

# Improving Educational Opportunities and Outcomes for Youth in Care

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# Why Focus on Education?

## Education Realities for Youth in Foster Care

- 83% of children in foster care are held back in school by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade
- 46% do not complete high school
- 75% are working below grade level
- Children in foster care are more likely to attend a low-achieving school than other children
- 35% of foster youth have experienced four or more school changes

# Arizona's Youth

## All children in foster care:

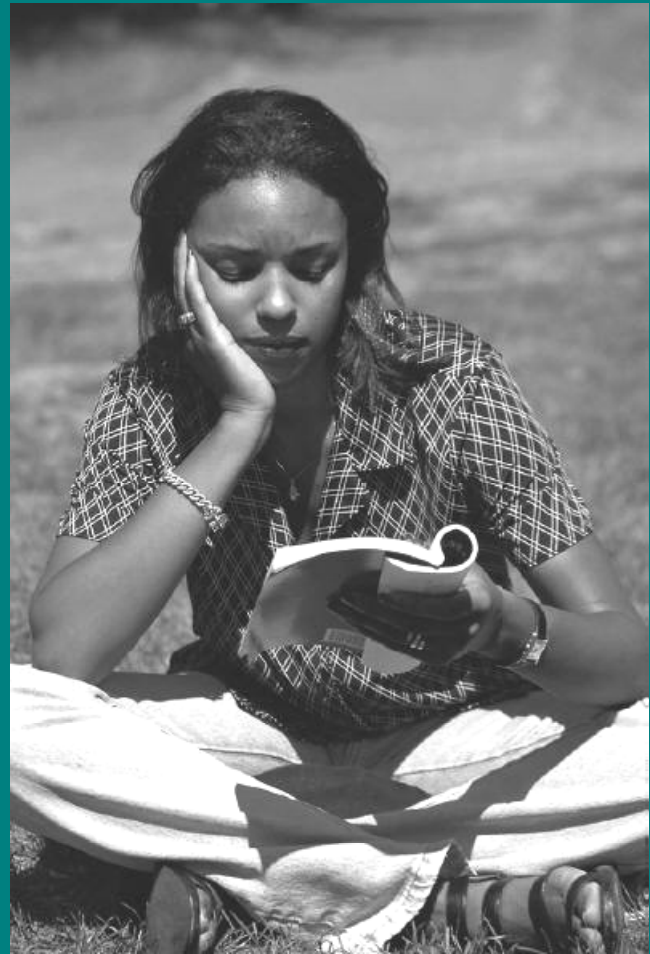
- Almost 10,000 children in care
- Over 60% are school-age
- 27% have been in care for more than 2 years
- Average number of out of home placements = 3



# Arizona's Older Youth

## Arizona's Young Adult Program:

- Youth 16 years and older with a goal of independent living
- Average time in care = 4 years
  - 62% have been in care more than 2 years
- Average number of placements = 8
  - 50% have had 5 or more placements



# Goals

- **The Same Opportunities Should Be Offered to Youth in Foster Care that are Offered to Youth Outside of Foster Care**
- **Provide Uninterrupted Educational Access and Stability for Youth in Foster Care**

# What Can We Do to Ensure These Goals are Met?

- Educate the People Involved in a Youth's Life
- Ensure School Placement Stability
- Improve Access to Records and Timely School Enrollment
- Ensure Access to Special Education Services for Youth in Foster Care, Where Appropriate
- Continue Foster Care Services Past Age 18

# What Are The First Steps?

- Raise Awareness
- Engage and Empower Key Partners
- Develop Tools and Resources
- Listen to and Involve Youth

# Arizona Education Summit Team

- Key Founding Members/Connectors and Leaders:
  - Casey Family Programs
  - Governor's Office
  - Department of Economic Security, Division of Children, Youth and Families
  - Department of Education
  - Attorney General's Office



# Arizona Education Summit Team

- 2004 Education Summit Plan:
  - Raise awareness of key decision-makers including, the State Board of Education; Governor's Children's Cabinet; and Juvenile Court Judges
  - Develop and enhance education advocacy and training materials
  - Address policy barriers to effective surrogate parent assignments
  - Study promising practices from other states
  - Expand and sustain the AZ Education Summit Team

# Arizona Education Summit Team

- Outcome –  
**RESOURCES!**
  - For Educators
  - For Judges
  - For Case Workers
  - For Youth
  - For Caregivers



# Resources for Educators

- *What Arizona Schools Need to Know About Children in Care: A Guide for Teachers, Administrators, Foster Parents, and Case Managers*
  - <http://www.ade.state.az.us/schooleffectiveness/specialpops/homeless/fostercarebooklet.pdf>
- On-Line Course for Teachers based on Casey Family Programs *Endless Dreams*
  - [www.asset.asu.edu](http://www.asset.asu.edu)

# Resources for Judges

- “Judge-Driven” Education Checklist
  - Questions Regarding:
    - General Education
    - Tracking Education Information
    - Changes in Placement and/or School
    - Health Factors
    - Extracurricular Activities & Talents
    - Transition Plan for Independent Living
    - Questions for the Youth

# Resources for Case Workers

- Specific Policies, Guidelines and Tools Focused on Educational Needs of Youth in Care
  - Revised Policy to reflect changes in the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), McKinney-Vento Law, and State law
  - Adding “Educational Status” Plan to case management system
- Timely Access to School Records:
  - Creation of a separate *Order to Release Educational Records*, now included within all Dependency petitions
  - Requires schools to expedite the transfer and delivery of school records of youth in care

# Resources for Caregivers

- Education Advocacy Manual
  - *Make a Difference in a Child's Life: A Manual for Helping Children and Youth Get What They Need in School:*
    - How to Be a Good Advocate
    - Basic Education Rights
    - Special Education, Including Help for Young Children
    - School Discipline
    - Resources for Young Adults
    - Making Connections & Finding Supports
- New State Law and CPS Policy allows foster parents to be surrogate parents for children with special education needs when a birth parent is unable or unavailable to serve

# Resources for Youth

- Arizona Legislature Passed 2006 Bill that Created:
  - CPS Educational Case Management Unit: two staff responsible to assist youth in the State Independent Living Program to accomplish four objectives:
    - Graduate from high school
    - Pass the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) test
    - Apply for postsecondary financial assistance
    - Apply for postsecondary education
  - Education Training Vouchers
    - Up to \$5,000 per year to assist with expenses related to post-secondary education and training (supplements Federal funding)
    - ETV benefits may extend to the youth's 23rd birthday

# Resources for Youth

- Now allow youth who have left foster care after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday to re-enter care anytime until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday
- Enhanced Employment Supports for Youth
  - Vocational Rehabilitation
  - Shared Youth Vision Team
- Transitional Supports
  - Transitional Independent Living Program
  - Young Adult Transitional Insurance



# Youth Voice

- Mentoring Programs
- Foster Youth and Alumni Surveys
- Foster Youth Advisory Board
- Annual Conference Led by Foster Youth



# What's Next

July 2007 Education Summit  
Team Convening:

- Local Action Planning
- Engage Schools and Community Partners
- Implement Small Tests of Change
- Spread Progress and Localize Results



# Resource Citations

- Chapin Hall Center for Children Reports:  
<http://www.chapinhall.org/>
- Arizona Children's Services Policy Manual, *Meeting the Educational Needs of Children in Out-of-Home Care*:  
<http://www.azdes.gov/dcyf/cmdps/cps/Policy/ServiceManual.htm>
- Education Checklist for Judges:  
<http://www.ncjfcj.org/images/stories/dept/ppcd/pdf/2005educationchecklistfulldoc.pdf>
- Pima County Technical Assistance Brief:  
<http://www.ncjfcj.org/images/stories/dept/ppcd/pdf/pimabrief.pdf>
- Education Advocacy Manual (Washington):  
<http://www.teamchild.org/manual.html>
- Arizona State Legislature: <http://www.azleg.gov/>

When I approach a child, he  
inspires in me two sentiments;  
tenderness for what he is, and  
respect for what he may  
become.

- Louis Pasteur

# Thank You!

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