



Colorado's Children in Need:

Health Care for Youth in Foster Care

Children removed from their families and placed in foster care often have little stability, contributing to lower graduation rates and higher incarceration rates. They also have higher rates of diagnoses for physical, chronic, and behavioral health complexities compared to children not in foster care, as found by a study conducted by the Farley Health Policy Center. The study compared a group of 34,971 children in foster care to 269,470 Medicaid-enrolled children between July 2011 and June 2020. Key findings from the study are shared below.



4,133

children in foster care in Colorado¹



30% of CO

foster care children graduate high school²



3.4

average foster care placement rate³

CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE COMPARED TO KIDS ON MEDICAID NOT IN FOSTER CARE

Medicaid-Enrolled Children

24.3%

have physical health complexities

12.1%

have behavioral health complexities

0.6%

that are less than 3 years old have behavioral health complexities



~1.6x

the rate of physical health complexities

~3.0x

the rate of behavioral health complexities

~7.3x

the rate of behavioral health complexities



Children in Foster Care

38.6%

have physical health complexities

36.5%

have behavioral health complexities

4.4%

that are less than 3 years old have behavioral health complexities



“When you are taken into the system, you are removed from a situation you’re comfortable with. The isolation starts out right away, even when you are surrounded by caseworkers, judges, foster parents, staff. You can be surrounded by people and still feel completely alone and alienated and lost.”

– Mitch Devito, former youth in Colorado’s foster care system⁴

For more information, [read the full study or the published article.](#)

¹ 2022 data obtained from: <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/pdf/colorado.html>

² 2022 data obtained from: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/code/gradvisual2122>

³ 2022 data obtained from: <https://colorado.rom.socwel.ku.edu/reports/106>; to view the 2022 data, please select “2022” from the options list

⁴ <https://www.pbs.org/video/rebecoming-me-hclnjp/>



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