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# Fostering Connections Bill to Expand Access to Services for Young Adults

## Press Release

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SANTA FE, Feb. 10, 2023 — The Children, Youth and Families Department is working to make its Fostering Connections program open to more young adults as they move from state care to adulthood.

The Fostering Connections bill, [S.B. 328](#) sponsored by Sen. Michael Padilla, expands the eligibility criteria to ensure that all young people who age out of foster care can participate in Extended Foster Care and receive critical services and supports as they grow into adulthood.

“This work means that young people leaving the foster care system will have the type of support other young adults receive from their parents and extended family,” said Cabinet Secretary Barbara J. Vigil. “This includes help setting up a household, help with education, guidance in establishing a career. These young adults deserve our enthusiastic support.”

**What’s new:** Currently, those who turn 18 while in the department’s custody without being adjudicated are not eligible for the program. Additionally, those who turn 18 while in state custody under a Voluntary Placement Agreement are not eligible. The proposed legislation addresses those barriers.

The proposed change to the successful 2019 Fostering Connections Act would ensure that more young people can receive guidance, support and help as they enter adulthood.

In New Mexico, young adults can elect to enroll in the Extended Foster Care program, making them eligible for a range of services, including support transition planning and in securing safe and stable housing. This is all aimed at helping them achieve their goals around education,

employment, healthcare coverage -- plus supplemental financial support for young parents. To date, over 200 young people have elected to take part in the program that extends foster care.

Young people aging out of foster care continue to overcome the impact of childhood trauma and adversity. They often need extra support in getting the resources they need to thrive. Fostering Connections helps these young people decide about their futures, and it provides highly trained specialists to support them in achieving their goals.

Fostering Connections is a voluntary program for young adults, aged 18-26.