

## **Title: Leaving foster care in Germany - Social support for care leavers in their transition to adulthood from their point of view**

In Germany, nearly 90.000 young people live in foster care. Nevertheless, too little is known about the lives of these young people, especially care leavers and their experiences in their transition from care into adulthood. So far, more research is done on the group of young people who lived in residential care. Additionally, the perspective of the care leavers themselves often is missing in research studies.

Although a legal basis for support until the age of 21, in exceptional cases until 27, exists many young people face the challenge to leave out-of-home care when they become 18. Regarding foster care, the German child and youth welfare frequently relies on the voluntary commitment of foster parents to provide further support when public care is finished.

Because of these aspects, I dedicated my PhD thesis, that I finished successfully in 2019, to that topic. The poster will present the research background, the research questions and the methodology and methods of the study on the one hand. Within the PhD thesis seven care leavers aged between 18 and 24 were interviewed regarding their experiences in coping with the transition to adulthood. For analyzing the data, I used the German socio-pedagogical concept "Lebensbewältigung" (Böhnisch 2018) as a heuristically frame. Among other things, one main focus in the concept is the social environment of people who cope with different things in their lives. On the other hand, the poster includes the main results of the study. The results will focus on the social support for care leavers from different persons while transitioning out-of-home care (foster families, families of origin, friends and boyfriends, social workers and supervisors from vocational trainings and work).

The results of the speakers' PhD reveal that support is dependent on the experienced belongings of the young people to the different persons while living in care and after leaving care. Within the explanations of the interviewed care leavers, different family ideas and concepts become visible. Depending on the respective concept of 'being a family', the interviewed persons describe various experiences in their transition and the possibilities to participate in decisions regarding their process of leaving care.

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