



Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy 2009 Legislative Agenda for Children and Youth

Help Youth Transition into Adulthood SB 283 (Coates / Jackson)

Problem

- There are over 60,000 young people in Oklahoma, ages 18-24, who are neither in school nor in the military, and not working, and have no degree beyond high school.
- A study of youth aging out of foster care in the Midwest found that fewer than half were employed, and for those who were, employment was sporadic, rarely providing financial security.
- Fewer than 43% of youth exiting the juvenile justice system return to school after their release, and another 16% drop out within five months.
- The Oklahoma City Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force reported there are at least 1,500 homeless children in Oklahoma City Public Schools.

Oklahoma's Disconnected Youth

There are a variety of programs - educational, drug treatment, mental health, rehabilitation, medical services - that the state provides to help at-risk teens move toward independence and productivity. Yet for many, all of these services come to an abrupt halt when they "age out" of the system.

Some programs are off limits to juvenile offenders. Others are geared solely toward employment and do not provide the kinds of supports at-risk young people require.

The state of Oklahoma has no true picture of how many young people are falling through the cracks - and how much potential is being lost - due to our inability to determine the numbers of "disconnected youth."

Solution: **SB 283** (Senator Coates and Rep. Jackson)

SB 283 Creates the Task Force on Youth Transitioning into Adulthood

SB 283 Directs this new task force to conduct an in-depth study of Oklahoma's disconnected youth, and the issues that directly impact their ability to achieve financial independence and life skills.

SB 283 is part of the 2009 Legislative Agenda for Children and Youth promoted by the Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy. For more information, contact Anne Roberts at 405/627-9877.