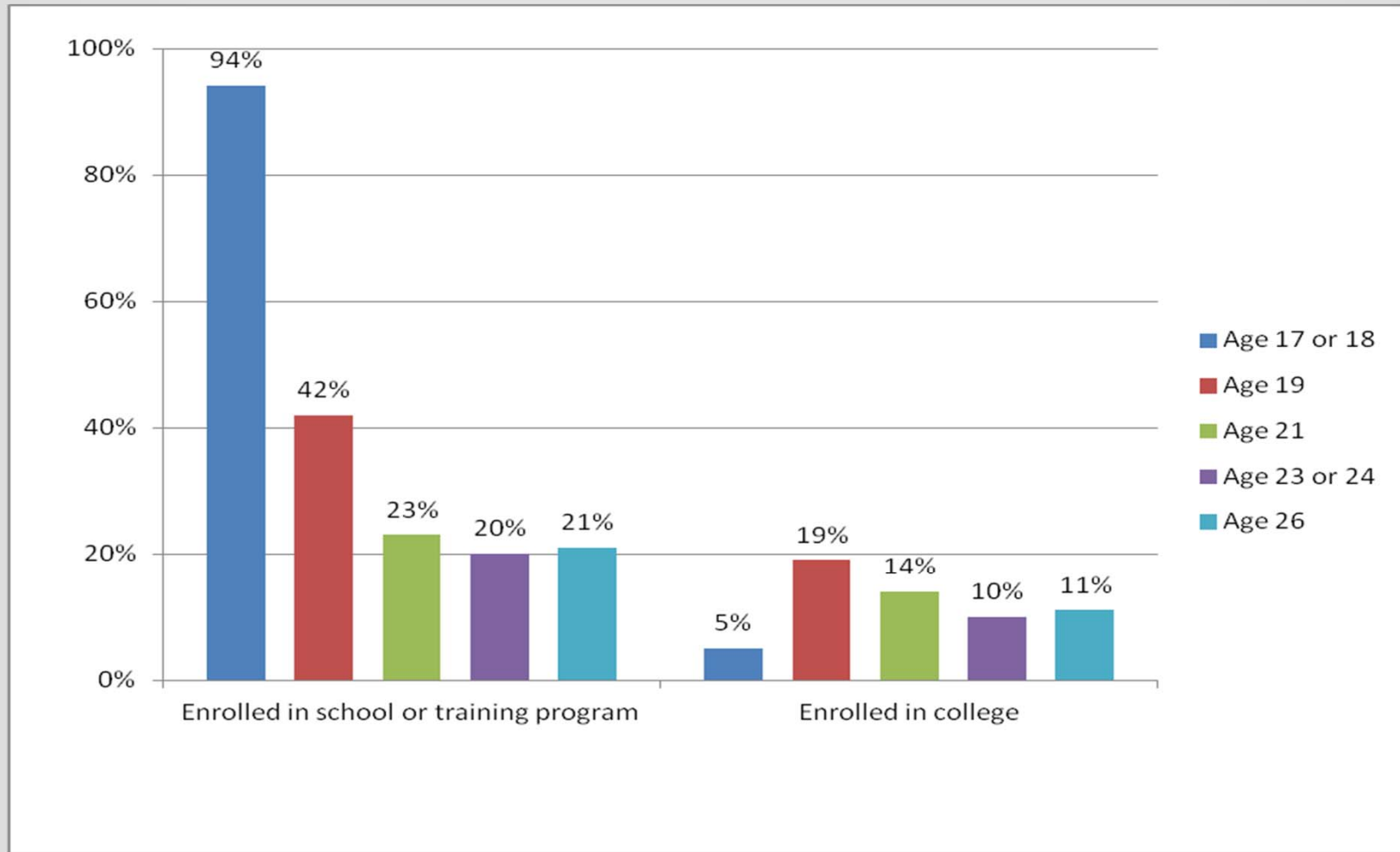
Young Men's Educational Attainment



Young Women's Educational Enrollment



Young Men's Educational Enrollment



Highest Grade Completed: Midwest Study Compared with Add Health Study, Age 26

	Midwest Study		Add Health Study	
	(N = 593)		(N = 890)	
	#	%	#	%
No high school diploma or GED ^a	118	19.9	54	6.1
High school diploma only	182	30.7	161	18.1
GED only ^b	56	9.4	34	3.8
One or more years of college, but no degree	188	31.7	231	26.0
2-year college degree	26	4.4	87	9.8
4-year college degree	15	2.5	209	23.5
One or more years of graduate school	4	0.7	114	12.8

Dropping Out of Post-Secondary Education (N = 596)

	#	% of sample	% of dropouts
Ever dropped out of a postsecondary educational program	211	35.4	----
Vocational/technical school	49	8.2	23.2
2-year college	151	25.3	71.6
4-year college	51	8.6	24.2
Graduate school	7	1.2	3.3
Type of program dropped out of most recently (n = 210)			
Vocational/technical school	33		15.7
2-year college	133		63.3
4-year college	35		16.7
Graduate school	2		1.0
Most recent reason for dropping out (n = 211)			
Pregnancy	30		23.6
Child care responsibilities	78		37.0
Needed to work	129		61.1
Family emergency	46		21.8
Couldn't afford tuition and fees.	93		44.1
Too many required classes were not useful.	56		25.3
Some classes were too difficult.	54		25.6
Returned to program most recently dropped out of (n = 211)	23		10.3

Reasons No Longer Enrolled in School (n = 487)

	#	%
Graduated	131	26.9
Could no longer afford to attend	93	19.1
Academic difficulties	40	8.2
Lost interest in my studies	75	15.4
Became employed	127	26.1
Became a parent/caring for children	105	21.6
No transportation	41	8.4
Discouraged by significant other	6	1.2
Other	123	25.3
Missing	3	0.6

Barriers to Continuing Education

	Total		Female		Male	
	(N = 491)		(n = 260)		(n = 228)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Any barrier to continuing education	245	49.9	136	52.3	109	47.8
Biggest barrier to continuing education						
Cannot pay for school	145	59.4	73	54.1	72	66.1
Need to work full-time	105	42.9	64	47.1	41	37.6
Need to care for child(ren)	82	33.5	64	47.1	18	16.5
No transportation	38	15.5	19	14.0	19	17.4
Don't think any college would accept me	22	9.0	11	8.1	11	10.1
Classes near me don't fit my schedule	14	5.7	11	8.1	3	2.8
Criminal record	23	9.4	7	5.1	16	14.7
Don't know how to enroll in school	10	4.1	6	4.4	4	3.7

Plans for Returning to School

	#	%
Amount of thought given to going back to school (n = 488)		
A lot of thought	288	59.0
Some thought	159	32.6
No thought at all	41	8.4
Steps taken to return to school (n= 444)		
Seriously looked into a specific school	196	41.1
Have not yet looked but plan on doing so soon	171	38.3
Not going to look	72	16.1
Already chosen/ accepted into a school	5	1.1

Education Needed to Achieve Career Goals

	Total		Currently Enrolled		Not Currently Enrolled	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Have just the right amount of education	102	17.1	14	13.3	88	18.1
Need additional education	469	78.7	90	85.7	375	77.0
Have more education than needed	25	4.2	1	1.0	24	4.9

Predictors of Educational Attainment During the Transition to Adulthood: The Importance of Extended Care

Multivariate Model of Educational Outcomes

- Multilevel ordinal logistic regression to analyze youth's educational attainment
 - Outcomes assessed at the last four waves of the Midwest Study
 - Of the 732 youth at baseline we follow 90.8% (n = 665) to Wave 5
 - Three outcome categories: less than high school, high school (including a regular diploma, GED, other equivalency, or certificate of completion), and one year of college or more
 - Largest prospective study of foster youth making the transition to adulthood since the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999
- Time-varying covariates: Age and ***days in care past 18th birthday***
- Baseline covariates: gender, race, college plans, reading level, ever retained in school, total number of placements, placement type at baseline, employed 10 hour per week, drug issues, alcohol issues, depression, PTSD, maltreatment history, delinquency, receipt of education-related independent living services, state (stratified analysis)

Significant Predictors of Educational Attainment

	B	All states SE		OR
<i>Time-varying covariates</i>				
Age (centered at 18)	.96	.09	***	2.60
Years in care past 18	1.74	.28	***	5.72
<i>Covariates measured at baseline</i>				
Female	1.51	.64	*	4.52
African-American (ref: white)	-2.13	.81	**	.12
College plans	2.06	.71	**	7.86
Reading level (ref: less than 6th grade)				
6th-8th grade	2.27	.81	**	9.66
High school	2.45	.85	**	11.56
Post high school	3.46	.98	***	31.97
Retained	-3.83	.67	***	.02
Education ILS	1.25	.62	*	3.50
Child	-2.61	.92	**	.07
Employed 10 hours	2.32	.66	***	10.19
Drug issues	-1.88	.81	*	.15
Delinquency	-1.44	.72	*	.24

Note: *** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05

Summary of Findings and Implications

- Youth are continuing to obtain education as they enter their late 20s
- For each additional year in care, the odds are 5.7 times more likely that youth will reach the next higher education category
- Human capital and aspirations matter:
 - Reading level and grade retention are powerful predictors
 - A history of employment is important
 - College aspirations and educational services are also positively associated with later education
- Having children early has long-term consequences
- Substance use and delinquency appear to be barriers to continuing education
- Gender and race are associated with education as they are in the general population

History of Midwest Study Funding: \$3.6 million+

- Data collection for waves 1 through 3
 - 3% of state child welfare agencies Chafee Program dollars for four years: \$1,226,760
- Additional topic specific analysis of data from waves 1 through 3
 - NIJ, Crime During the Transition to Adulthood: \$259,781
 - MacArthur Foundation, Benefit-Cost Analysis of Extended Care: \$183,785
 - W. T. Grant Foundation, Qualitative Study and Study of Youth Trajectories: \$341,083
 - National Institute of Mental Health, RO3, Maltreatment and Mental Health in Older Foster Youth: \$152,500
- Data collection for wave 4
 - Annie E. Casey Foundation, Casey Family Programs, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, Stuart Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation: \$450,000
- Data collection for wave 5 and analysis of data from all prior data collection
 - Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation: \$1 million

History of Midwest Study People

- **Co-Investigators**

- Amy Dworsky, Chapin Hall (since wave 2)
- Margot Kushel, UCSF (Stuart Foundation grant on health and housing stability)
- Tom Keller, Portland State (NIMH and W T Grant)
- Gretchen Ruth Cusick, Chapin Hall (NIJ)
- Jennifer Hook, University of Washington (Gates and pending RO3)
- Kym Ahrens, University of Washington (NIH K Award)
- Harold Pollack, University of Chicago (MacArthur)
- Gina Miranda Samuels, University of Chicago (W T Grant)
- Toni Naccarato, SUNY Albany (departmental grant)

- **Doctoral students:** Noel Bost, Judy Havlicek, Clark Peters, Alfred Perez, Adam Brown, Colleen Cary, Aditi Das, Proscovia Nabunya, Vanessa Vorhies, JoAnn Lee, Tony Garcia

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For more info:

<http://www.chapinhall.org/research/report/midwest-evaluation-adult-functioning-former-foster-youth>

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