

Supporting Students Without Parental Involvement

Key areas for consideration:

- **Student legal status** – although there is not an emancipated minor law in Missouri, the Qualified Minor Law allows for unaccompanied youths under the age of 18 to independently manage their health care and educational needs. The challenge with this is educating others about students’ rights to self-direct their services.
- **Students who are wards of the state** – youths in foster care face unique challenges when signing up for financial aid and have resources available through the state funded Chaffee program, which offers up to \$5,000 per year per student toward college expenses. The challenge is ensuring that the youths are signed up to receive this funding.
- **Needs are not limited to education** – often to support youths in educational success, there are a significant number of other challenges that must first be addressed. Youths are unable to focus on creating a future through education when they are not having basic needs of food, housing and health care met. For a holistic approach, linking youths to a network of support services is critical to success. Some resources include:
 - United Way 211 service
 - St. Louis County Youth Connection Helpline (877) 928-2929 or text 4HLP to 31658
 - Children’s Service Fund www.keepingkidsfirst.org
 - Youth Emergency Service 24 hour helpline (314) 727-6294
 - Youth At Risk helpline (877)
- **Challenges of establishing rapport** – youths who are disconnected from parents are less likely to seek out help from adults, so an approach of empowerment is key to securing student involvement.