

# Preparing Virginia's Youth for Success

Sunny Shin, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Social Work and Psychiatry

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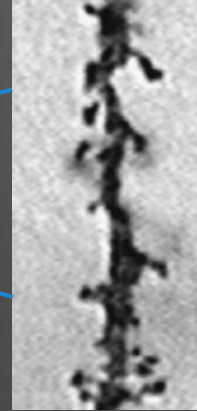
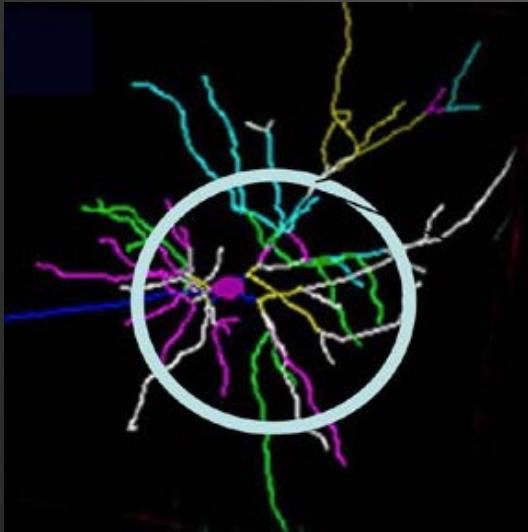


# Topic covered

- ⊗ Health and social consequences of chronic early life stress
- ⊗ The transition to adulthood in the 21st century
- ⊗ Virginia's older youth in care and key outcomes after emancipation
- ⊗ Potential benefits of allowing youth to remain in care to age 21
- ⊗ Preparing Virginia's Youth for Success: Lessons from Other States

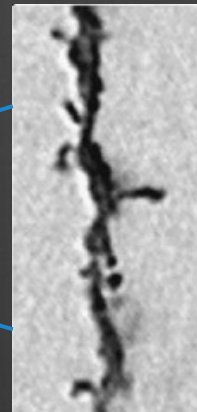
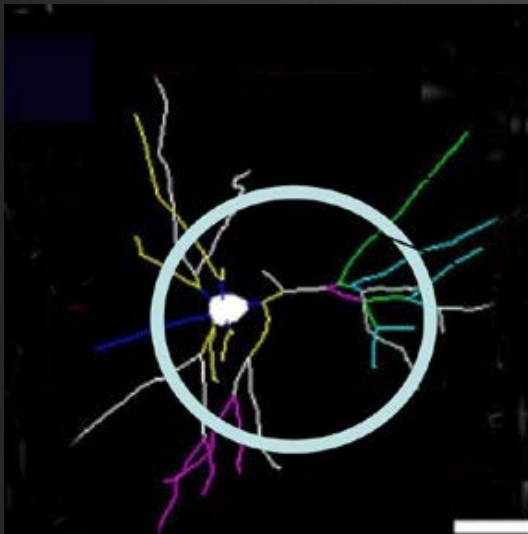
# Health and social consequences of chronic early life stress (Radley et al., 2004)

Normal



Typical neuron – many connections

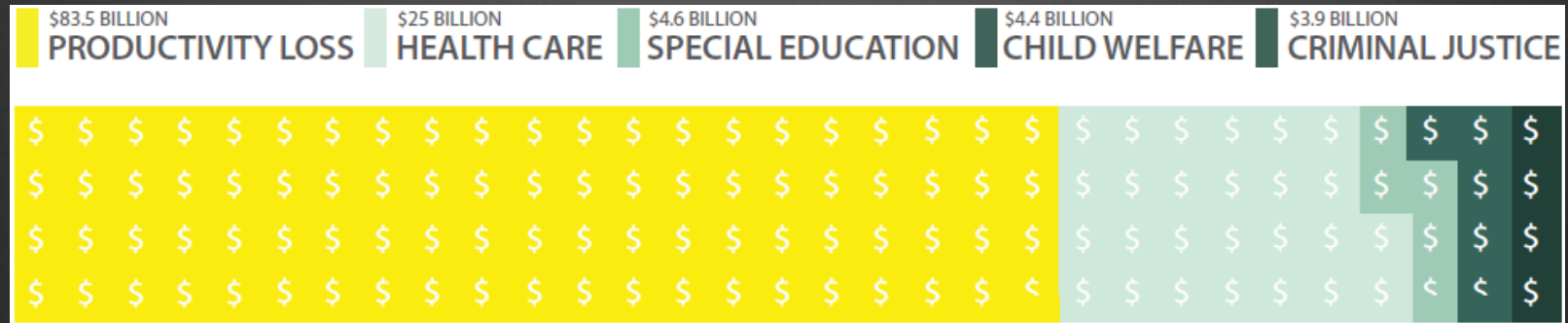
Toxic Stress



Damaged neuron – fewer connections

Brain regions: Prefrontal Cortex & Hippocampus

# Economic cost of child maltreatment



- ⊕ Exposure to child maltreatment costs Americans an estimated \$124 billion annually (Fang et al., 2012).
- ⊕ Each occurrence of child maltreatment costs the US economy an estimated \$800,000 in gross product, annually (The Perryman Group, 2014).

# The transition to adulthood in the 21st century

- ⊕ In most industrialized countries, it is no longer normative for the late teens and early twenties to settle into adult roles (i.e., marriages, parenthood, completion of education).
- ⊕ Continuing reliance on parental financial assistance for food, housing, education or direct cash assistance (75% of young people between 18-28; Roughly \$38k (ages 18-34)).
- ⊕ Recent findings in neuroscience push the timeline of brain maturation into adolescence and early adulthood (brain parts responsible for “top down” executive control).

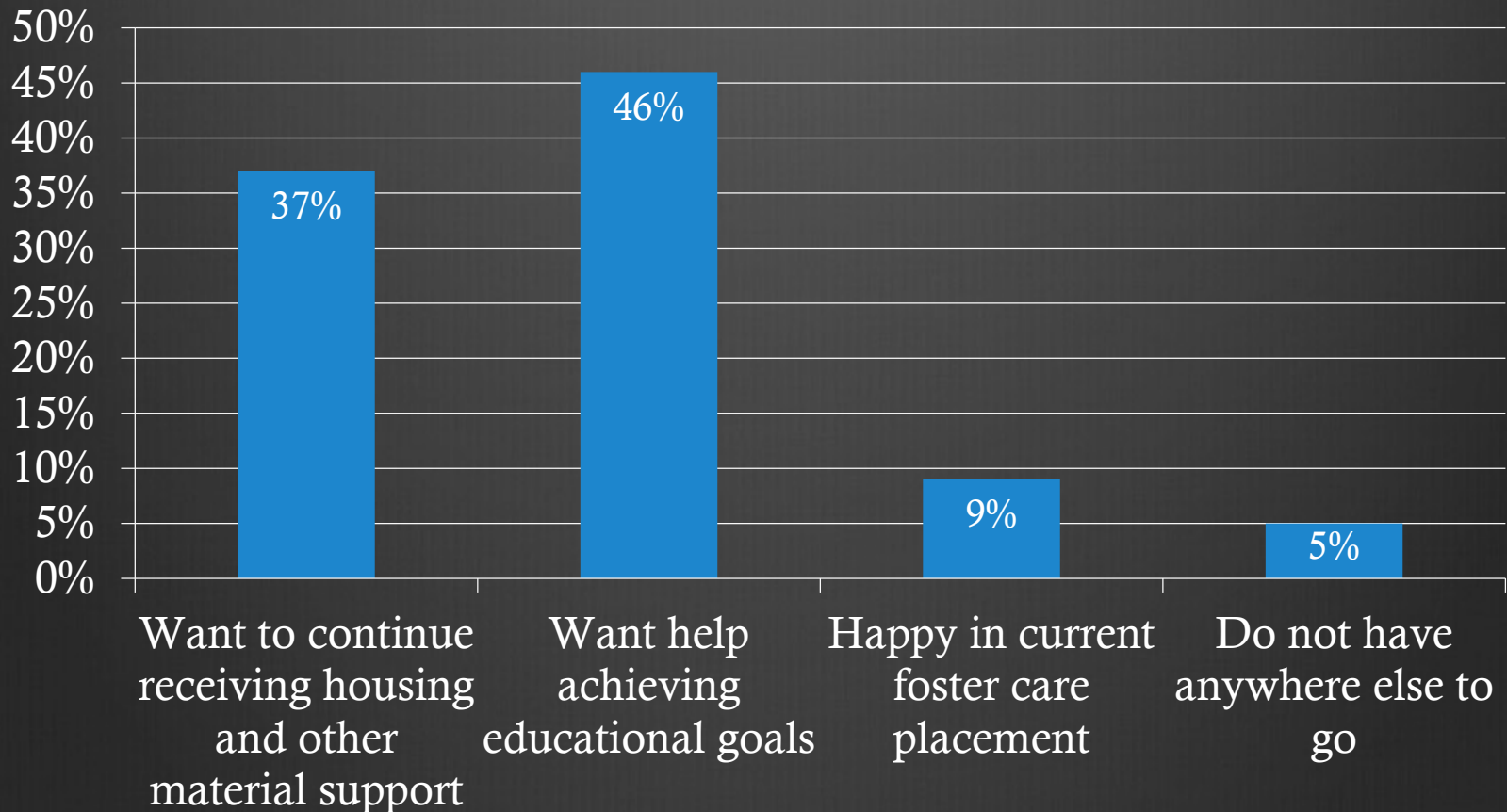


# Snapshot of Virginia's Transition-Age Foster Youth

- ⊗ 5,249 Virginian children in out-of-home care on April 1, 2016
  - ⊗ 54% Caucasian; 34% African American; 9.5% Hispanic
  - ⊗ Average time in care = 23 months
  - ⊗ 27% (n = 1,440) were age 16 and over.
- ⊗ In 2013, 580 youth (21% of all exits) left care to “emancipation” or to “independent living” at the age of 18. (9% national average)

Why would they stay in  
care or leave care after  
18<sup>th</sup> birthday?

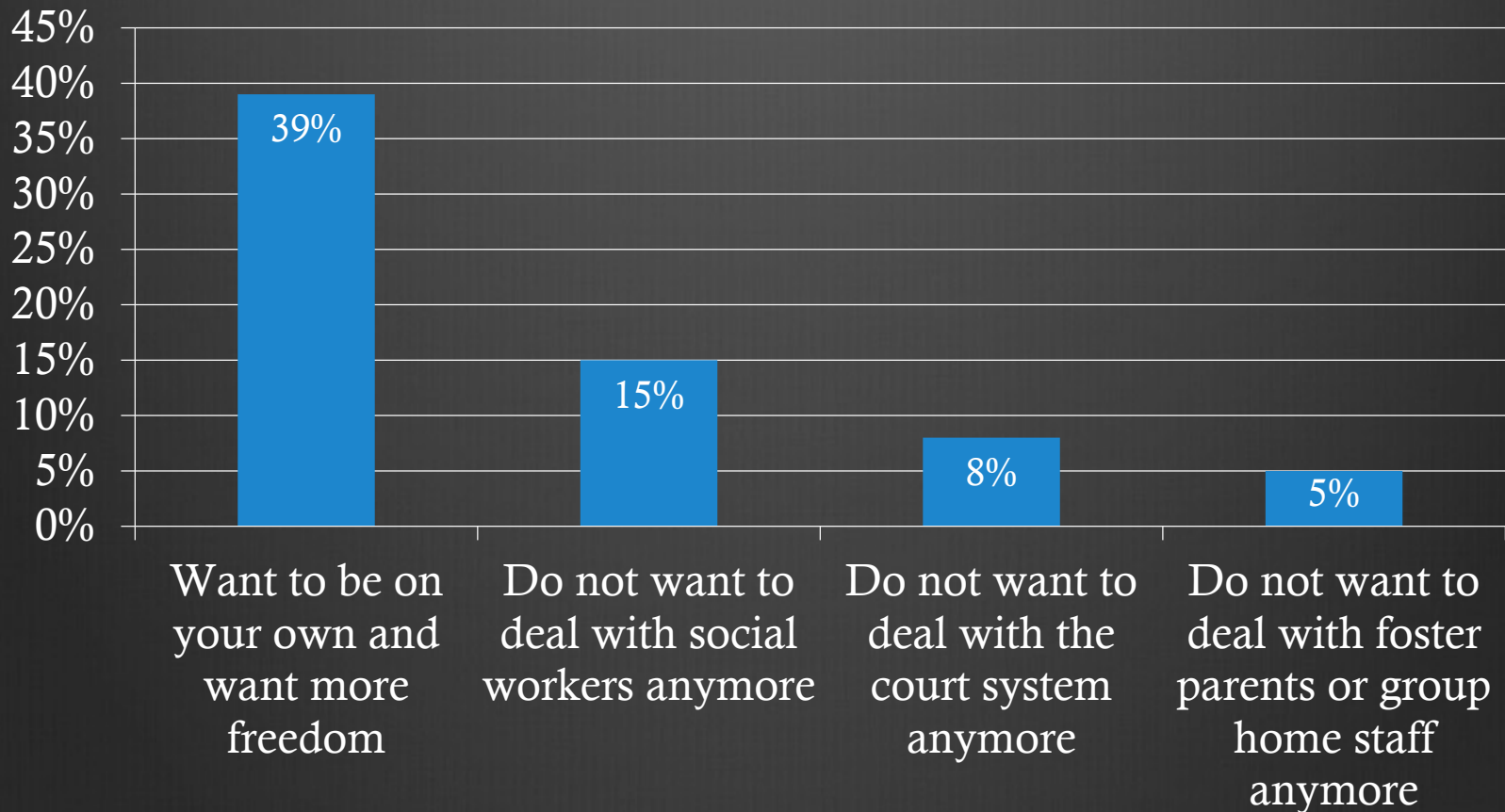
# Why would they stay in care?



\* 2013 California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study: 727 foster youth (ages 16.9 - 17.8)/ 67% wanted to stay in care after the age of 18 (Napolitano et al., 2015).



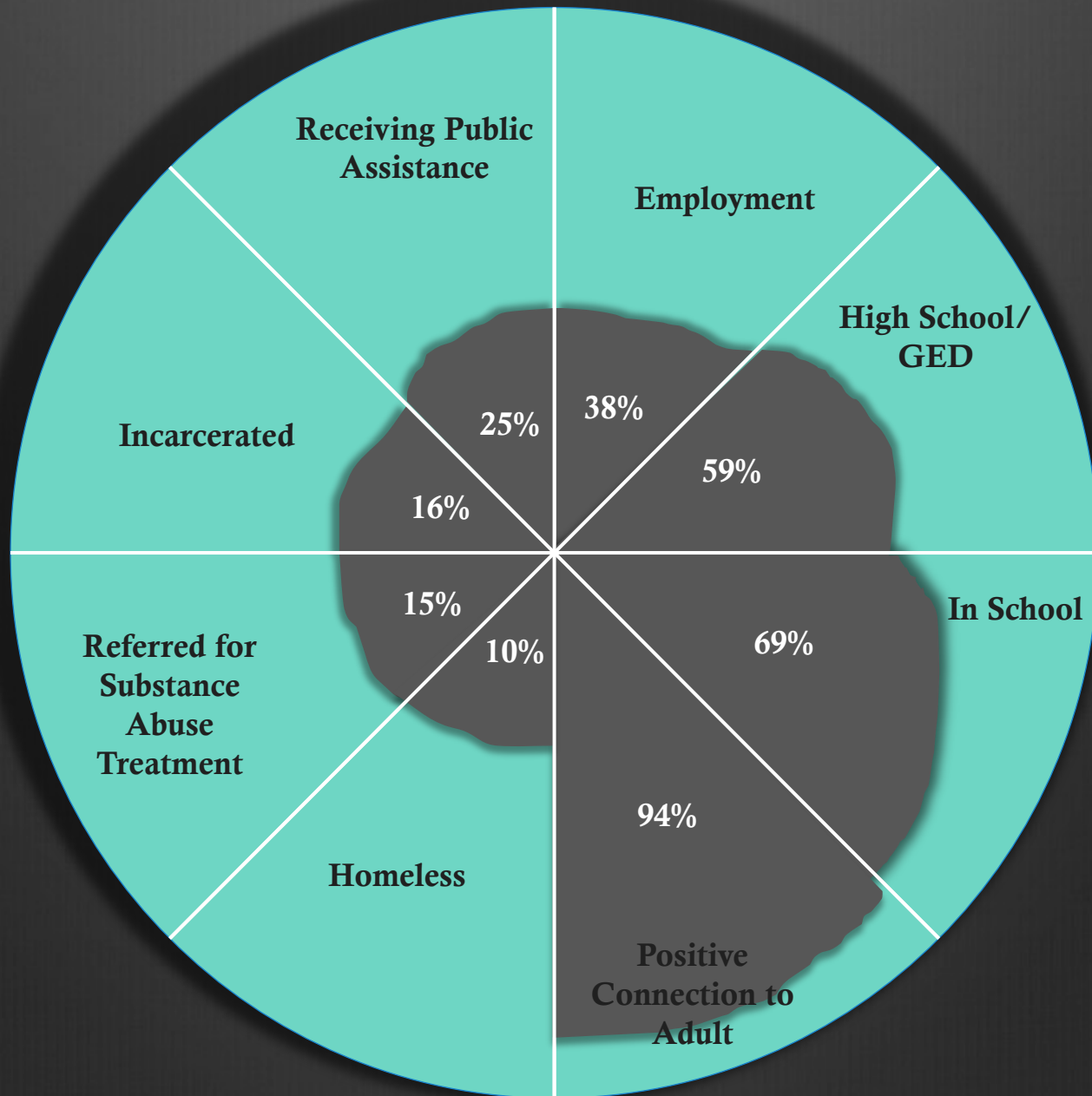
# Why would they leave care?



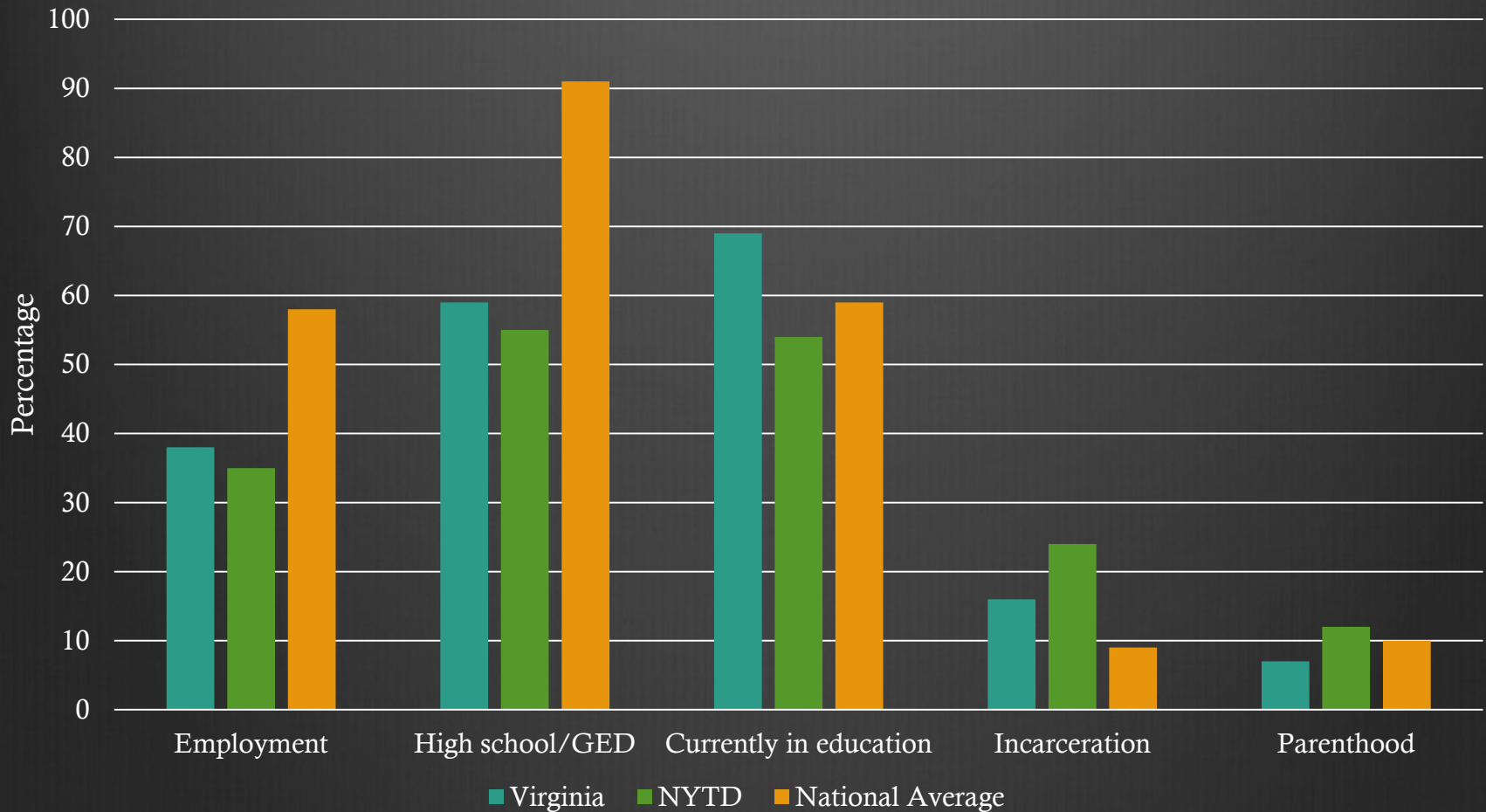
The transition to  
adulthood for foster youth  
in Virginia

# Summary of key outcomes

- ⊗ In spite of the numerous barriers that they face, many youth who exit state care have positive outcomes.
- ⊗ The majority of Virginia youth making the transition to adulthood from foster care are faring worse than their same-age peers across a number of domains of functioning.



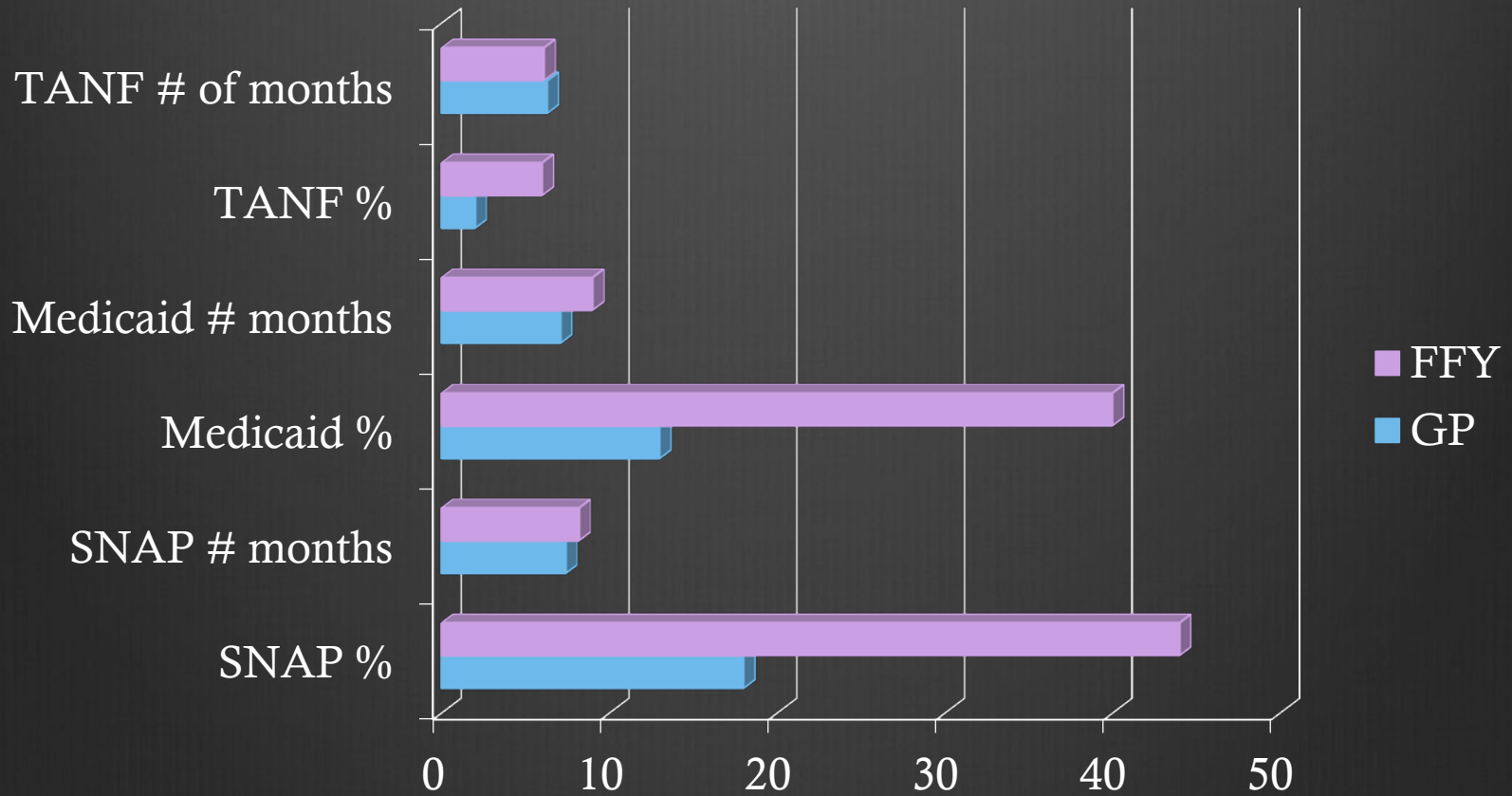
# Transition Outcomes at Age 19



\* Virginia (N=175)

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD; N=11,712)

# Receipt of Public Assistance in 2015

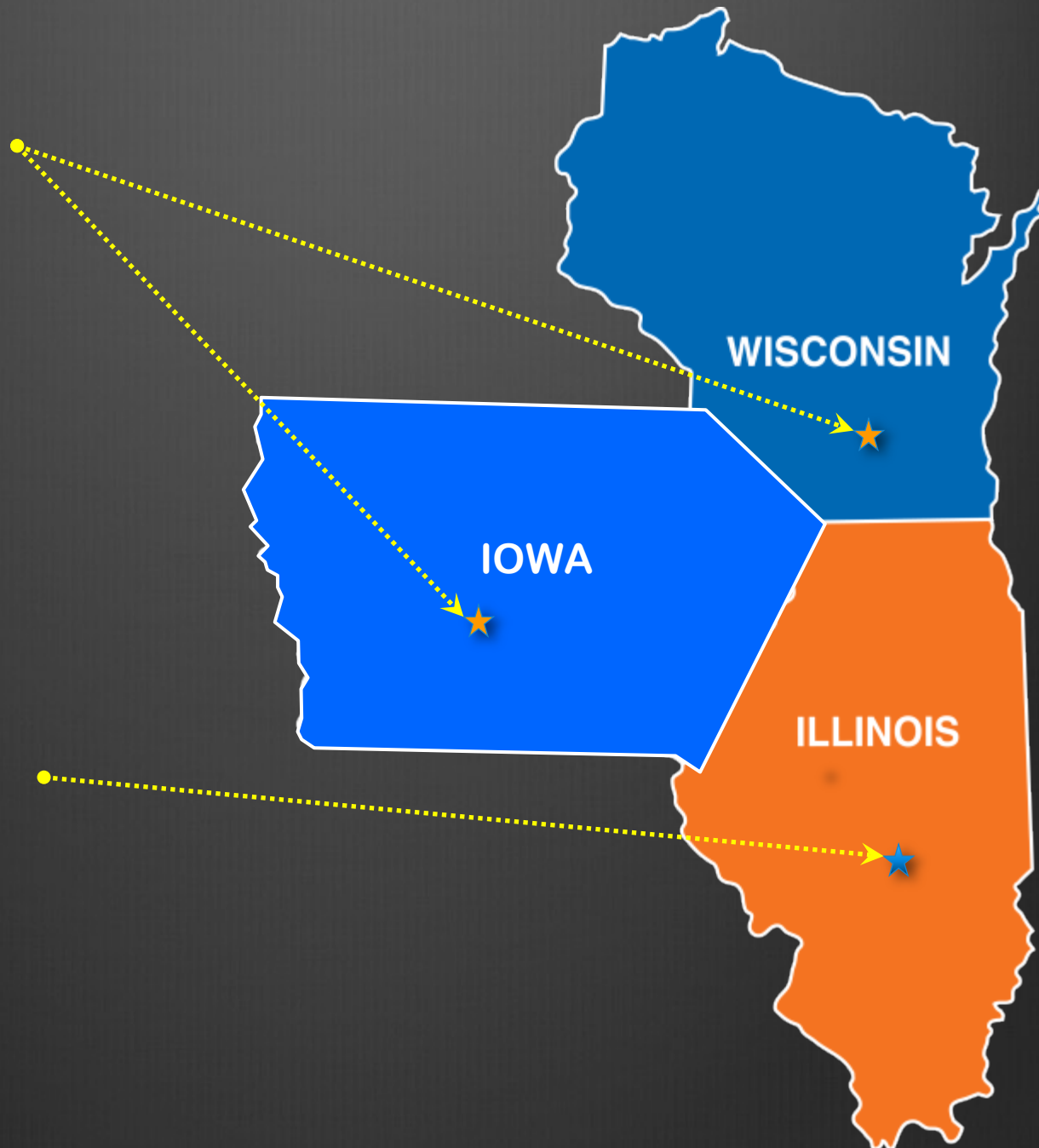




Potential benefits of  
allowing youth to remain  
in care to age 21

Discharged  
youth around  
18th birthday

Routinely  
extend care  
until age 21



Mean Age at Discharge:    Wisconsin = 17.8                  Iowa = 17.9                  Illinois = 20

# Major between-state differences

- ⊗ More post-secondary education and independent living services after age 18
- ⊗ Increased earnings and involvement of young fathers with their children
- ⊗ More stable housing and homelessness delayed
- ⊗ Delayed pregnancy and reduced crime rates among female former foster youth

Sources: Courtney, Dworsky, & Pollack, 2007; Courtney, Lee, & Perez, 2011; Dworsky & Courtney, 2010; Hook & Courtney, 2011; Lee, Courtney, & Hook, 2012

# Benefits of extending foster care to age 21

- ⊕ Best predictors of being “connected” (i.e., working or being in school) at age 19 was staying in care, (more than tripled the estimated odds of being connected) and receiving more budgeting and financial management services (Courtney & Dworsky, 2006).
- ⊕ For every \$1 spent on keeping youth in care until age 21, there is a return of about \$2 (average per-youth cost of extending foster care to age 21 = \$38,000 vs. per-person present-discounted value of earnings = \$72,000; Peters et al., 2009).

# Preparing Virginia's Youth for Success: Lessons from Other States

## ⊗ Extended Foster Care

- ⊗ 22 states and the District of Columbia
- ⊗ Voluntary re-entry program (3 states)

## ⊗ Youth Engagement

- ⊗ Participation of youth in their own court hearings (4 states)
- ⊗ Statewide & Regional Youth Advisory Boards (1 state)
- ⊗ Youth peer-to-peer mentor program (1 state)

## ⊗ Improved behavioral health services (3 states)

## ⊗ Enhance educational opportunities for older foster youth (9 states)

# Recommendations to Help Virginia's Youth to Succeed

- ⊗ Extending foster care beyond 18 wasn't just the right thing to do – It is the smart thing to do!
- ⊗ Youth engagement can accomplish great things!
- ⊗ Rigorous evaluation is necessary to generate useful evidence.
- ⊗ If it's predictable, it's preventable!



Thank You!