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### **Foster youth get help from state-UAA partnership**

*Easing transition to adulthood is goal*

ANCHORAGE — In an effort to provide integrated services to youth aging out of foster care, the Office of Children's Services (OCS), in partnership with the Child Welfare Academy (CWA) of the University of Alaska, has created a position to enhance support and outreach services to current and former foster youth between the ages of 16 and 23.

"Too many foster youth enter college without the support of a loving family or a connection to a caring adult," said Amanda Metivier, a former foster youth and newly named CWA Youth Education Coordinator. "This is an opportunity to support those youth in achieving their goals."

As young adults, foster youth are faced with the harsh reality of moving out, finding a job, and going to college without the lifeline of parents to help them navigate the transition. Nearly 40 percent of youth who age out of Alaska's foster care system experience homelessness, while roughly 30 percent end up incarcerated.

"Our current and former foster youth are exceptional people who have many skills, talents and aspirations," said OCS Director Christy Lawton. "Unlike their peers who've never been in care, however, they often don't have the benefit of strong supports or resources to enable them to maximize their potential and obtain their goals. We must do everything we can to increase their ability to be successful and to shine. This addition to our array of services offered for youth and alumni provides a venue and focus to be able to reach out to more young people and to offer them the support they will require."

Metivier will work with the existing Chafee Educational and Training Voucher Program, breaking ground for youth transitioning from foster care to college and increasing efforts to promote normal life experiences. The CWA provides postsecondary education support,

case management, and assistance to youth as they navigate the college system. Lawmakers increased funding to the OCS Independent Living Program, so foster youth could attain postsecondary education, and this CWA program seeks to ensure that those youth succeed.

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