

A Road Map for Learning

Improving Educational Outcomes in Foster Care



A Framework For Education Practice From Casey Family Programs



casey family programs

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About Casey Family Programs

Casey Family Programs' mission is to provide and to improve—and ultimately to prevent the need for—foster care.

Established by United Parcel Service founder Jim Casey, the Seattle-based national operating foundation has served children, youth, and families in the child welfare system since 1966.

The foundation operates in two ways. It provides direct services, and it promotes advances in child-welfare practice and policy.

Casey collaborates with foster, kinship, and adoptive parents to provide safe, loving homes for youth in its direct care. The foundation also collaborates with counties, states, and American Indian and Alaska Native tribes to improve services and outcomes for the more than 500,000 young people in out-of-home care across the United States.

Drawing on four decades of front-line work with families and alumni of foster care, Casey Family Programs develops tools, practices, and policies to nurture all youth in care and to help parents strengthen families at risk of needing foster care.

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For more information about this framework, contact Casey Family Programs at 1300 Dexter Avenue North, Floor 3, Seattle, WA 98109.

Visit our Web site at www.casey.org.

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Framework at a Glance

Helping youth in out-of-home care to acquire a successful education is a cornerstone of our practice at Casey Family Programs. Success in this endeavor requires knowledge and collaboration across the child welfare, legal, and education systems at all levels: local, state, and federal.

This framework is set up in a modular format to encourage quick access to the 11 key education recommendations that we target, and the practices and resources that we support for attaining them.* For ease of reference, we've grouped the recommendations into five subsets, according to the general issues they address:

School transfer issues

1. Provide school placement stability and continuity.
2. Secure and maintain accurate and accessible school records.

Collaboration and training issues

3. Facilitate collaboration and training among all involved systems.
4. Train caregivers to be education advocates at school and at home.

Supports and services issues

5. Provide education advocates and education specialists/advocates.
6. Give youth access to supplemental education supports and services.
7. Address special education needs as appropriate.
8. Decrease disparate outcomes for youth of color.

Preparation issues

9. Ensure that youth are literate, acquire basic skills, and have extracurricular opportunities.
10. Prepare youth to achieve their postsecondary education, training, and career goals.

Public policy issues

11. Promote public policies that support education during and after care.

*The material in this framework draws from many sources, including field work and research; the Federal Child and Family Services Reviews, Section WB2; and the Council on Accreditation (COA) for Children and Family Services' standards.

The framework provides a combination of background information plus almost 50 practical applications that anyone involved with serving youth in care can use in developing a holistic, comprehensive, and culturally responsive approach to education.

How to Use This Framework

This framework emphasizes the K–12 population. It also touches on the education issues of the preschool population and youth who have been emancipated from care.

We designed the framework to be modular, so it can be used as both a practical and an educational tool by anyone who works with the education needs of youth in out-of-home care. We encourage you to choose whichever recommendations and tools serve the most critical areas for your specific clientele and community, as well as those that help you explore ways to improve your overall services, support, and systems.

The framework also serves as a resource for informing others about the unique education needs of youth in out-of-home care.

A Note on Web Resources

Internet links change occasionally or sometimes disappear. All links were correct when this book went to press. If you experience difficulties with a link, please check the online version on our Web site at www.casey.org. We update our publications there periodically.

What you'll find in each objective

Each education recommendation in this framework has the following components:

- **Background:** Supporting information, statistics, and studies that explain the issues behind the recommendation. Because educating youth in care is a holistic endeavor where service, supports, and challenges intersect at so many points, we've added cross-references to other education objectives. In them, you may find additional relevant information.

- **Promising Practices and Resources:** A list of services and supports that have been applied successfully to fulfill the particular recommendation. For quick identification, the names of these practices and resources are in ***bold-italic*** type. Details and contact information for each entry are in Section 2.
- **Handouts and Checklists:** One or more ready-made materials that others have found useful in achieving the education recommendation. These documents can be found in Section 3 for photocopying and distribution.
- **Other Recommended Resources:** A list of books, papers, Web sites, and legislation that may be relevant to the education recommendation.
- **What You Can Do Now:** Actions that you can immediately apply to your clientele's needs to help fulfill the recommendation. These are divided into three categories of successively expanding spheres of influence:
 1. *Direct Services* to youth and families
 2. *Supports and Technical Assistance* for other providers, partners, and families
 3. *System Improvements* for advancing local, state, and national efforts to support the education of youth in out-of-home care

Underlying Principles

For youth in out-of-home care, education has the potential to be a positive counterweight to abuse, neglect, separation, and impermanence. Positive school experiences enhance the well-being of these youth, help them make more successful transitions to adulthood, and increase their chances for personal fulfillment and economic self-sufficiency, as well as their ability to contribute to society.

School also provides the opportunity for youth to form lasting connections with adults and to experience the benefits of participation in extracurricular activities. School connectedness has been found to be a protective factor against every health risk except pregnancy.¹ As the Child Welfare League of America

¹ Resnick et al., 1997.

states, for youth leaving the child welfare system, education is their best hope of achieving independence in adulthood.²

Five principles underlie the recommendations in this framework:

- 1. Youth in out-of-home care must be the primary voice in education decisions.** We must teach youth to have an active voice, and we must listen to that voice as appropriate for the youth's age, development, safety, and well-being when establishing education plans. This includes providing age-appropriate tools and strategies to help youth express their capabilities and desires, as well as soliciting their input on the supports, outcomes, and goals they follow to realize their dreams.
- 2. School success requires addressing a mix of variables.** Education plans must consider the youth's cognitive abilities, emotional needs, home influences, motivation, and peer influence, as well as the quality of the school the youth attends. Additionally, plans must include developmentally age-appropriate activities that give youth the chance to play, have fun, and live a normalized life.
- 3. Education planning must incorporate practices that are predictors of education success.** Factors such as school placement stability, employment experience, a positive relationship with at least one connected adult, and plans for postsecondary or career options are strong predictors that a student will complete high school.³ The more of these positive factors we can build into a youth's education plan, the more likely he or she will experience educational success.
- 4. Youth need education services and supports that build skills for economic self-reliance.** This means helping youth develop life-preparation skills in all areas of life, including completion of a high school diploma or GED and postsecondary education and/or training.
- 5. Education systems must partner with as many individuals and systems as possible on behalf of youth in out-of-home care.** Formal and informal collaborators include birth parents, foster parents, kinship caregivers, schools, teachers, child welfare agencies, communities of faith, the judiciary, community-based organizations, and agencies that serve youth who have emancipated to independent living and employment.⁴

² Yu, Day, & Williams, 2002a, p. xii.

³ Burley & Halpern, 2001.

⁴ U.S. General Accounting Office, 1999.



Section 1

Education Recommendations

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School Transfer Issues

Recommendation 1: Provide school placement stability and continuity.



Perhaps the single most important thing that each of us can do to improve the educational outcomes for foster children is to ensure that their school placement remains stable. Historically, change of placement of the child has meant an almost automatic change of school. Yet for every school change, a child experiences serious loss and suffers academically.⁵

Background

Studies have shown that the longer a youth is in out-of-home care, the greater the number of home placements he or she is likely to experience.⁶ Furthermore, a change in home placement is often accompanied by a change in school.

The educational impact of every school change is significant. Each time youth enter a new school, they must adjust to different curricula, different expectations, new friends, and new teachers. They frequently suffer disruptions in valuable education services, such as special education support, counseling,

⁵ Heybach & Winter, 1999, p. 3.

⁶ Yu, Day, & Williams, 2002a.

enrichment programs, and extracurricular opportunities. And they often lose days or even weeks of schooling due to enrollment delays or temporary placement in emergency care, where they are held out of school pending a more permanent placement.

Reports from youth and foster parents highlight the urgency of this issue. Consider the following statements taken from focus groups conducted by the Youth Law Center in California⁷:

“I was in eighth grade for two months, doing well but then was moved 11 times in 9 months. It was almost impossible to go to school. During the first 3 moves, I stayed in the same school, but after that, I changed districts and had to change schools.”

“I was in 52 placements. I did not do eighth grade but went to a charter school, where the principal let me in, and I went to summer school there.”

“I have been in 47 placements, through three agencies. I did not have a lot of school options. I kept talking to social workers and eventually got to go to [a] regular school.”

“The system abuses foster children further, moving them from one educational placement to another. Time after time, I [a foster parent] have seen kids who are two weeks from graduation, and the social worker moves them.”

A 2003 national study of alumni who spent time in foster care underscores the link between home placement stability (with its corresponding school placement stability) and a youth’s academic success. This study of more than 1,000 alumni shows that youth who had one or fewer home placements per year were twice as likely to graduate from high school before leaving care.⁸

Other studies of the general population have found correlations between a lack of school placement stability and academic performance:

- A 1993 study reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that frequent school changes were associated with an increased risk of failing a grade in school and of repeated behavior problems.⁹

⁷ Burrell, 2003, pp. 3-4.

⁸ Pecora et al., 2003, p. 44.

⁹ Wood et al, 1993.

- A study by researchers at the University of Chicago found that by the sixth grade, students who had changed schools four or more times had lost approximately one year of educational growth.¹⁰
- A 1999 study by researchers at the University of California at Berkeley found that high school students who changed schools even once were less than half as likely to graduate, even when controlling for other variables that affect high school completion.¹¹

Of course, no one advocates that youth remain in schools that are unsafe or that provide an inferior education, simply for the sake of school placement stability. However, youth deserve as much school continuity as we can give them. We must work with education and child welfare systems to eliminate enrollment barriers and other delays that create unnecessary disruptions in a youth's schooling. Social workers should be educated about the importance of school placement stability and continuity as they make home placement decisions. Likewise, youth themselves should be educated about—and involved in—decisions about changes in their home and school placements.

As the Youth Law Center of California noted, the stability of education placement must become a core value of systems for youth in child welfare and juvenile justice, and that value must be implemented in policy.¹²

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see Section 2.

Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) on Improving Educational Continuity and School Stability for Children in Out-of-Home Care (page 106)

This BSC brings together public/tribal child welfare agencies and school systems that are committed to improving educational continuity and school stability for children in out-of-home care.

Education Specialists/Advocates (page 114)

These practitioners provide education case-management and advocacy services for youth in out-of-home care. They are trained to educate schools about the

¹⁰ Kerbow, 1996, p. 20.

¹¹ Rumberger et al., 1999, p. 3.

¹² Burrell, 2003, p. 18.

importance of school placement stability. Their proactive planning with schools decreases the likelihood of suspensions and expulsions for these youth.

Endless Dreams Training and Video (page 115)

This training curriculum shows educators how their schools can support students who are in out-of-home care and conveys the importance of keeping youth in stable school placements. When used to recruit teachers as temporary foster parents, the curriculum could also help youth stay in the same school for the remainder of a school year.

K-12 School Placement Guide (page 123)

This program from Casey gives a protocol for school placement decisions and can also be used for guiding home placement decisions.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (page 125)

This act includes provisions for youth in foster care and, in some instances, may be used to maintain a child in his or her home school.

National Education Working Group on Foster Care and Education (page 127)

The mission of this group is to ensure successful educational outcomes for children and youth in foster care across the country. The Working Group is committed to heightening awareness around educational stability for children and youth in foster care.

State legislation with a focus on education stability for youth in out-of-home care (page 133)

Several states have adopted legislation that addresses school placement stability and continuity for youth in out-of-home care.

Treehouse (page 140)

This Seattle program places tutors in schools to provide academic support and advocacy to students in foster care. With academic support and a connected adult, it is more likely that the student will be able to remain in the school of origin.

Handouts and Checklists

None for this recommendation.

Other Recommended Resources

Planning Ahead for Educational Success: Interjurisdictional Provision of Public Education. This issue brief identifies how to secure necessary supports and services for interstate placement of children and youth in foster care. It includes a practical Interstate Education Checklist of things to consider before placement and during the placement process. Written by Sharon McCartney, JD, and Liz Oppenheim, JD, AAICAMA, American Public Human Services Association. Download from www.aphsa.org

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Ensure and advocate for school placement stability and continuity for youth in out-of-home care within schools, with judges, and with local public and private child placement agencies with the authority to place youth.
- Use the ***K–12 School Placement Guide*** when making school placement and home placement decisions.
- Become educated on the ***McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act's*** provisions for youth, particularly the provision for “children awaiting foster care.”

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Provide ***Endless Dreams Training and Video*** presentations to schools, local teacher unions, parent-teacher associations (PTAs), and school boards.
- Train social work staff about the need for school placement stability and continuity for youth in out-of-home care.
- Educate program administrators, principals, school office staff, etc., about legislation in your state (if it currently exists) on the provisions for youth in out-of-home care.

System Improvements

- Initiate interagency school district projects to improve school stability for youth in out-of-home care using the model provided in the **Handouts** and **Checklists** section.
- Develop a state-level initiative to educate legislators on the importance of school stability, using the existing state legislation (e.g., AB490 from California) to serve as a model. (See **Promising Practices and Resources**.)
- Work with your state's foster parent association and child welfare agency to develop state foster parent recruitment strategies that recruit foster parents from school and community neighborhoods.

Recommendation 2:

Secure and maintain accurate and accessible school records.



Improving the reliability of information shared among foster parents, schools, court officers, and caseworkers could help prevent the fragmentation of educational support for foster youth.¹³

Background

The negative school experiences of youth in out-of-home care are shaped not only by frequent school changes but also by misplaced, delayed, inaccessible, or incomplete education records.¹⁴ Even the federal government acknowledges, in its Child and Family Services Reviews, that “availability of school records” is one factor it considers in judging how well a state is meeting the Child Well-Being Outcome for education. In 18 of the 37 states reviewed, education records were missing from case files or had not been made available to foster parents.¹⁵

Specifically, the problems are as follows:

- **Inefficient data management in child welfare systems** for maintaining up-to-date and complete education records for youth in out-of-home care.
- **Lengthy delays in transferring records** between schools and districts and across states. Affected records include individual, cumulative, and special education files, such as report cards, transcripts, student assessment scores, records of behavior infractions, health records required for school enrollment, Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and Section 504 plans.

¹³ Burley & Halpern, 2001, p. 30.

¹⁴ Yu, Day, & Williams, 2002a.

¹⁵ Christian, 2003, p. 4.

- **Loss of school records.**
- **Failure of school records to include full information about a youth's situation**, such as details about his or her in-care status, legal status, and the roles of birth parents, foster parents, and social workers who are acting on the youth's behalf.
- **Barriers to information sharing between education and child welfare systems**, including confidentiality requirements and incompatible information-management systems.

The inability to secure and maintain a youth's school records can adversely affect a youth's academic progress in several ways.

First, youth are often denied school enrollment if they do not have all their records. Second, even if a school will allow late enrollees, delays in records transfer can postpone a youth's start date, meaning more missed school days. Group homes in California, for instance, report enrollment delays of days or even weeks as youth wait for their records to arrive.¹⁶ When school changes are frequent, the number of lost school days becomes significant. High school students in particular can lose valuable academic credit, which in turn can delay their graduation.

Third, a lack of accurate and complete records creates discontinuity and inadequacies in school programming. Caregivers, social workers, teachers, judges, and attorneys simply do not have the information they need about a youth's school experience to help them determine appropriate school supports and services as the youth moves from school to school.

The Challenge of Confidentiality

Confidentiality can be a large stumbling block when trying to maintain and share accessible records. The federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 stated that a youth's education records cannot be released to a third party without the written consent of the parent. "Parent" is defined to include a natural parent, a guardian, or an individual acting as a parent in the absence of a parent or guardian.¹⁷

¹⁶ American Institutes for Research, 2003, p. 9.

¹⁷ McNaught, 2003, p. 6.

However, exceptions to FERPA state that education records may be released without prior parental consent to¹⁸:

- Other school officials, including teachers, who have legitimate interest in the youth
- Appropriate persons in connection with a health or safety emergency
- Officials of other schools when a student is transferring schools
- Appropriate persons when release of information is needed to comply with a judicial order or subpoena

For youth who are in the child welfare system, confidentiality provisions depend on state law and can be problematic even though they are designed to protect the youth's privacy. For example, in some states, child welfare systems cannot tell school systems the names of youth who are in out-of-home care.

When in doubt, contact your state's Office of the Attorney General for rulings and clarification.

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see Section 2.

American Bar Association Child Law Practice Series (page 103)

This series of six articles from the ABA Child Law Practice journal has important information on confidentiality, records review, and the legal rights of youth in care.

Education Specialists/Advocates (page 114)

These practitioners can ensure timely records transfer by overseeing records transmittal from agency to school or from school to school, often by delivering the records themselves. Such services are often integrated into larger service and support programs offered by various states.

Foster Youth ePassport (page 116)

This database was developed to help youth in out-of-home care and their service providers store placement, health, education, and demographic records.

¹⁸ McNaught, 2003.

It expedites school placements, reduces gaps in education from overlooked services, and improves the availability of academic records for schools and agencies.

Mythbusting: Breaking Down Confidentiality and Decision-Making Barriers to Meet the Education Needs of Children in Foster Care

(page 126)

This free, online, searchable publication addresses the issues surrounding confidentiality and other barriers that arise when advocating for the educational rights of children and youth in care.

National Education Working Group on Foster Care and Education (page 127)

The mission of this group is to ensure successful educational outcomes for children and youth in foster care across the country. A goal of the Working Group is to promote educational transitions for children and youth when education changes do occur.

State legislation with a focus on education stability for youth in out-of-home care (page 133)

Several states have adopted legislation that address school placement stability and provide specific provisions around the timely transfer of records and other such related items.

Handouts and Checklists

None for this recommendation.

Other Recommended Resources

Lost in the Shuffle Revisited: The Education Law Center's Report on the Education of Children in Foster Care in Pennsylvania. This 2002 report includes practice and policy recommendations for improving the transfer of education records and information on youth in out-of-home care. Available online at www.elc-pa.org/foster/publications.html.

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Ensure that youth's records are transferred in a timely manner and that school districts adhere to legal guidelines for transferring records and enrolling youth. Help others (including teachers, school secretaries, court appointed special advocates [CASAs]) learn about the need for quick records transfer.
- Give youth self-advocacy training on the importance of their school records, how to keep a personal academic portfolio, and how to access official transcripts from schools.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Provide information and training on federal and state guidelines to schools, social workers, and caregivers.
- Train school district personnel on reading other districts' transcripts and IEPs, as they often vary by district.

System Improvements

- Develop local and district-based memoranda of understanding (MOUs) that outline responsibilities and guidelines around the sharing and transfer of records.
- Initiate a local or state model for improving the maintenance and sharing of education records based on the recommendations contained in *Lost in the Shuffle Revisited: The Education Law Center's Report on the Education of Children in Foster Care in Pennsylvania* (see **Other Recommended Resources** above).
- Request clarification from your state's attorney general on federal and state laws and regulations regarding confidentiality.



Collaboration & Training Issues

Recommendation 3:

Facilitate collaboration and training among all involved systems.



The challenge for all systems is to ensure a positive school experience for these youth that will result in each young person's achieving his or her individual potential. No agency, school, or school district can solve the problem alone. Committed leadership and cooperation, communication, and collaboration among the various agencies are necessary to ensure the best possible educational outcomes for children and youth in care.¹⁹

Background

Reports or studies on the education issues of youth in out-of-home care consistently point out that increased collaboration and cross-training among the major systems involved with these young people—child welfare, education, and judiciary—is critical at the local, state, and national levels.²⁰ Effective collaboration means working together to maintain school placement stability, share a youth's pertinent information and records, and ensure the youth's timely enrollment in school. It can also guarantee that youth in out-of-home care receive all the other education services they need.

¹⁹ Yu, Day, & Williams, 2002a, p. 36.

²⁰ Yu, Day, & Williams, 2002a.

Through collaboration, for example, a social worker might refer a youth for special education assessment, whereupon the school would obtain the assessment and hold a meeting to discuss the results, and a judge might then request information on whether there was appropriate follow-up.

Interagency protocols, preferably supported by appropriate level regulation, are essential to creating a comprehensive, effective collaborative system. Complete procedures for accountability should also be part of the protocols for each system.

As described by the Child Welfare League of America, collaboration should take place at the local, state, and federal levels. At the local level, service providers should work with at least one other system, such as the courts, child welfare system, or local school district, to evaluate system-wide challenges for youth in out-of-home care. These might include sharing information and solutions. At the state level, greater collaboration must occur between the state department of education and the state child welfare agency. At the federal level, the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services should work closely together to develop federal policies and programs that improve the academic achievement of youth in care.²¹

Whenever possible, the voices of constituents should be included in the training. Ideally, alumni input will be included in any organization's planning and decision making around both practice and policy, internally and externally. In order to ensure that these collaborations are meaningful and result in more positive outcomes, all the partners need the right tools to work better together.

Interagency collaboration does, of course, require training for each group involved. For instance, child welfare agencies (including tribal councils) need training in the following:

- The importance of educational success to a youth's well-being, safety, and successful transition to adulthood
- How the education system works and its related legal issues
- The best methods to promote a youth's education success (e.g., attendance at school meetings, accessing supplemental education resources, and ensuring that the youth's mental health needs are managed)

²¹ Yu, Day, & Williams, 2002a.

- The importance of school placement stability and its role in home and school placement decisions
- The institutional, social, and structural barriers that may prohibit good collaboration (e.g., institutional racism and stereotypes about the foster care system)

Educators need training in the following:

- How and why youth get into out-of-home care
- An understanding of the importance of expectations and aspirations on the educational success and outcomes of youth in out-of-home care
- Foster care policies and how they affect the operation of the child welfare system
- The roles of social workers, birth parents, foster parents, and other caregivers in making education decisions
- How to develop empathy and avoid stigmatizing youth in out-of-home care
- Specific ways educators can support the educational success of youth in out-of-home care
- The unique emotional, practical, behavioral, social, intellectual, and academic challenges faced by youth in care, and how to respond to them
- How the disparate outcomes for children of color in the child welfare and judicial systems affect the education system and visa versa

Attorneys, judges, parole and probation officers, juvenile detention staff, court appointed special advocates (CASAs), and guardians ad litem (GALs) need training in the following:

- The importance of educational success to a youth's well-being, safety, and successful transition to adulthood
- How court expectations and standards influence the ways social workers, educators, and other service providers respond to a youth's education needs

- How to adequately assess a youth's education progress and spot any concerns
- Effective methods of advocacy for a youth's education needs within the constraints of the appointed roles of these individuals

Ideally, interagency training encourages participants to freely share their knowledge and to identify barriers in a way that respects each agency's authority, expertise, responsibilities, roles, and accountability. Trainers need to be prepared to facilitate and negotiate potential areas of conflict while keeping the needs of the youth at the center of the discussion.

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see Section 2.

American Bar Association Child Law Practice Series (page 103)

This series of six articles from the ABA Child Law Practice journal can guide parents, caregivers, attorneys, social workers, and education advocates in working together to speak up for the education needs of youth in the child welfare system.

Asking the Right Questions. A Judicial Checklist: Critical Questions and Strategies for Meeting the Education Needs of Children and Youth in Juvenile and Family Court (page 105)

This checklist and accompanying technical assistance brief outline questions that should be asked in a courtroom with respect to the educational needs of children and youth in foster care.

Education and Youth in Out-of-Home Care, an E-learning Module (page 112)

Developed by the National CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) Association, this e-learning curriculum is designed to help trained volunteer CASAs/GALs and program staff to support the educational rights and needs of children and youth in foster care.

Endless Dreams Training and Video (page 115)

This comprehensive curriculum can be used to train members of the child welfare, education, and judicial systems in many of the topics listed above, leading them toward greater collaboration and youth education advocacy.

Foster Youth Services (page 117)

This California program unites a variety of agencies and systems that work together to establish best practices for meeting the education needs of youth in counties throughout California.

Make a Difference in a Child's Life and Toolkit for Change
(page 124)

This education advocacy training program provides information on the education rights of youth in schools and how to advocate for these rights. The *Toolkit for Change* is a template that enables the training materials to be adapted to other states' laws.

Tutor Connection (page 142)

This program, developed for delivery in university preservice programs for teachers, covers topics such as child welfare issues, and the impact of trauma, child abuse, and neglect, on educational success.

Handouts and Checklists

A sample of this item is available for photocopying in Section 3.

“Things Teachers Can Do to Support Good Educational Outcomes for Students in Out-of-Home Care.” This information sheet was developed as part of a toolkit for National Foster Care Month. In addition to providing teachers with strategies for supporting youth in care educationally, it identifies other people and agencies they can work with to support positive outcomes for youth.

Other Recommended Resources

Handbook for Caregivers and Social Workers. This handbook can be used to teach both social workers and caregivers about education advocacy skills, the roles they each play in the education process, how to work with birth and/or legal parents, and how to work with the special education system. For a free copy, go to contactus@casey.org.

Improving Educational Outcomes for Youth in Care: A National Collaboration. Published as part of the Improving Educational Outcomes for Youth in Care project, this monograph summarizes research findings about the academic achievement of youth in the custody of the child welfare system and the role of education in successful transitions to independence. Purchase at www.cwla.org/publications.

Improving Educational Outcomes for Youth in Care: Symposium Summary Report. Written by the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) in 2002, this report summarizes the proceedings of a symposium convened by CWLA and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) to initiate dialogue between the child welfare, judicial, and educational fields on how to support positive educational outcomes for youth in care. It includes promising programs and practices, survey results from field experts, and a national agenda discussion. Purchase at www.cwla.org/publications.

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Train youth on how to communicate their needs and goals in a way that promotes better understanding among the various agencies and people who work with them, using curricula such as **Better Together**. Train staff in how to listen to and support the needs of youth.
- Ensure that all the professionals involved in decisions about a youth's education success and transition have opportunities to share their expertise and to plan collaboratively.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Provide training to judges, CASAs, and GALs using the **Asking the Right Questions: A Judicial Checklist to Ensure That the Educational Needs of Children and Youth in Foster Care Are Being Addressed**, or use CASA's **The Education and Youth in Out-of-Home Care, an E-learning Module**.
- Implement the **Endless Dreams Training and Video** curriculum to reach teachers and administrators at local community schools.
- Provide workshops and seminars for social workers on supporting education issues and advocacy for youth in out-of-home care using **Make a Difference in a Child's Life** and **Toolkit for Change**.
- Work with teacher education programs at local colleges and universities to set up courses that teach about the unique education needs of youth in care. Look at programs such as **Tutor Connection** as a model for this type of course.

System Improvements

- Develop a university curriculum for teacher preparation programs about how to meet the education needs of youth in out-of-home care using ***Tutor Connection*** as a model.
- Promote a national, standardized curriculum on the education issues of youth in out-of-home care that can be used by many people and accessed easily online.

Recommendation 4:

Train caregivers to be education advocates at school and at home.



There is no doubt about it: Parent involvement in the education of their children positively influences child educational achievement. In the case of foster children, increased challenges mean increased need for caregivers to be invested and involved in their child's education.²²

Background

Primary caregivers play a critical role in a youth's education through the support they provide both at home and at school. Close involvement from a caregiver leads to improved attendance, grades, and test scores; improved attitudes and school behavior; higher graduation rates; and higher rates of college enrollment.

Unfortunately, this important ingredient is frequently missing for youth in care for several reasons. First, youth in care typically experience frequent changes in caregivers, which creates a lack of continuity and consistency not only in their education but also in the support they receive from their caregivers. Second, caregivers may not know about a youth's education capabilities and school history, and they may instead focus almost exclusively on the youth's adjustment at home. Finally, many caregivers feel uncomfortable advocating for their youth in school, usually because they do not have the tools to do so.

Many caregivers recognize their limitations in this arena and have requested training in how to advocate for their youth's education:²³

“Parents need to be trained to advocate for our kids in the Latino community. I don't know of any services available. We need to inform parents about legal rights and services available, and we need culturally specific education for parents.”

²² Casey Family Programs, 2000, p. 1.

²³ Burrell, 2003, p. 12.

“We need to work with the birth family on educational issues. If my foster child goes back to her mother, she will not have the skills or knowledge to deal with the child. If the family is reunified, services may not carry over. The birth family needs to be educated and learn what I learned.”

Training for caregivers in helping youth be successful in school should focus on how caregivers can do the following:

- Embrace educational success as a high priority within the family and convey this to the youth in a caring, supportive manner. Studies show that parental expectations of a youth’s education achievement is the single most important correlate of his or her education success. Likewise, caregivers should expect teachers, judges, and child welfare workers to hold equally high standards regarding the educational success of their youth.
- Understand the particular education challenges that youth in out-of-home care encounter and openly communicate with the youth about what is happening in the classroom.
- Learn how to talk directly to teachers about their expectations for the youth’s progress, homework, tests, and classroom assignments.
- Support the youth’s academics—for instance, by helping with homework, encouraging independent learning and self-advocacy, and becoming aware of community educational resources.
- Understand the school’s procedures and requirements for enrollment, attendance, discipline, and graduation; and develop effective communication and cooperative, nonadversarial relationships between home and school.
- Become involved in the school. Involvement can range from maintaining regular communication with the school to volunteering and attending conferences and other functions.
- Understand and advocate for the youth’s education rights, including where to find resources and what legal roles foster parents, birth parents, social workers, and surrogate parents can play in schools.
- Teach the youth about their educational rights and stress the importance of self-advocacy.

- Prepare the youth to make the transition from high school to postsecondary education or employment, with continued support from appropriate adults in his or her life. Caregivers must know how to help youth take responsibility for their own education needs, e.g., by developing a portfolio, directing an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), assessing postsecondary financial aid options, and accessing information about postsecondary institutions.

It is also crucial that the training be relevant to the caregiver's culture and be provided in the family's primary language whenever possible.

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see Section 2.

Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment Education Supplement and Guidebook (page 104)

This assessment measures factors related to school success, including study skills. Both caregivers and youth can take the assessment and compare their findings to help support planning and advocacy.

Early Child Development Screening Tools (page 110)

The American Academy of Pediatrics has identified three brief (10 minutes or less) high-quality screening and reporting tools that parents can administer to children ages birth to 8 years. Foster parents can easily be trained to use these tools, which provide early detection of potential learning and developmental problems.

Educational Advocacy Curriculum from NFPA (page 113)

Created by the National Foster Parent Association (NFPA), this training encourages and prepares foster parents to become educational advocates for the children and youth in their care. It is designed for foster parents and social workers.

Endless Dreams Training and Video (page 115)

Although directed at educators, various modules of this training curriculum can be adapted for use with parent groups who deal with youth in care.

Make a Difference in a Child's Life and Toolkit for Change

(page 124)

The first part of this resource is a training program that teaches parental and youth advocacy for a child's education rights. Currently several state versions are available, including those for Arizona, California, Massachusetts, and Washington. The ***Toolkit for Change*** provides general guidelines for education advocacy and a template for customizing the Washington training for other states.

Parent Training and Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers

(page 128)

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, these centers offer parents of children with disabilities an array of services that can support their child's successful education experience. The centers are helpful resources for the caregivers of youth in care who have cognitive or emotional disabilities.

PRIDE Education Module: The Foundation for Education Advocacy and Improving Educational Outcomes for Youth in Family Foster Care

(page 131)

For foster parents, the Child Welfare League of America has developed a new 6-hour training module that addresses meeting and supporting the educational needs of youth.

Handouts and Checklists

None for this recommendation.

Other Recommended Resources

Handbook for Caregivers and Social Workers. Developed by Casey Family Programs' San Diego office, this handbook provides a sound model that can guide caregivers in negotiating school systems and in developing education advocacy skills. It covers enrollment procedures, graduation requirements, the special education system, and the roles of birth and foster parents in schools. It also contains sample letters for making referrals to special education and Section 504 services. To request a free copy, e-mail contactus@casey.org.

Learning Curves: Education Advocacy for Children in Foster Care. Written by Kathleen McNaught, JD, of the ABA Center on Children and the Law, this book addresses such topics as creative approaches to addressing education barriers for children in foster care and the special education process. While it was written for practitioners, caregivers will find the contents of this book very helpful. You may purchase a copy at www.abanet.org/abastore.

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Offer parent training in education advocacy at least once a year, using tools such as the **PRIDE Education Module** or the **Educational Advocacy Curriculum from NFPA**.
- Introduce parents to existing parent support groups in their community and encourage involvement.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Develop a **Handbook for Caregivers and Social Workers** for your region, using the San Diego handbook as a model (see **Other Recommended Resources** above).
- Work with family developers to include training on education issues in their parent training materials or use sections from the **PRIDE Education Module**.

System Improvements

- Initiate collaboration with the Child Welfare League of America to expand the education module of the **PRIDE** curriculum to address specific topics such special education, mental health and education, and emancipating youth and their education. Be sure to pay special attention to training for parents of diverse cultural backgrounds.

- Work with your state foster parent association to develop training materials on the education issues of youth in out-of-home care, and to train caregivers of younger children to use the recommended ***Early Child Development Screening Tools***.
- Educate your state foster parent association on using ***Make a Difference in a Child's Life*** and ***Toolkit for Change*** to adapt an education advocacy curriculum to your state's laws, and then train foster parents with it.
- Work with a local school district that is heavily populated with youth in out-of-home care to develop a parent training program.



Supports and Services Issues

Recommendation 5:

Provide education advocates and education specialists/advocates.



The system must provide liaison services to help youth and parents through educational transitions. Advocacy resources to assist youth and families with enrollment, suspension/expulsion, and special education, or other barriers must be available. Assistance that specifically helps youth to prepare for college or the workforce... must be increased.²⁴

Background

Youth, caregivers, and child welfare agencies identify the lack of education advocacy as a major failing of the child welfare system and, when advocacy is available, as one of its most important assets. In fact, a lack of “adequate educational advocacy” was cited as a problem by the federal Child and Family Services Reviews for 14 of 37 states on whom reports have been issued to date.²⁵

²⁴ Burrell, 2003, p. 19.

²⁵ Christian, 2003, p. 4.

The voices of the youth themselves are perhaps the most eloquent in articulating this issue²⁶:

“I needed more support in school. I was by myself. No one came and asked how I was. I went off into the cracks. Teachers see kids hanging their heads; they need to really sit down and talk to kids.”

“A mentor at my school helped me get money for college. I am the only one in my family to graduate. My mentor has really helped—calling every day, giving me pencils and paper and a daily planner. She taught me study skills. She had a good life and showed me the way.”

Consistent education advocacy is provided by people who are knowledgeable about a youth’s needs and education history. These people can be either professional education specialists/advocates who perform an official dual role of direct service and advocacy for the youth and family, or they can be education advocates, individuals such as caregivers, mentors, and volunteers who are trained to speak out on behalf of a youth’s education needs, primarily in schools and in court.

Solutions Using Education Specialists/Advocates

Some child welfare agencies hire education specialists/advocates to provide direct service and advocacy to youth and families. Additionally, they may train caregivers, youth, and staff to be effective advocates in schools.

Education specialists/advocates provide education case management for individual youth, facilitate assessments and services for their academic needs, communicate with schools about their needs and progress, collaborate with schools on behavior and academic plans, and assist youth with postsecondary planning. They can also perform the crucial tasks of maintaining education records and ensuring that records are quickly transferred between schools or insuring that transportation is provided to support school placement continuity.

As advocates, they protect a youth’s education rights, speak out on his or her behalf at school meetings, and champion his or her best interests for curriculum opportunities, school placement options and stability, interagency transition plans, and the types of support to be provided. Education specialists/advocates

²⁶ Burrell, 2003, pp. 10, 11.

may also be involved in public policy advocacy for all youth in out-of-home care, with the intent to improve the systems.

There are many types of professional education specialists/advocates, and they provide services through different venues. These include private agency specialists who work at schools or agencies; specialists who are attached to public child welfare regional offices; and public child welfare specialists who work within designated schools. Some state Independent Living/Chafee programs have workers who serve as education specialists/advocates to assist high school or Independent Living/Chafee program youth with postsecondary planning and the like.

Education Advocates

When an agency cannot fund education specialists/advocates, they can train others to be education advocates who speak out for a youth's education needs in schools and in court. For instance, caregivers and parents can learn to assume an advocacy role, or social workers can be taught to provide advocacy support if necessary. Training court appointed special advocates (CASAs), guardians ad litem (GALs), tutors, alumni, and mentors as volunteer advocates is also an option.

Finally, the youth themselves should be trained in self-advocacy. They must know how to articulate their academic needs and career goals, access the support they need, understand their educational rights, and participate in education planning meetings.

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see Section 2.

Education and Youth in Out-of-Home Care, an E-learning Module from National CASA (page 112)

This e-learning curriculum can be utilized to train volunteer CASAs/GALs and to support the educational rights and needs of children and youth in foster care. Selected state and local CASA programs are adding education advocacy for youth to the role of the CASA volunteer.

Education Specialists/Advocates (page 114)

These professionals provide education advocacy and consultation for youth in school, and they work with foster parents, youth, and social workers on school advocacy. They are very knowledgeable about school and community educational resources and often build strong working relationships with these organizations.

Foster Youth Services (page 117)

Under the auspices of the California Department of Education, this program provides education liaisons for youth in several school districts in California.

John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (page 122)

Implementation of the advocacy aspect of this model varies by state. Massachusetts, for example, has 29 adolescent outreach workers whose jobs include school advocacy.

Make a Difference in a Child's Life and Toolkit for Change
(page 124)

The first part of this resource is a training program that enables caregivers to become education advocates and to train youth in self-advocacy, based on Washington state law. The **Toolkit for Change** provides general guidelines for education advocacy and a template for customizing the Washington training for other states.

Person Centered Planning (page 129)

This program was developed as an approach to expand the power that youth have to identify their values and life choices, and to be supported as they develop problem-solving skills to achieve their personal goals.

Possible Selves (page 130)

This successful motivation program teaches youth how to set goals, build plans for the future, and gain the skills to advocate on their own behalf. The program comes from the Center for Research on Learning at the University of Kansas.

Treehouse (page 140)

This privately funded organization in the Seattle area offers a tutoring program, an education advocacy program, and a Coaching-to-College program for abused and neglected youth.

Handouts and Checklists

None for this recommendation.

Other Recommended Resources

Learning Curves: Education Advocacy for Children in Foster Care. This book addresses such topics as creative approaches for addressing education barriers for children in foster care and special education process with practice tips, psychological tests, education advocacy resources, and excerpts from key federal laws and regulations. Purchase at www.abanet.org/abastore.

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Continue to shape and refine the role of education specialists/advocates. Look to existing programs, such as **Foster Youth Services**, as a model.
- Integrate education advocacy into a youth self-advocacy model and provide this training to youth. The youth advocacy sections from **Make a Difference in a Child's Life** and **Toolkit for Change** could be used for this.
- Act as a “broker” among the providers involved in the education of a youth in out-of-home care.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Train parents, social workers, and CASAs in education advocacy, using **Make a Difference in a Child's Life** and **Toolkit for Change** (adapted to your state's laws, as suggested below) or use the *Learning Curves: Education Advocacy for Children in Foster Care* book to point out important education advocacy tips for advocates.

System Improvements

- Using ***Make a Difference in a Child's Life*** and ***Toolkit for Change***, work with your state's Department of Education and child welfare department to create an education advocacy curriculum adapted to your state's laws, and then train all potential advocates in it.
- Collaborate with state CASA organizations on education advocacy projects that are based on CASA models.
- Collaborate with alumni from foster care networks that can offer peer support to specific youth in local communities.
- Collaborate with state child welfare agencies to develop a model program and role description for regional education specialists, using information from existing public and private models, such as the ***Foster Youth Services*** model in California.

Recommendation 6:

Give youth access to supplemental education supports and services.



It is now well established that children in care do not achieve well within the educational system and perform below national norms for their age groups...Our interpretation of these results is that something more than 'normal' family life and 'normal' parental interests may be required to compensate for earlier deprivation...Our suggestion is that greater-than-average progress needs greater-than-average inputs.²⁷

Background

Many youth in out-of-home care are at markedly increased risk of education failure, in addition to suffering the effects of foster care on their health, safety, and independent living. Their education has often taken a back seat to the crises in their lives, and many child welfare agencies may contribute to this imbalance by focusing solely on child protection and ignoring education.

To make up for this lack, youth in out-of-home care often need considerable supplemental education services if they are to catch up with peers who have more stable childhoods. For the K–12 population, these supplemental services might include mental health services, counseling and advisory support, tutoring, mentoring, career assessment and counseling, and access to remedial and enrichment offerings in the school curriculum.

Ideally, these supplemental services would start in early childhood. For example, recent research has shown that phonological training that starts at about age 3 can, when combined with exposure to print, good language models, and training in letters and letter-sound associations, prevent reading difficulties and reduce the likelihood of special education placement.²⁸ Early

²⁷ Heath, Colton, & Aldgate, 1994, p. 245.

²⁸ Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998.

academic assessment for preschoolers in out-of-home care, as well as access to preschool, Head Start, and early intervention programs, are also important supplemental services and supports.

While locating supplemental programs and services and then paying for them is often a challenge for younger and older youth, caregivers and service providers should remember to seek out the valuable programs that already exist in the local schools and communities. These may include school-to-work programs, programs for teens who are also parents, Section 504 accommodations for youth who don't qualify for special education, honors and enrichment classes for youth who need greater academic challenges, school-based mentoring and tutoring, and early intervention programs designed to encourage college preparation for at-risk youth. Community after-school programs, mentoring, and tutoring programs are other valuable resources.

Youth will likely need adult support to find and take advantage of this wealth of assistance. In particular, adults should be the ones to evaluate a prospective program, as even tutoring and mentoring programs can vary greatly in their quality and outcomes.

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see Section 2.

GEAR UP (page 118)

This federal program offers disadvantaged youth in middle and high school the opportunity to improve their chances of entering postsecondary education.

John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (page 122)

This program gives funding to states so they can provide independent living services, including education services, to youth currently in care and to youth up to age 21 who have emancipated from care. These supplemental services may include tutoring, computer classes, and help with postsecondary planning.

Person Centered Planning (page 129)

This program helps youth in out-of-home care become self-advocates for the additional education services they need. It teaches youth how to articulate their strengths, their needs, and their goals and how to develop a plan for reaching those goals.

Sound Partners (page 132)

This phonics-based program provides one-on-one, custom instruction in early reading skills to children who are at risk of failing to acquire reading skills.

Strategic Tutoring Program (page 137)

This program provides homework support while teaching students learning strategies that they can apply to a range of academic tasks.

Treehouse (page 140)

This group's Coaching-to-College program matches volunteer coaches with youth to help them achieve their postsecondary goals. Youth work with their coach to identify education goals and carry out the steps necessary to reach them.

TRIO Programs (page 141)

These federal programs, which include Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Upward Bound Math/Science, offer motivation and education support to youth from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Tutor Connection (page 142)

This program at California State University, San Marcos, partners child welfare staff with education departments at local universities and with Community Service Learning programs. The goal is to teach future educators about the education needs of youth in out-of-home care, and to provide them with experience in tutoring these youth.

vMentor Program (page 143)

The Orphan Foundation of America offers this national online ("virtual") mentoring program for youth in care who are age 16 or older. Mentors work with students on such issues as goal planning, strategies for success in school and the workplace, course selection, and career guidance.

Handouts and Checklists

Quality Assurance Standards and Program Recommendations for Tutoring and Mentoring. Practitioners working with youth in out-of-home care can identify the effectiveness of free and fee-based community tutoring programs using this comprehensive checklist.

Other Recommended Resources

Self-Determination Synthesis Project. Working with the Center on Self-Determination at Oregon Health Sciences University, this project customizes and validates a self-determination model and intervention tools for use with youth in foster care. These tools help teach youth how to advocate for their own supports and supplemental services. Contact: www.uncc.edu/sdsp/sd_curricula.asp.

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Help youth and families find tutors or tutoring programs that can support successful academic achievement. These could be locally sponsored programs or federal programs such as **GEAR UP** or one of the **TRIO Programs**.
- Conduct **Person Centered Planning** training sessions with youth to identify their goals and needed areas of support.
- Contact local organizations (e.g., Kiwanis clubs, Boys and Girls' clubs) that provide community-based tutoring services. Use the *Quality Assurance Standards and Program Recommendations for Tutoring and Mentoring* to make decisions about the quality of the tutoring program.
- Determine if the youth you work with are attending a school that is required by No Child Left Behind to provide free tutoring and other supplemental services for their students.
- Connect youth with community-based GED programs, college entrance exam preparation programs (e.g., SAT, ACT), and other supplemental supports. Check on the availability of scholarships for low-income students to participate in these types of preparation classes.
- Work with teens who are also parents to be sure they're enrolled in programs that help them pursue their academic goals as well as help them obtain the parenting skills and child care they need.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Provide self-determination training for youth to teach them how to advocate for their own supplemental supports and services.
- Inform families, caseworkers, and educators about the need youth have for educational supplemental supports. Teach youth how to advocate for and access these resources.
- Teach educators, school counselors, and school social workers about the discrepancy in outcomes and available services that youth in out-of-home care often experience.

System Improvements

- Have foster-care liaisons available in all schools and school districts to coordinate and monitor supplemental supports for youth in out-of-home care. Use programs such as the **Foster Youth Services** program as a model for replication.
- Use the **John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program** to provide enrichment, tutoring, career development, and other services to youth in out-of-home care at early ages.
- Educate staff from programs like Head Start on the relationship between abuse and neglect on early development in order to support and advocate for the inclusion of young children in foster care in these programs early on.

Recommendation 7:

Address special education needs as appropriate.



A review of the literature and anecdotal data from the field suggest that the stories of foster children in special education are, all too often, stories of unserved or under-served children, lost records, minimal interagency communication, and confusion over the roles of birth parents, foster parents, and social workers.²⁹

Background

Youth in out-of-home care who also receive special education services are an especially vulnerable subgroup of all youth in out-of-home care. Between 30 and 40 percent of students in foster care may qualify for special education services because of a disability.³⁰ A recent comparison study by the Fostering Futures project reported the following common characteristics of high school youth who are in both out-of-home care and special education³¹:

- They had lower grade point averages than youth in general education.
- They changed schools more frequently than youth in general education or in special education only.
- They earned fewer credits toward graduation than youth in general education.
- They had lower scores on state testing than youth in general education or in foster care only.

²⁹ Van Wingerden, Emerson, & Ichikawa, 2002, p. 3.

³⁰ Geenen & Powers, 2003, p. 1.

³¹ Geenen & Powers, 2003, p. 1.

- They were more likely to be exempted from state testing than youth in general education or in foster care only.
- They were more likely to be in segregated special education classes than youth in special education only.

Several specific aspects of special education services for youth in out-of-home care have been identified as problematic:

- **Inconsistent tracking of youth in foster care who are also in special education.** Very often, not all parties in the child welfare system are aware of a youth's special education needs. Social workers may not know to pass along special education information, or they may not be completely aware of all the special education services and supports the youth has been receiving. Without one person to transfer a youth's records and information from school to school, a youth may experience lengthy delays in special education services or may not receive them at all, because no one has brought the issue to the next agency's attention. For those with IEPs, studies conducted since 1993 reveal that, across school districts and disability groups, IEP plans were generally vague, often did not address important areas of transition, and rarely reflected effective practices.³²
- **Lack of clarity about roles for youth in care who are also in special education.** Youth in out-of-home care often lack a consistent education advocate who is knowledgeable about their needs in the special education process. There is often confusion about who can sign consent forms and IEPs: Is it the birth parents, foster parents, social workers, court appointed special advocates (CASAs), or surrogate parents? With the reauthorization of the Individual with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 2004, the IDEA now defines a "parent" as 1) a natural or adoptive parent; 2) a foster parent (unless prohibited by state law); 3) a guardian, but not the state (not a child welfare agency caseworker); 4) a person acting in the place of a parent; or 5) a surrogate parent.³³
- **Lack of coordinated transition planning.** Special education systems and the child welfare system often do a poor job of working together seamlessly to prepare youth to move into adult living. Instead, both systems rarely meet, usually create independent transition plans, and often do not hear the youth's voice during the planning. This lack of coordination results in two (or more) nonintegrated plans that the youth may or may not buy into as best for his or her future.

³² Geenen & Powers, 2003, p. 3.

³³ See 34 CFR § 300.30(a)

- **Insufficient attention to mental health and behavioral needs.** It is estimated that as many as two-thirds of youth in out-of-home care critically need mental health services, and close to 25% have difficulties in social competence that are related to academic and behavioral challenges in school.³⁴ Moreover, youth in out-of-home care who are in special education suffer disproportionately from emotional or behavioral disturbance as a primary handicapping condition.³⁵
- **Disproportionate representation of youth of color in special education.** This is especially significant given the disproportionate representation of youth of color across the child welfare system itself.

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see Section 2.

100 Black Men of America (page 102)

Chapters of this organization are designing and carrying out school-based projects to reduce referrals of youth of color to special education and to support feasible exits from special education and subsequent success in the academic mainstream.

Education Specialists/Advocates (page 114)

These practitioners provide guidance on the special education process to social workers and families, as well as consultation and advocacy in the school and at IEP meetings.

Make a Difference in a Child's Life and Toolkit for Change (page 124)

These education advocacy training tools directly address many special education issues, such as parental roles and rights, a youth's right to services, and timelines for provision of services. The curriculum also discusses disciplinary regulations related to suspension and expulsion.

³⁴ Clark et al., 1994, p. 1.

³⁵ George et al, 1992.

Parent Training and Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers (page 128)

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, these centers serve families of children from birth to age 22 who have any sort of disability— physical, mental, learning, emotional, or attention deficit disorders. They train and inform parents and professionals of legal rights for youth in out-of-home care, help families obtain appropriate education and services for their children, and work to improve educational outcomes for all youth.

PRIDE Education Module: Working Together to Improve the Educational Outcomes of Youth in Care (page 131)

While this module covers general information on the education needs of foster youth that all parents should know, it also highlights special education processes and the rights of youth who are in special education programs.

Handouts and Checklists

None for this recommendation.

Other Recommended Resources

Education Issue Brief: Improving Special Education for Children with Disabilities in Foster Care. This informational resource and advocacy tool includes information on the role of foster parents and surrogate parents in the special education process for youth in out-of-home care. For a copy: contactus@casey.org

Disability Support Services Coordinators. These are employees of a college who assist students with disabilities by ensuring equal access to services and accommodations. Based on appropriate disability documentation provided by the student, the coordinator ascertains eligibility for classroom accommodations and works with students and instructors to ensure that those accommodations are provided. Contact the college or university's Disabled Student Services office.

Information on the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). Visit the U.S. Department of Education Web site to learn more about the recent changes with the reauthorization of the 2004 IDEA. www.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/idea2004.html

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Attend IEP meetings with youth, and advocate for appropriate special education services, goals, and objectives; transition planning; and supports on their behalf.
- Teach youth how to advocate for themselves at IEP and other special education-related meetings.
- Connect youth in postsecondary settings with Disability Support Services Coordinators (see **Other Recommended Resources** above), who can provide them with a host of services.
- For high school youth with IEPs that include a transition plan, facilitate the coordination of the special education transition plan with the youth's Independent Living/Chafee program transition plan. Educate team members from both systems about the process for ensuring this coordination.
- Insure that toddlers and preschoolers who are in foster care are screened for possible issues related to their history of abuse and neglect. Enroll them in early intervention programs as appropriate.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Train caregivers, social workers, CASA volunteers, and other involved adults in special education law using ***Make a Difference in a Child's Life*** and ***Toolkit for Change***.
- Provide training to special education teachers, related service personnel (e.g., speech and language pathologists and occupational therapists), school psychologists, special education support personnel, and all other auxiliary school staff (e.g., physical education teachers, music and art instructors, and librarians) on the unique behaviors associated with disabilities that are caused by pre- or postnatal abuse and neglect.

- Introduce caregivers to community support or advocacy support groups for parents with children with disabilities.

System Improvements

- Provide information to state and national education organizations about the unique education needs of youth in out-of-home care who are also in special education. Be sure to provide education around the new definition of “parent” according to the 2004 IDEA reauthorization.
- Work with state and national foster parent agencies to keep them informed of current policies about educating youth in care who have special needs.

Recommendation 8:

Decrease disparate outcomes for youth of color.



As the childhood population becomes increasingly diverse, we have to pay ever more attention to the ways in which children from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds come to understand the roles that effort and ability play in academic achievement.³⁶

Background

As in the child welfare system, racism, cultural bias, and insufficient cross-cultural expertise with youth of color (e.g., youth from African American, Hispanic/Latino, or American Indian and Alaska Native cultures) are realities in the education system. These disparities directly affect the education outcomes of youth of color. For example, in 2003, the Center for Civic Innovation at the Manhattan Institute noted the following statistics³⁷:

- Only 51 percent of all African American students and 52 percent of all Hispanic students graduate from high school, and only 20 percent of all African American students and 16 percent of all Hispanic students are college-ready when they leave high school.
- Due to their lower college-readiness rates, African American and Hispanic students are seriously underrepresented in the pool of minimally qualified college applicants. Only 9 percent of all college-ready graduates are African American and another 9 percent are Hispanic, compared to a total population of 18-year-olds that is 14 percent African American and 17 percent Hispanic.
- The graduation rate for white students is 72 percent; for Asian students it is 79 percent; and for American Indian students it is 54 percent.

³⁶ Bempechat, 1998, p. 114.

³⁷ Greene & Forster, 2003, pp. 17, 21.

The disparities in educational supports, programs, and outcomes for youth of color are apparent in several key areas. Besides experiencing greater school segregation and its commensurate negative effect on their achievement, youth of color are more likely to undergo school disciplinary action, to attend schools that receive less funding, and to be put into low-education tracks.³⁸

The most prevalent disparity springs from tracking, the practice of placing students in different classes based on perceived differences in their abilities (called “ability grouping”). Education tracks take many forms, including remedial, special education, vocational, general, college preparatory, gifted, and talented. Students of color are consistently underrepresented in tracks that promote a future in postsecondary education (e.g., college preparatory, gifted, and talented) and overrepresented in tracks that are less inclined to prepare students for a four-year university setting (e.g., vocational and special education).³⁹

Other targets of discrimination

As with youth of color, other populations of young people are also prone to discrimination and disparity in education outcomes. These include youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT), immigrant youth, and youth whose first language is not English. Teens who are parents may also experience discrimination and may face huge challenges in completing their education. These populations have unique needs that must be addressed.

While the scope of this framework prevents us from discussing each of these populations individually, we highly encourage those working with these populations to learn more about their unique education needs as well as ways that you can support culturally relevant and sensitive educational supports and services.

The unique education needs of American Indian and Alaska native youth

Casey Family Programs have been actively addressing American Indian and Alaska Native youth welfare needs since the 1970s. One of our long-term goals is to support tribes in developing and improving sustainable child welfare systems.

There are many ideological, historical, legal, social, economic, and cultural influences on the education of Native youth. While Native youth in care are

³⁸ Gordon, 1998.

³⁹ Gordon, 1998.

subject to the same disparities in education outcomes and discrimination as other youth of color, their education issues, needs, and solutions also differ greatly from those of other youth in out-of-home care. For this reason, many of the education tools and objectives in this framework will not directly serve this very important part of our constituency.

Casey intends to work with the councils of many tribes to tailor an education framework that provides practices and resources supportive of the ways and lifestyles of Native youth. We want to reduce the disparity in education services for these tribes, while also supporting their efforts to develop and improve their own sustainable child welfare systems.

Eradicating disparities

Institutional racism is an unfortunate fact of life in both the education system and the child welfare system. The disproportionate representation and poor outcomes that in-care youth of color experience in the education system closely parallel the overrepresentation and poor outcomes of youth of color in the child welfare system.

This does not have to be the case, however. Like all youth in out-of-home care, youth of color deserve the absolute best attention, services, and supports we can give them.

The only way we can hope to reduce—and ultimately prevent—disparate outcomes for these youth is for education and child welfare systems to work together and address this issue head on. Agencies must explicitly focus on establishing cross-agency standards, training, and policies that can eradicate institutional racism.

We can begin by supporting culturally competent education staff, valuing the diverse strengths of youth and families, and providing services and promoting practices that honor each youth's cultural identity.

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see Section 2.

100 Black Men of America (page 102)

Under its Wimberly Initiative on Disproportionality, this organization offers school-based mentoring and tutoring programs that support the academic and social skills of African American male youth.

Council for Exceptional Children, Division for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners (page 109)

This national group advocates for the rights and needs of youth in special education. This particular division is committed to markedly reducing the numbers of African American, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian and Alaska Native students in classes for the mentally retarded, the emotionally disturbed, and the learning disabled.

Education Specialists/Advocates (page 114)

By providing case management and advocacy, these practitioners ensure that youth of color receive unbiased assessments and equitable support services, and that they are not indiscriminately placed in education tracks that will reduce their life opportunities.

Endless Dreams Training and Video (page 115)

This curriculum has several modules that directly address the issue of disparity, particularly as it relates to youth in out-of-home care.

GEAR UP (page 118)

This federal program offers support to disadvantaged youth in middle and high school (including youth of color) to improve their chances of entering postsecondary education.

K–12 School Placement Guide (page 123)

This guide from Casey Family Programs presents indicators to consider when determining the appropriateness of a school placement for an individual youth. A portion of these indicators address the youth's cultural-identity needs as well as the cultural competence of the proposed school's personnel.

TRIO Programs (page 141)

This set of seven federal programs is designed to increase the number of low-income or disadvantaged students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

Handouts and Checklists

None for this objective.

Other Recommended Resources

Gay & Lesbian Educators of British Columbia (www.galebc.org). This Web site offers a list of resources and publications for teachers on LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) issues.

Developing Your Vision While Attending College. This series of four handbooks directed at Native youth takes students through the process of college selection, financial aid, and money management. The series of online guides promotes postsecondary education and training success by featuring stories of personal struggle and illustrating how educational and cultural success are intertwined. Available online at www.collegefund.org (American Indian College Fund).

Expanding the Circle, Respecting the Past, Preparing for the Future. This transition curriculum presents skills that help Native students stay in high school while giving them an opportunity to find out about themselves and what is important to them. The intent is to encourage them to graduate from high school and attend postsecondary schools or engage in a career that matches their individual strengths and interests. Purchase from <http://ici.umn.edu> (Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, Publications Office).

National Indian Education Association (NIEA). This nonprofit organization was founded in 1969 to give American Indian and Alaska Native tribes a national voice in their struggle to improve access to educational opportunities. It plays a pivotal advocacy role in improving federal tribal education policies. NIEA also holds an annual convention to share common concerns, ideas, and solutions to specific problems related to educating Native youth. Go to www.niea.org.

Helping Hispanic Students Reach Academic Standards: An Idea Book. Weiner, L., Leighton, M., & Funhouser, J. (2000). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. This resource, available online, includes material of particular interest for individuals working with Hispanic/Latino youth, including “Using Family and Community Resources” (chapter 4); “Building Sturdy Foundations for Postsecondary Options” (chapter 5); “Overview of Profiled Programs” (Appendix A); and “Resources for Serving Hispanic Students and Their Families” (Appendix B). Available at www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/PES/Hispanic/title.html.

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Use the ***K-12 School Placement Guide*** when deciding about the cultural appropriateness of placement for youth.
- Ensure that youth of color are not “tracked” based on their minority status but are instead enrolled in courses that meet their individual needs and goals.
- Use self-determination and self-advocacy strategies to teach youth how to recognize discrimination and handle it effectively.
- Provide students with role models and mentors who are ethnically and culturally similar and who have been successful in school.
- Ensure that youth of color are involved, if appropriate, in pre-referral programs, so that they can receive support and education assistance prior to being labeled as “special-needs students.”
- Identify local ***100 Black Men of America*** mentoring/tutoring programs or other similar types of programs, and refer appropriate youth to these programs.
- Employ multiple assessment strategies to ensure that students’ abilities and performance are gauged accurately and in non-culturally biased ways.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Use the ***Knowing Who You Are*** video to train caregivers and social workers to facilitate the development of a sense of cultural identity. Point out data that highlights the institutional racism in schools, and provide tools for advocating equitable services and supports.

- Present to school districts attended by youth in care the ***Endless Dreams Training and Video*** modules that address disproportionality.
- Hold summer camps and/or workshops that allow youth of color in foster care to be together to learn more about themselves and their cultural backgrounds.

System Improvements

- Become a member of the ***Council for Exceptional Children, Division for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners***, or a similar organization, and provide input and information to the group as they advocate for national policy changes to improve special education for youth of color with a special focus on youth of color in fosters care.
- Promote the use of better education materials, books, and resources that offer perspectives other than that of the dominant “white” culture and that will support history and identity development and address disparities.
- Initiate a partnership with a local chapter of ***100 Black Men of America*** to assist them in addressing the education and economic issues of African American youth.
- Work with the national organization of ***100 Black Men of America*** to develop a local chapter with programs relevant to the needs of local youth.



Preparation Issues

Recommendation 9:

Ensure that youth are literate, acquire basic skills, and have extracurricular activities.



Children in foster care frequently do not receive the attention and continuity necessary for academic success. They are at a markedly increased risk for educational failure—especially dropping out—and associated independent living impacts after leaving foster care.⁴⁰

Background

Numerous studies have found that, on average, youth who have been in out-of-home care have lower grades, lower standardized test scores in reading and math, higher dropout rates, and lower enrollment rates in higher education than peers who have not been in out-of-home care.

Information from the field and a recent national study of alumni of foster care reinforces the importance of both a high school diploma and strong academic

⁴⁰ National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, *Permanency Planning for Children* Department, 2002, p. 22.

skills for successful transition into adulthood.⁴¹ Other studies show the specific value of higher-level math and science courses as a pathway to higher education for disadvantaged students, noting that having low expectations for these young people does them a disservice.⁴² Clearly, ensuring that youth in out-of-home care leave school with strong literacy, math, science, and technology skills is absolutely critical.

Acquiring strong reading skills is especially important because of reading's link to success in both school and the workplace. Literacy research on elementary-age children offers some direction for curriculum, instruction, and remedial approaches in reading that we can translate into classroom practice and academic intervention for youth in care.⁴³ Additionally, this research can provide direction to caregivers and advocates who are looking for appropriate reading instruction and remediation for youth in care.

Early and accurate assessment of a youth's basic academic skills is essential to basic-skill acquisition. All too often, for example, reading problems are not detected until a youth has lost years of reading progress. Without accurate assessment, we cannot perform appropriate education planning and intervention.

School quality, and especially the quality of residential and institutional schools and alternative schools, plays an equally important role in the academic success of youth in care. Focus groups of youth and their caregivers in California's child welfare and juvenile justice systems revealed that "although a few students had positive experiences to relate, the vast majority of remarks about [the] educational quality [of institutional or alternative school programs] were extremely negative."⁴⁴ For instance, two focus group participants had this to say⁴⁵:

"At [continuation school] I was just given a packet. You didn't have to do the work; and if you were there to learn, you couldn't, because the others were goofing off."

"At lots of continuation schools the books are very old; the teachers are dried up and don't care what kids are doing. The idea is if you're a f-up you deserve a f-up school. They need to have books with African Americans in them; they need to be up to speed with what is happening in the world. Continuation schools should be better than other schools."

41 Pecora et al., 2003.

42 Csikzentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000.

43 National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000.

44 Burrell, 2003, p. 7.

45 Burrell, 2003, pp. 8-9.

Similarly, the quality of schools available to youth on American Indian reservations is of great concern, according to social work staff from reservations in the Midwest.

Another contributor to academic success is participation in school-based or community-based co-curricular and extracurricular activities. Such activities improve a student's grade point average and other aspects of academic success and are perceived by youth as both important for their future and enjoyable in the here and now.⁴⁶ Extracurricular activities provide the added benefit of helping youth build interpersonal and social skills, meet other developmental needs, and generally enjoy a well-rounded life. Unfortunately for youth in care, chaotic personal lives and multiple changes in school placements may interfere with their opportunities to participate in these activities.

To best assist youth in out-of-home care, we must provide all these kinds of direct services to them and their families. We must work to improve systems in the schools in ways that will help youth acquire the basic skills, science and technology skills, and extracurricular activities they need to survive in the world.

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see Section 2.

100 Black Men of America (page 102)

This group supports after-school homework and tutoring programs in selected sites across the country. Additionally, their 100 Black Men University offers youth more than 500 low-cost online courses in technology and small business skills.

Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment Education Supplement and Guidebook (page 104)

The supplement and guidebook are designed to alert caregivers and social workers about gaps or delays in a youth's basic skills. They provide a picture of a youth's general functioning in basic skills and technology and offer specific education resources to improve them.

⁴⁶ Csikzentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000.

Asking the Right Questions: A Judicial Checklist to Ensure that the Educational Needs of Children and Youth in Foster Care Are Being Addressed (page 105)

Family court judges can use this list of basic questions to determine the educational progress of youth whose care is under court supervision. The goal is to help judges ensure that youth are acquiring basic skills and achieving academically.

Education Specialists/Advocates (page 114)

These practitioners follow an education case-management model that, among other things, pays attention to a youth's progress in the acquisition of basic skills, plans around a youth's strengths and needs, and ensures that a youth participates in one or more extracurricular activities.

Endless Dreams Training and Video (page 115)

This modular curriculum provides training for school staff in the education needs of youth in care and can help staff more effectively support the youth's efforts to strengthen academic skills.

John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (page 122)

Many services based on this program pay for tutoring to support the education of youth (usually 16 and older) who have an Independent Living/Chafee program plan.

Strategic Tutoring Program (page 137)

This individual tutoring curriculum has produced significant gains in grades and standardized achievement scores for youth in out-of-home care. It teaches young people the lifelong skills of independent problem solving and of applying a thoughtful, "strategic" approach to tasks in school and in the workplace.

Treehouse (page 140)

A Seattle-based private child welfare agency, this group has created a school-based tutoring model for youth in out-of-home care that has proven successful in improving reading and math skills.

Handouts and Checklists

A sample of this is available for photocopying in Section 3.

Quality Assurance Standards and Program Recommendations for Tutoring and Mentoring. Practitioners working with youth in out-of-home care can identify the effectiveness of free and fee-based community tutoring programs using this comprehensive checklist.

Other Recommended Resources

Kidscreen. This assessment was developed by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services to identify needed services for youth entering out-of-home care. Youth are screened in five areas, including education, within 30 days of their initial placement. Results can alert caregivers and social workers to gaps or delays in a youth's basic skills. A Kidscreen brochure is available online at www.dshs.wa.gov.

Online Learning Manual. Online learning is a growing educational option for youth and has been used with success for youth who have difficulty learning in a traditional setting and for older youth who are behind in credits. This resource from Casey can be used in setting up online learning programs for youth in out-of-home care.

For a free copy, e-mail contactus@casey.org.

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Provide education assessment and planning, and facilitate interventions to improve basic skills for youth in out-of-home care.
- Engage caregivers and all the adults involved in a youth's life in discussions on how to get the youth to read more, both with greater comprehension and with greater joy.
- Enroll youth who are reading below grade level in high-quality reading-based programs. Check to see if the school offers additional reading support.
- Use community tutoring programs as appropriate, but ensure that they meet the standards listed in the *Quality Assurance Standards and Program Recommendations for Tutoring and Mentoring* (see **Handouts and Checklists** above).
- Ensure the development of technology skills, either through school curricula or supplemental programs such as computer camps or the online university of **100 Black Men of America**.
- Monitor the school reading programs for youth in out-of-home care and encourage the use of research-based practices in schools. Provide adolescents who are behind in reading with age-appropriate instruction and supports.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Train school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers to support the education progress of youth in out-of-home care, using the **Endless Dreams Training and Video**.
- Monitor the results of research on reading, especially concerning adolescent literacy, and disseminate this information to tutors, schools, caregivers, and social workers.
- Train Casey staff and caregivers in the use of the **Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment Education Supplement and Guidebook**.

- Train caregivers and agencies in ways to support getting youth involved in extracurricular activities. This might include setting up a fund to cover the costs of extracurricular activities or the costs of extra transportation that might be required to enable the youth to participate in these activities.

System Improvements

- Make tutoring programs such as **Strategic Tutoring** available to community tutoring organizations, education specialists/advocates in other agencies, and programs under the **John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program**.
- Collaborate with **100 Black Men of America** to provide after-school services to African American youth in schools that have high numbers of youth in out-of-home care.
- Provide training to social workers and Independent Living/Chafee program staff in public child welfare agencies in how to use the **Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment Education Supplement and Guidebook**.
- Support improvements in public schools at local and state levels, especially reservation schools, alternative schools, and residential schools by not only sharing educational outcome data for youth in out-of-home care, but for all youth at-risk.

Recommendation 10:

Prepare youth to achieve their postsecondary education, training, and career goals.



Improving the educational attainment of youth in care is important because education is related to obtaining and maintaining employment. With employment, former youth in care can meet other needs, such as housing and health care, and become productive and self-supporting citizens.⁴⁷

Background

The importance of postsecondary education or training to a successful adulthood is clear. In addition to personal benefits, such as improved self-worth, career satisfaction, and self-confidence, there are clear economic advantages. A 2002 U. S. census report states that workers over the age of 25 with only a high school diploma had a median income of \$25,900. The median for workers with an associate's degree was \$33,000 and for those with a bachelor's degree, \$45,400. Workers who completed postsecondary certificate programs also earned more than those who had just completed high school. Earnings differences continue to grow among workers with postsecondary degree attainment as the demand for skilled workers grows.⁴⁸

Statistics on postsecondary educational outcomes for youth formerly in foster care are cause for concern. In general, only about 55 percent of all students entering college receive a degree, but these figures are even lower for students of color, first-generation college students, and students without parental support.⁴⁹ In a recent study of youth who had been in public and private care in Washington and Oregon, by the age of 25, only 1.8 percent had completed

⁴⁷ Yu, Day, & Williams, 2002a, p. 19.

⁴⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, 2002.

⁴⁹ Venezia et al., 2003.

a bachelor's degree.⁵⁰ In order for youth to have a chance at doing well in their postsecondary and/or training experiences, they must first be able to enter these programs prepared and supported.

Having college aspirations, preparing for postsecondary education experiences while in middle and high school, becoming aware of the full range of available postsecondary program options, learning to use needed support services, and applying self-determination skills for goal setting and problem solving are keys to successful transitions from care and from high school.

For young people who go on to postsecondary education or training immediately after high school or later on, the need for academic, personal, and financial support does not end with high school graduation. Students from foster care too often lack the structured support systems and services that would enable them to complete their college programs. In the focus groups conducted by the Youth Law Center in California, young people made this very clear⁵¹:

“Books, tuition, money, money, money. The cost of books overwhelmed me, even at City College. What about state college? Graduate school?”

“I do not know how to drive; I’m scared of driving. I’m worried about transportation and money for the bus, which I’ll need to go to college.”

“I went to talk to a college counselor who only wanted to talk about basketball. I didn’t want to talk about basketball; I wanted to talk about classes. I had to talk to someone else.”

High school completion and postsecondary planning

One of the most important strategies for youth in transition is to ensure that “way power” is matched to “willpower” when it comes to a youth’s postsecondary goals. Recent studies have found that up to 80 percent of youth in foster care aspired to go to college, but few had actually taken the coursework needed to enroll.⁵² Only 15 percent of youth in out-of-home care—versus 32 percent of the non-foster care population—are likely to be enrolled in college preparatory classes during high school.⁵³ Studies clearly show that college success is highly affected by high-quality, academically-intense high school curriculum engagement.⁵⁴ Other studies have found that disadvantaged

⁵⁰ Pecora et al., 2005.

⁵¹ Burrell, 2003, pp. 13, 16.

⁵² Edmund S Muskie School of Public Service, 1999, p. 10.

⁵³ Sheehy et al., 2001, p. 10.

⁵⁴ Burrell, 2003, pp. 13, 16.

youth often lack the role models, peer support, and expectations from teachers and other adults that are the motivation for finishing high school and enrolling in postsecondary education and training.⁵⁵ As one young man said, “College is not something people talk to foster children about. They don’t grow up with that cultural expectation.”⁵⁶

In the guide *It’s My Life: Postsecondary Education and Training*, developed in 2006 by Casey Family Programs primarily for caseworkers, practical strategies and resources are recommended that can give youth in out-of-home care the secondary education, academic guidance, and support they need to not only prepare to attend postsecondary programs but ultimately to complete them.⁵⁷ The guide offers eight recommendations, based both on the research on access to postsecondary education for underrepresented youth in general and on research and practice with youth in foster care:

Foster high academic aspirations. This can be accomplished by holding high academic expectations, helping students take charge of their own education, encouraging students to connect career dreams with postsecondary education plans, introducing youth to role models, and encouraging positive peer relationships.

Encourage long-term planning for postsecondary education. Students in out-of-home care are in special need of support when it comes to long-term planning. Ways that this can be accomplished include helping youth get connected to a mentor, building an academic portfolio, exploring options for postsecondary education, enrolling in college preparation programs, and discussing preparation for postsecondary education at IEP and Section 504 meetings for students with disabilities.

Stress rigorous academic preparation. Strong academic preparation (see **Recommendations 6, 7, and 9**) is the single most important factor in enrolling and succeeding in a postsecondary program.

Support students in taking standardized tests. Although standardized tests are a fact of student life in this country, taking them is daunting to many youth. In order to make this process less intimidating for youth in out-of-home care, we can help them prepare for standardized tests (e.g., SAT, ACT), register for standardized tests, track their performance on state tests, and get updated educational assessments for students in special education to help them qualify (if appropriate) for accommodations when taking standardized tests.

⁵⁵ Horn & Chen, 1998.

⁵⁶ Newberger, 2001, p. 1

⁵⁷ Casey Family Programs, 2006.

Support students in choosing, applying for, and enrolling in postsecondary education. Youth will need strong practical and emotional support during the process of choosing, applying for, and enrolling in postsecondary education. Ways to help youth during this process include discussing with students the wide range of postsecondary education and training opportunities, helping them match postsecondary programs with their goals and skills, helping them submit a strong application and, finally, assisting them in making acceptance decisions and enrolling.

Help students apply for and get adequate financial aid. With proper planning and support, students from out-of-home care can combine financial aid awards from a number of sources (see **Promising Practices and Resources** on page 99) to pay the full cost of attendance for most programs. The financial aid process is complex and confusing, however. Youth benefit from having a mentor help them explore their financial aid options, apply for financial aid (including scholarships), and secure their financial aid packages.

Engage young adults who have missed out on postsecondary preparation. Young adults may not be fully aware of the personal and economic benefits of postsecondary education and may feel that it can never be a reality for them. Some ways to engage youth in this process include helping them see the importance of postsecondary education and how it can be a reality and offering guidance and support for postsecondary enrollment.

Help students adjust to and complete their college or training program. Although the scope of this framework does not specifically address postsecondary educational supports, it is important to note that completing a postsecondary education is very arduous for not only youth who were in out-of-home care but for many students. We can support these young adults by helping them make the transition to their postsecondary program, identifying a mentor, and making sure they know about support services and how to access them as needed.

Career development

Whether they choose to go to work or to further their education and career training after high school, youth need career development assistance. They need to learn about career options; assess opportunities and understand their personal interests, aptitudes, and working styles; gain job skills and experience; and learn job-seeking skills. High schools often provide much of this support, but youth need to also access community programs.

Encourage youth to learn about and enroll in career, technical, and other career-related certificate and degree programs in their communities. Taking advantage of school-to-work and career and technical education courses while in high school can set the stage for advanced postsecondary training. These programs often offer employment and economic rewards in much shorter timelines than college degree programs, and they offer job placement services. These occupational training opportunities need to be presented to youth as a worthy higher education option, frequently leading to a good first job with decent wages and benefits.

For all youth in out-of-home care, work experience during the high school years—whether an after-school job or a summer job—is important to academic success and future employment. Casey’s 2003 alumni study found that youth in out-of-home care who had extensive employment experience while in high school were more than four times as likely to graduate as those who lacked this experience.⁵⁸ Work experience can also play an important role in helping to shape career and academic priorities.

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see Section 2.

Academic, Career Development, and Independent Living Support

College Bridge Programs (page 108)

These programs let youth participate in dual-enrollment programs (simultaneous enrollment in high school and college). Youth can take on more rigorous coursework, earn college credit while in high school at little or no personal financial cost, and make a somewhat seamless transition to postsecondary education. Although originally designed for high school youth needing a more rigorous program, these programs now also target disadvantaged youth at risk of not enrolling in postsecondary education.

⁵⁸ Pecora et al., 2003, p. 43.

Education Specialists/Advocates (page 114)

When serving youth age 14 to 18 who have not yet graduated from high school, these practitioners provide transition services for goal setting, direct self-determination training, and skills development for postsecondary education and/or career development.

GEAR UP (page 118)

GEAR UP programs are designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. GEAR UP funds are also used to provide college scholarships to low-income students.

Get SET (page 119)

Developed in Yakima, Washington, this four-week summer transitional skill development program provides participating youth with instruction in study and work skills.

It's My Life Postsecondary and Education and Training
(page 121)

This guide helps child welfare professionals and educators prepare young people from foster care academically, financially, and emotionally for postsecondary education and training success.

John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (page 122)

This state-administered federal program is designed to serve youth as young as age 14 by providing education advocacy, tutoring, computer camps or classes, help with GED completion, and college and career planning activities.

Person Centered Planning (page 129)

This systematic approach to setting and achieving goals can be useful in guiding youth who are making plans about their lives after high school.

Summer Bridge Programs (page 138)

These programs are offered by many colleges and provide an on-campus academic and residential experience designed to prepare new students for college success.

Treehouse (page 140)

This private agency serves youth in out-of-home care in the Seattle area. Their popular Coaching-to-College program provides volunteers who guide high school youth through the college preparation, selection, application, and enrollment process. Once enrolled, the college coach remains in contact with students and helps guide them to success.

TRIO Programs (page 141)

TRIO Programs are educational opportunity outreach programs designed to motivate and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO includes outreach and support programs, such as Upward Bound and Talent Search, targeted to assist low-income, first-generation college students and students with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to postsecondary education programs.

vMentor Program (page 143)

The Orphan Foundation of America (OFA) set up this online system to match youth with adult mentors who provide Web-based support for their continuing education. It is available to youth who are on an OFA scholarship, in the Casey Family Scholars Program of the OFA (described below), or in an Independent Living/Chafee program in states that have contracted with OFA.

Financial Aid Support

Casey Family Scholars Program of the Orphan Foundation of America (page 107)

This program provides scholarships for postsecondary education and training to young people who have been in care. Participating scholars receive ongoing support through multiple means, including a toll-free support number and regular e-mail contact with an assigned mentor.

Education and Training Vouchers (page 111)

These federal Independent Living/Chafee program funds for young people who have been in care can provide up to \$5,000 a year toward the cost of attending a postsecondary institution. Funds can be applied to the “costs of attendance” at an eligible institution of higher education.

Guardian Scholars and other targeted college support programs (page 120)

Available at California State University, Fullerton, and more than 30 other community and four-year colleges, these growing public-private partnership programs support the efforts of students formerly in foster care to complete a college education. They offer outreach, tuition assistance, room and board, textbooks and supplies, counseling and mentoring, advising, and a variety of support services.

State Tuition Waivers (page 136)

Currently available in 17 states, these waivers exempt youth formerly in care from tuition fees. Each state has its own criteria for the waivers.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (page 139)

This federal program provides financial assistance as well as educational and training opportunities that can improve wages and working conditions for low-income families. Many youth who emancipate from care at age 18 and who are pregnant or have children may qualify for this assistance. Kinship care families may also qualify.

Workforce Investment Act (page 144)

Services provided under this federally funded program prepare qualifying low-income youth (including youth in foster care) for postsecondary education and/or employment. Services can include paid and unpaid work experiences, summer jobs, occupational skills training, and tutoring.

Handouts and Checklists

None for this recommendation.

Other Recommended Resources

First in the Family: Advice about College from First-Generation Students. First-generation students enrolled at colleges across the country offer their stories about preparing, enrolling, and succeeding in college. They give suggestions to other students, teachers, counselors, and others who offer important guidance and support. Available at Next Generation www.whatkidscando.org/index.asp.

Frequently Asked Questions I, II, and III. A series of publications designed to assist child welfare professionals, advocates, and young people to use and understand the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and the Chafee Education and Training Voucher Program. Download from www.casey.org.

It's My Life: Employment. This guide provides benchmarks for career exploration and techniques for job seeking. It breaks out the benchmarks by age group and lets young people describe their successes in their own words. It also provides a wealth of links to online tools and assessments and many suggestions for taking advantage of community resources. Download from www.casey.org.

It's My Life: Financial Aid. This excerpt from ***It's My Life: Postsecondary Education and Training*** provides child welfare workers, counselors, and financial aid officers with information for helping students apply for and obtain adequate financial aid for college. Download from www.casey.org.

It's My Life: Housing. This guide to employment and career development helps child welfare professionals prepare young people for success in the workplace. Download from www.casey.org.

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Provide self-determination/advocacy training for youth, with emphasis on goal-setting and postsecondary education and training planning.
- Develop solid collaborative interagency transition plans for youth, emphasizing “way power” alongside “willpower” and providing education supports for high school completion, career development, and postsecondary preparation and access.
- Link youth to existing community educational and career development programs, such as **TRIO** and **GEAR UP** programs, College Bridge Programs, and summer programs.
- Make sure that each youth’s high school counselors and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) special education managers know about his or her transition plans, college and career plans, and support needs.

- Provide career and vocational assessments and make sure youth know about the career, school-to-work, and technical classes offered in their high schools and communities.
- Talk with youth about the complete range of postsecondary education and training options available to them now and in the future. Arrange campus or program visits where they can meet successful students and be introduced to support services.
- Ensure that youth have access to successful alumni from care and adult role models who have benefited from postsecondary education or training.
- Ensure that youth have adequate summer and part-time work experience during their high school years.
- Ensure that college students from foster care have safe and stable year-round housing and financial aid plans.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Develop a resource bank of local youth employment options, community educational options, and other community services for youth.
- Develop links with the state Independent Living/Chafee program coordinator and explore avenues for partnering on mentoring programs, online learning, college preparation, career development, and other transition programming.
- Link students to (or develop) a Coaching-to-College program for all community youth based on the **Treehouse** model.
- Support the full use of **Education and Training Vouchers** and other financial aid options available in your state.

System Improvements

- Implement the strategies outlined for policymakers, advocates, and programs in *College Access, Financial Aid, and College Success for Undergraduates from Foster Care* (NASFAA, 2006), www.nasfaa.org/publications/2006/rnfosterkids072506.htm.

- At local and state levels, provide information to high schools and educators on the academic and career preparation needs of youth in transition and on the **John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program**.
- Collaborate with your state's child welfare agency and the Office of Public Policy on developing state program improvement plans and State Independent Living Plans for the **John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program**.
- Develop links with your state's Board of Higher Education and state Independent Living/Chafee program coordinator to explore options for supporting youth formerly in out-of-home care who are in state colleges and other state postsecondary training programs. (See **Other Recommended Resources** above for examples of Chafee linkages developed in some states.)
- At local and state levels, collaborate with **Workforce Investment Act** and **Temporary Assistance to Needy Families** programs to maximize opportunities for youth in care and emancipated youth to take advantage of these programs.
- Promote or facilitate local and state postsecondary education and training alliances that target the issues of youth in foster care. Include state and private agencies, alumni, higher education, and corporate partners.

Promote public policies that promote college success for students in foster care

Promote the extension of Medicaid coverage until the age of 21 in your state. College students from foster care report that the lack of health insurance coverage presents one of their biggest barriers to college success.

Work to ensure that students have adequate access to both federal and state financial aid options. These can include state tuition waivers, publicly funded scholarships, state need grants, or extended foster care payments for those enrolled in college.

Promote the possibility of allowing youth to remain in foster care beyond age 18 in order for them to participate in and complete a postsecondary education or training program while receiving the necessary supports and transition services that foster care can provide to successfully complete a college program.



Public Policy Issues

Recommendation 11: Promote public policies that support education during and after care.



For years, we have focused only on protection of foster children. Protection must be priority number one, but we must do more. We must ensure access to education and provide equality of that education. We ask more of almost every other group in America. Today, we must begin to ask more of ourselves and our foster children when it comes to their education.⁵⁹

Background

Underlying all of the issues in this framework is the need to support public policies and programs that will improve the education outcomes of youth in out-of-home care. Without coherent, comprehensive public policies and the engagement of major stakeholders at the local, state, and national levels, change and systems improvement will only occur in a piecemeal way.

In particular, nonprofit organizations have an important role in developing and implementing education policy for youth in out-of-home care.

⁵⁹ A. Cornell, in keynote address cited in Yu, Day, & Williams, 2002b, p. 24.

This role, first of all, involves developing awareness of significant issues that affect youth in out-of-home care, and then educating and convening potential partners and major stakeholders who can develop policy and support policy initiatives. Secondly, it involves collaborating with partners in policy development and providing technical assistance when policies are implemented.

Working solutions

Specific policy implementation activities that we can engage in include:

- Researching and collecting data and information on the education and transition issues of youth in out-of-home care.
- Developing and disseminating well-balanced information briefs related to specific issues in the education of youth in out-of-home care, such as service needs, costs, outcomes, promising practices, and policy gaps.
- Producing articles for professional child welfare and education journals, newsletters, and Web sites on the education issues of youth in out-of-home care.
- Maintaining a presence at targeted national education, child welfare, and legal conferences, and making presentations on the education issues of youth in out-of-home care.
- Convening stakeholders from the three key systems (child welfare, education, and legal) within a state or community to develop a joint vision, agenda, and action plan for reform.
- Convening stakeholders to focus on specific education issues, such as a Postsecondary Education Convening.
- Supporting the implementation and expansion of policy initiatives, such as the **John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program** or Education and Training Vouchers (both described in **Promising Practices and Resources**), through technical assistance and the development of implementation tools.

Potential partners and major stakeholders that are or should be included in policy efforts include:

- Public and private child welfare agencies and advocacy organizations
- Youth leadership groups and foster care alumni groups

- Foster parent organizations
- Special education groups, including government agencies and professional organizations
- Regular education (K–12) groups, including government agencies and professional organizations
- Judicial organizations
- Birth families and relatives
- Legal organizations
- Court-appointed special advocates (CASAs) and guardians ad litem (GALs)
- Higher education groups, including government agencies and professional organizations
- Workforce development groups, including government agencies and groups from the private sector

Child welfare agencies and others can provide leadership to these stakeholder groups for all the issues identified in this framework. By bringing the education needs of youth in out-of-home care and emancipated youth to the forefront of public policy, agencies can make education excellence for all youth in out-of-home care a core value of child welfare and education policy.

Promising Practices and Resources

For more details on these entries, see Section 2.

Asking the Right Questions: A Judicial Checklist to Ensure That the Educational Needs of Children and Youth in Foster Care Are Being Addressed (page 105)

This checklist and accompanying technical assistance brief outline questions that should be asked in a courtroom with respect to the educational needs of children and youth in foster care. The domains addressed in the checklist can serve as an outline for policy issues.

Education and Training Vouchers (page 111)

This federal program, administered under the ***John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program***, provides up to \$5,000 for postsecondary education and training to youth who have been in foster care.

Endless Dreams Training and Video (page 115)

This video is a popular and successful tool for educating policy makers about the education needs of youth in out-of-home care.

John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (page 122)

This federal program provides money to states to prepare youth emancipating from foster care for independent living; it also provides some support for youth who have already made the transition from care. States have the flexibility of using a portion of the funds for education services.

Make a Difference in a Child's Life and Toolkit for Change
(page 124)

The ***Toolkit for Change*** portion of these materials gives education advocates self-contained resources for customizing a campaign to help youth in care get the most out of school.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (page 125)

This federal policy, which covers children or youth without a fixed regular and adequate nighttime residence, includes all or some children in foster care depending on state law and/or interpretation.

National Education Working Group on Foster Care and Education (page 127)

The Working Group grew out of the recognition that only through collaboration can practice, policy, and cultural changes take place that will support educational stability and achievement as priorities in the lives of children and youth. A goal of the group is to promote greater national attention to providing quality educational experiences, expectations, and aspirations for youth in foster care.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (page 139)

This federal program provides funds to states for assistance to low-income families. One of its main purposes is to fund education and training opportunities for participants.

Handouts and Checklists

Samples of these items are available for photocopying in Section 3.

“Educational Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster and Out-of-Home Care.” This fact sheet, created by the **National Working Group on Foster Care and Education**, provides outcome data on several education-related areas including school placement stability, academics, special education, social-behavioral issues, high school completion rates, and post-secondary entrance/completion rates.

“Indicators of Systems Change for Improving Educational Outcomes for Youth in Out-of-Home Care.” This Casey-developed matrix can be used at the local level to guide school districts in developing a policy for improving the education outcomes of youth in out-of-home care in their districts.

Other Recommended Resources

The Casey National Alumni Study. The report from this study presents life experiences, educational achievements, and current functioning of more than a thousand alumni of foster care. The reports present data collected from case records and interviews of 1,087 Casey foster-care alumni who were served between 1966 and 1998. Download from www.casey.org.

Educational Attainment of Foster Youth: Achievement and Graduation Outcomes for Children in State Care. This 2001 study from the Washington State Institute for Public Policy looked at the education outcomes of more than 4,500 in-care youth in public schools in Washington state, quantifying the achievement gap between youth in foster care and other students in Washington state. Available online at www.wsipp.wa.gov.

Getting out of the Red Zone: Youth from the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Systems Speak Out about the Obstacles to Completing Their Education, and What Could Help. This report from the Youth Law Center documents the results of focus groups that examined the education experiences of youth in out-of-home care in California. It provides good insight into the perspectives of youth and caregivers. Available online at www.youthlawcenter.com.

Higher Education Reform: Incorporating the Needs of Foster Youth. This document identifies three Higher Education Act reauthorization strategies that would

promote improved postsecondary access and outcomes for students coming from out-of-home care. It is an excellent resource for individuals working to eliminate the obstacles to postsecondary education and training for youth emancipating from out-of-home care. Download from www.casey.org.

Lost in the Shuffle Revisited: The Education Law Center's Report on the Education of Children in Foster Care in Pennsylvania. This 2002 report focuses on a range of issues related to the education of youth in care and provides recommendations for policy changes and systems improvement in both the child welfare and education arenas. Available online at www.elc-pa.org.

Opportunities for Expanding College Bridge Programs for Out-of-School Youth and Promising Practices: School to Career and Post-secondary Education for Foster Care Youth: A Guide for Policymakers and Practitioners. Both of these informational documents from the Workforce Strategy Center recommend specific education programs that can help disadvantaged youth, including youth in foster care, complete high school and continue in postsecondary education and training. Available online at www.workforcestrategy.org.

What You Can Do Now

Direct Service Activities

- Educate school staff on the particular education needs and issues of youth in out-of-home care.
- Present one or more modules of the ***Endless Dreams Training and Video*** to all school staff, school boards, and parent-teacher organizations.
- Present one or more modules of the ***Endless Dreams Training and Video*** to preservice teachers in teacher training programs at local colleges.
- For high school youth with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) that include a transition plan, facilitate the coordination of the special-education transition plan with the youth's Independent Living/Chafee program transition plan. Educate team members from both systems about the process for ensuring this coordination.
- Provide self-determination training to youth and ensure that youth have a voice in policy efforts that are of concern and interest to them.

Supports and Technical Assistance

- Research information on how ***John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program*** funds are used in your state for education purposes and how youth can access them. Make this information available to youth, caregivers, schools, and public and private agencies serving youth in out-of-home care and emancipated youth.
- Obtain up-to-date information on the use of ***Education and Training Vouchers*** in your state, and disseminate this information to youth, caregivers, schools, and public and private agencies serving youth in out-of-home care and emancipated youth.

- Develop an informational brochure for schools on the education needs of youth in out-of-home care and/or youth in transition.
- Research and disseminate information on public funding streams that can be used for education purposes for youth in out-of-home care, e.g., **Workforce Investment Act** funds or **Temporary Assistance to Needy Families** funds.
- Stay informed on state and federal policy developments that are relevant to youth in out-of-home care. Make sure that youth, caregivers, and agency staff are aware of any new developments that could benefit the youth.

System Improvements

- Form a local coalition of representatives from child welfare and education agencies to collaborate on local and state issues of youth in out-of-home care.
- Facilitate an education summit, for either K–12 or higher education youth, that brings together local or state stakeholders around the theme of improved education and transition outcomes for youth in out-of-home care.
- In a school district heavily populated by youth in out-of-home care, work with district administrators to create and implement a system-wide plan that improves the education outcomes of these youth. Use Casey’s “Indicators of Systems Change for Improving Educational Outcomes for Youth in Out-of-Home Care” (see **Handouts and Checklists** on page 146) to guide and evaluate the plan.
- Make presentations at state and national conferences of professional K–12 and higher education, child welfare, and legal advocacy groups, such as the Council for Exceptional Children, the National Resource Center for Youth Development, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, and the American Bar Association, on the education needs of youth in care.
- Write an article on one or more aspects of the education issues of youth in care for a professional journal or for Web publication.



Looking Forward

Topics in this section:

Greater collaboration and coordination

University-based professional development

Standardized education training for foster parents

Direct self-advocacy training for youth in care

Ongoing research and data collection

Increased public policy focus



Looking forward

No matter what education services or advocacy we provide, youth must remain at the heart of our work. It is their needs, dreams, and aspirations that must continue to drive our efforts to support and facilitate positive education outcomes for youth in care.

While the greatest strides are made one youth at a time, more comprehensive efforts on their behalf are still needed in all systems related to education. These efforts are briefly described below.

Greater collaboration and coordination

Public and private agencies at the local and state level, including education systems, must continue to explore ways to collaborate to ensure successful education outcomes for all youth in care.

University-based professional development

Educators, social workers, and lawyers at the preservice level can all benefit from training on the education issues of youth in care. While how to teach youth with special needs and diverse abilities is often a topic of study for education students, many potential teachers are never exposed to curricula or instruction specifically on teaching youth in care. Nor are many high school counselors aware of the targeted postsecondary financial aid that is available for students in care. Social workers, education specialists/advocates, and others can develop relationships with professors and administrations in law schools and education and social work departments to promote curricula that focus on all aspects of education for youth in care.

Standardized education training for foster parents

A standardized, comprehensive foster-parent training curriculum focused on educating youth in care would be a valuable tool for state and federal child welfare agencies and foster parent associations across the country. Such a curriculum could be set up as standalone training or as part of an existing foster-parent training curriculum such as PRIDE, one of the most

common national foster-parent training curricula. While PRIDE now has an education module included in its training, we must insure that all current and prospective foster parents understand their role and responsibilities for insuring educational success. Additionally, any curriculum that is developed should be easily accessible online and should include information and approaches that are culturally relevant to a diverse population of caregivers, including American Indian and Alaska Native, African American, and Hispanic families.

Direct self-advocacy training for youth in care

Continual recognition of the youth's voice and choices is at the core of our work. Every service provided to the youth must take the youth's input into account. But merely stating that youth need to be self-advocates is not enough. Youth in care need direct instruction in how to advocate for their needs, make and adjust education and career goals, and develop a personal support network. This instruction must be developmentally age-appropriate as well as culturally appropriate. The skills that are taught must be tailored to what the youth needs to ensure that his or her voice is heard and responded to effectively.

Ongoing research and data collection

We must continue to collect outcome and comparative data on the education performance of youth in out-of-home care, including information on barriers faced by emancipated youth in postsecondary education. Data should also be collected on the efficacy of specific programs meant to support the education needs of youth in care.

Increased public policy focus

Most national and state education legislation and policies do not recognize youth in out-of-home care as having unique education needs. While the needs of migrant or homeless youth are considered under the No Child Left Behind Act, this is not the case for youth in care, or for disadvantaged or disconnected youth in general. These are some specific policy areas that must be addressed for youth in care:

- The necessity of school placement stability and of efficient maintenance and transfer of school records for these youth
- The role of judicial oversight in promoting the education of youth in care
- The need to ensure that the voices of youth in care and of youth formerly in care are represented in all policy development efforts
- Strategies for reducing the disproportionate number of youth in care on tribal reservations

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Eleven Education Recommendations

School transfer issues

1. Provide school placement stability and continuity.
2. Secure and maintain accurate and accessible school records.

Collaboration and training issues

3. Facilitate collaboration and training among all involved systems.
4. Train caregivers to be education advocates at school and at home.

Supports and services issues

5. Provide education advocates and education specialists/advocates.
6. Give youth access to supplemental education supports and services.
7. Address special education needs as appropriate to the youth.
8. Decrease disparate outcomes for youth of color.

Preparation issues

9. Ensure that youth are literate, acquire basic skills, and have extracurricular opportunities.
10. Prepare youth to achieve their postsecondary education, training, and career goals.

Public policy issues

11. Promote public policies that support education during and after care.

The framework provides a combination of background information plus almost 50 practical applications that anyone involved with serving youth in care can use in developing a holistic, comprehensive, and culturally responsive approach to education.



Section 2

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100 Black Men of America

Mission/Purpose

To enhance educational and economic opportunities for all African Americans. The current focus is on youth mentoring, violence prevention, and education and economic development programs.

Target Population

Partners and professionals who work with African American youth, especially African American males.

Description

100 Black Men of America has many programs. One of the best known is the Wimberly Initiative on Disproportionality, created in partnership with the National Association of State Directors of Special Education. This initiative is an effort to reduce the disproportionate representation of African Americans in special education. It has set up model programs using mentors and tutors to improve the academic and social skills of these youth. Another program, 100 Black Men University, offers over 500 low-cost online courses in computer technology and small business development to participating youth. The organization also has a national magazine and conducts regional training conferences and national conferences.

www.100blackmen.org

American Bar Association Child Law Practice Series

Mission/Purpose

To promote increased insight into the education needs of youth in out-of-home care and into the role that lawyers, child welfare professionals, and caregivers can play in education advocacy for these youth.

Target Population

Lawyers, child welfare professionals, and caregivers who are interested in the education needs of youth in out-of-home care from preschool to grade 12.

Description

Starting in 2002, the American Bar Association began publishing a series of articles in *Child Law Practice* to raise awareness of the kinds of education services that youth in out-of-home care need. The articles cover the following topics:

1. Education Advocacy in Child Welfare Cases: Key Issues and Roles
2. Education Law Primer (in two parts)
3. Creative Ways to Meet Educational Needs
4. The IEP Process
5. Advocacy for Young Children
6. Discipline

The series also includes information relevant to other education issues surrounding youth in care, such as confidentiality and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

www.abanet.org/child

Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment Education Supplement and Guidebook

Mission/Purpose

To help prepare youth age 8 to 21 for successful adulthood by providing assessments of their education progress and skills and by identifying activities and approaches for dealing with any education deficiencies they may have.

Target Population

Professionals, caregivers, educators, and social service personnel working with all youth, regardless of living circumstances. This includes youth in foster care, one-parent homes, group homes, and other living situations.

Description

The Education Supplement to the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment and Guidebook is used for assessing a youth's academic skills, education progress, and the supports and barriers to the youth's progress.

Both the supplement and guidebook are free of charge and downloadable.

The supplement includes separate education assessments for elementary, middle school, and high school youth and, at each of these levels, both a caregiver version and a youth self-report version. There is also a single self-report version for youth in postsecondary education and training. The assessments cover school behavior and school climate; academic skills, attitudes, and accomplishments; academic supports; school relationships; problem-solving skills; transition; special education/disabilities; cultural factors; and barriers to academic success.

The instructional guidebook provides tools and strategies for dealing with any shortcomings identified in the education assessment(s) and for promoting a youth's education progress.

www.caseylifeskills.org

Asking the Right Questions: A Judicial Checklist to Ensure That the Educational Needs of Children and Youth in Foster Care Are Being Addressed

Mission/Purpose

To provide a tool to educate judges and juvenile courts about the education needs of youth in foster care and to create shared expectations within the system for education outcomes.

Target Population

Judges who work in juvenile and family courts, caseworkers, CASAs and GALs, and anyone who must present information to a judge.

Description

Youth often come into the dependency and juvenile justice systems with mental health issues, learning difficulties, and crises from unstable or unsafe living situations; all these, unfortunately, overshadow efforts to also meet the youth's education needs. To address this concern, this national checklist and accompanying technical assistance brief were developed. The checklist outlines questions for judges to ask to get at the root of the education status and progress of youth in their courts. Asking the right questions can lead to solutions that improve the education outcomes of these youth.

Typical questions include the following: Is the child/youth enrolled in school? Does the child/youth have a plan for getting to and from school? Is the child/youth attending school regularly? Have absences resulted in the filing of a truancy petition?

The checklist is accompanied by a Technical Assistance Bulletin from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges to further support judges in achieving better education outcomes for youth in care.

www.ncjfcj.org

Breakthrough Series Collaborative: Improving Educational Continuity and School Stability for Children in Out-of-Home Care

Mission/Purpose

To identify, develop, test, implement, and spread promising strategies for improving practices in education and child welfare systems to support educational continuity and school stability for children and youth in out-of-home care.

Target Population

Agencies (e.g., education, child welfare, judicial) committed to improving the educational outcomes for youth in out-of-home care.

Description

Sponsored by Casey Family Programs, this Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) focuses on improving educational continuity and school stability for children in out-of-home care. The BSC brings together public/tribal child welfare agencies and school systems that are committed to improving educational continuity and school stability for children in out-of-home care. Participating jurisdictions are committed to testing strategies and tools on a small scale, sharing lessons learned, and implementing the most successful strategies throughout their system. These jurisdictions share their successes and learnings in real time to further accelerate achievement of improved outcomes.

E-mail contactus@casey.org

Casey Family Scholars Program of the Orphan Foundation of America

Mission/Purpose

To provide scholarships to youth currently or formerly in foster care and to provide ongoing support for their college success.

Target Population

Young people who wish to enroll in postsecondary education who are under age 25, have spent at least 12 months in foster care, and have not been subsequently adopted.

Description

The Casey Family Scholars Program is funded by Casey and administered by the Orphan Foundation of America (OFA). The program provides scholarships of up to \$10,000 to young people for postsecondary education, including vocational or technical training. Scholarships are renewable each year based on satisfactory progress and financial need. Participants in this program receive ongoing support through a toll-free number and regular e-mail contact with an adult mentor from OFA's vMentor Program.

www.orphan.org

College Bridge Programs

Mission/Purpose

To offer college-level curricular options to high school students and encourage youth to complete high school, while creating a relatively seamless transition to postsecondary education.

Target Population

High-achieving high school youth and at-risk or dropout youth.

Description

College bridge programs (also called dual-enrollment programs) encompass a range of programs that:

- Offer postsecondary courses at minimal or no cost to students
- Allow credits to be applied to both high school and college completion
- Place few limits on the number of credits a student can take

The traditional purpose of dual enrollment has been to offer more rigorous, college-level curricular options to high-achieving high school students. Dual-enrollment programs now also target at-risk youth, however, with the goals of improving their basic skills, allowing them to earn high school diplomas, and linking them with career training programs.

Diploma Plus: Center for Youth Development and Education, Commonwealth Corporation, www.commcorp.org

College bridge programs or PATHNET: Workforce Strategy Center-New York, www.workforcestrategy.org

Council for Exceptional Children, Division for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners

Mission/Purpose:

To promote the advancement and improvement of educational opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse learners who have disabilities and/or who have gifts and talents.

Target Population

Professionals and caregivers who support culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

Description

The Division for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners (DDEL) is one of 17 divisions of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). DDEL is the only professional organization in the United States that focuses exclusively on the concerns of culturally and linguistically exceptional learners.

DDEL members stay abreast of recent advances and trends in their field through two professional publications: *Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners* and the *DDEL Newsletter*. Members also have an opportunity to network with other industry professionals through professional development activities, such as sessions sponsored by DDEL at the CEC Annual International Convention and Expo, as well as at special topical conferences addressing multicultural and linguistic concerns.

www.cec.sped.org

Early Child Development Screening Tools

Mission/Purpose

To promote simple and accurate identification of learning and developmental disorders, disabilities, and delays in infants and young children using high-quality, parent-report screening instruments that take only a few minutes to administer.

Target Population

All children from birth to age 8.

Description

The American Academy of Pediatrics has identified three valid, reliable, sensitive, and specific screening tools for assessing the developmental progress of young children. These tests measure communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem-solving, and personal-social skills.

General information on all three tools: “A different kind of test.” *Education Week*, September 24, 2003, available at www.edweek.org, under Archives

Parents’ Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS): www.pedstest.com

Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQs): Brookes Publishing, www.brookespublishing.com

Child Development Inventories: Behavior Science Systems, Inc., P.O. Box 580274, Minneapolis, MN 55458, 612.929.6220.

Education and Training Vouchers

Mission/Purpose

To provide funding of up to \$5,000 for postsecondary education to youth who have aged out of foster care. To increase participation in postsecondary education programs by youth who have been in out-of-home care.

Target Population

Teenage youth and young adults who are or have been in out-of-home care and have enrolled in a postsecondary education and training program. Eligible participants are youth who are eligible for services under the state John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, including those who were adopted from foster care after they turned 16 and those who were participating in the education voucher program on their 21st birthday and are less than 23 years old, as long as they are enrolled in a postsecondary program and making satisfactory progress toward completion.

Description

Education and training vouchers (ETVs) pay for the cost of attendance at institutions of higher learning as defined by the Higher Education Act of 1965. (This includes institutions that admit students who do not have a GED or high school diploma but are beyond the age of compulsory attendance.) The vouchers are not to exceed \$5,000 per year or the actual incurred cost of attendance at the institution. The cost of attendance includes tuition, room and board, and other costs of participation in the education or training program. To apply for a voucher, youth should contact their regional or state Independent Living/Chafee program coordinator.

For a list of state Independent Living/Chafee program coordinators: National Resource Center for Youth Development, www.nrcys.ou.edu.

www.nrcys.ou.edu

Education and Youth in Out-of-Home Care, an E-learning Module from National CASA

Mission/Purpose

To train court-appointed special advocates (CASAs) to advocate more effectively in court and schools on behalf of a youth's specific education needs, with the intent to improve the education outcomes of the youth they represent.

Target Population

CASA volunteers (community-based volunteers who advocate in juvenile and family court for a youth's best interests), GALs (guardians ad litem), and program staff.

Description

This e-learning curriculum, developed in 2005, is designed to help trained CASAs/GALs and program staff support the educational rights and needs of youth in foster care. To access the e-learning modules, contact staff at staff@nationalcasa.org.

www.nationalcasa.org

Educational Advocacy Curriculum from NFPA (National Foster Parent Association)

Mission/Purpose

To prepare foster parents and caregivers to become educational advocates for the children and youth in their care.

Target Population

Foster parents, caregivers, kinship care providers, and social workers.

Description

This training encourages and prepares foster parents to become educational advocates for the children and youth in their care. The training focuses on encouraging, preparing, supporting, and empowering foster parents in becoming educational advocates for the foster youth in their care. Additionally, emphasis is placed on the necessary leadership skills that are essential to effectively advocate for the education rights of the youth in foster care who have special needs according to federal, state, and local mandates and laws.

Objectives of the training include:

1. Defining the term “educational advocate”
2. Learning basic advocacy skills
3. Building the capacity to recognize a child’s disability, how it affects the child, and appropriate educational approaches
4. Identifying effective leadership skills for advocacy purposes
5. Learning about resources and tools to support success in their role as the educational advocate
6. Identifying laws enacted by Congress to protect the educational rights of children
7. Better understanding the IEP process and the importance of being an active IEP team member
8. Gaining knowledge on how to measure educational progress and how to write annual goals and objectives for the IEP.

Download from www.nfpainc.org.

Education Specialists/Advocates

Mission/Purpose

To improve the education outcomes of youth in out-of-home care through education case management and education advocacy.

Target Population

K–12 youth in care.

Description

The role of education specialists/advocates may encompass a range of functions. As case managers, they facilitate assessments and service provision, communicate with schools about a youth's needs and progress, help with the maintenance and transfer of education records, collaborate with schools on behavior and academic plans, and assist youth with postsecondary planning. They see that the youth's education rights are protected, and they speak out for the youth's best interests. They also train caregivers, volunteers, and professionals in education advocacy, and they help youth to become their own self-advocates. Finally, they build strong working relationships with schools and other community agencies.

Education specialists/advocates are found in both public and private education and child welfare agencies.

For more information on education specialist programs, e-mail Casey Family Programs at contactus@casey.org.

www.casey.org

Endless Dreams Training and Video

Mission/Purpose

To educate classroom teachers, school administrators, and other staff about the unique needs and academic challenges of youth in out-of-home care in order to improve the education outcomes of these youth.

Target Population

Primarily teachers, administrators, and staff of schools; secondary audiences include court appointed special advocates (CASAs), school counselors, school social workers, and resource families.

Description

The ***Endless Dreams*** curriculum is composed of a video, training materials, and additional resource materials. This program gives trainers a framework for educating school staff members and other professional groups about this important and often overlooked population. Each training session is approximately an hour long, for a total of 10 hours. The 10 modules cover topics from understanding the foster care system to improving the education outcomes of youth in foster and out-of-home care. The ***Endless Dreams*** video is free of charge and can be obtained by e-mailing contactus@casey.org or visiting www.casey.org.

In order to receive a copy of the ***Endless Dreams*** curriculum, interested individuals must first complete a Train the Trainers course that is approximately 6 hours long. There is no charge to complete the Train the Trainers course but perspective trainers must have experience with the foster care system. Several trainings are offered each year throughout the United States. To request notification of trainings in your area, please let us know at contactus@casey.org.

www.casey.org

Foster Youth ePassport

Mission/Purpose

To provide youth with an accessible way to keep track of important health- and education-related records while moving from agency to agency and service to service.

Target Population

Youth who are currently or have been part of the foster care system.

Description

The Foster Youth ePassport is a secure, portable Internet-based health and education data tracking system delivered via Smart Card. ePassport simultaneously updates and manages records in real-time format through a secure patented synchronization technology. It enables individual youth to continuously update and track their personal health and schooling records. Youth data from other database systems are also securely exchanged over the Internet. The information is instantly accessible to the youth and to everyone involved in his or her care.

To learn more, e-mail epassport@communitycollege.org or visit www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/teleconferences/foster_youth_ePassport.pdf.

Foster Youth Services

Mission/Purpose

To improve the outcomes of youth in foster care through the development and implementation of a health and education multi-information system model. This system, a program of the California Department of Education, is designed to further enhance services and the coordination of activities among placement agencies, group homes, schools, and other service providers affecting the lives of youth in foster care.

Target Population

Children and youth in California who live in out-of-home care.

Description

Foster Youth Services (FYS) programs provide support services to children in foster care who suffer the traumatic effects of displacement from family and schools and multiple placements in foster care. FYS programs ensure that health and school records are obtained to establish appropriate placements and coordinate instruction, counseling, tutoring, mentoring, vocational training, emancipation services, training for independent living, and other related services. FYS programs increase the stability of placements for children and youth in care. These services are designed to improve the children's educational performance and personal achievement, directly benefiting them as well as providing long-range cost-savings to the state.

For information about this program, visit the California Department of Education: www.cde.ca.gov/ls/pf/fy.

www.cde.ca.gov/ls/pf/fy

GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs)

Mission/Purpose

To increase the number of low-income and first-generation students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

Target Population

Students, including youth in out-of-home care, who attend middle school and high school in high-poverty areas.

Description

GEAR UP is a discretionary grant program from the U.S. Department of Education. It provides five-year grants to qualifying state agencies and partnerships so these entities can offer mentoring and tutoring services at middle schools and high schools in high-poverty areas. These agencies and partnerships must be committed to serving and accelerating the academic achievement of low-income students through high school graduation.

GEAR UP grantees start providing services to a “cohort” of eligible students no later than seventh grade and follow them through high school graduation. Funds are also provided for college scholarships to low-income students. Typical partnerships combine at least one college or university, one low-income middle school, and two community-based partners. This combination enables them to offer other services such as professional development and often leads to a commitment to projects that can be sustained beyond the term of the grant.

www.ed.gov/programs/gearup

Get SET (Summer and Employment Training)

Mission/Purpose

To provide transitional-skills development for youth in out-of-home care.

Target Population

Youth in out-of-home care, age 13 to 17, in the Yakima and Pasco, Washington areas.

Description

Sponsored by Casey and regional partners, Get SET is a four-week transitional-skills development summer program for teenagers in care. The youth learn to develop work and study skills, develop daily living skills, increase self-sufficiency skills, and use community resources. Participating youth may also choose to spend a portion of each day performing supervised community activities, for which they can earn a daily stipend (the amount depends on the quality of the work skills demonstrated).

Participation in the program is meant to give youth the fundamental skills and confidence to manage regular schoolwork and have good study habits; complete a high school education or pass the GED tests; pursue postsecondary training, if desired; apply for, interview for, and hold down a job; research and access available community resources and agencies, including those that can meet health care, housing, and other needs; and make responsible choices about drugs, alcohol, and sexuality, and know where to go for assistance if needed.

For more information about this program, contact Casey Family Programs Yakima Field Office, 404 North Third Street, Yakima, WA 98901, 509. 457.8197.

www.casey.org

Guardian Scholars Program

Mission/Purpose

To provide scholarship, academic, and personal supports that help qualifying youth formerly in care complete a postsecondary education; pursue a fulfilling, self-supporting career; and become active and socially responsible members of the community.

Target Population

College-bound youth who have emancipated from foster care and who qualify for admission to participating postsecondary institutions.

Description

The Guardian Scholars program began in 1997 with three students. Today, the program has expanded to 20 colleges in California, Washington, Colorado, Indiana, and Massachusetts, serving hundreds of students. The leadership team and program staff are devoted to helping students succeed.

Each scholar receives full tuition and funding for textbooks, supplies, and annual fees. Additionally, the program offers assistance in completing college entrance and financial aid forms; an orientation to university life; year-round, on-campus housing and on-campus student employment; one-to-one counseling, academic advising, peer mentoring, and faculty mentoring; a drop-in study center; assistance with off-campus jobs in a youth's career field; and post-graduation career planning.

For more information contact the California State University, Fullerton, Guardian Scholars Program, guardianscholars@fullerton.edu.

www.fullerton.edu/guardianscholars

It's My Life: Postsecondary Education and Training

Mission/Purpose

To provide a resource for child welfare professionals as they support the needs of youth in out-of-home care as these youth pursue their postsecondary and training goals.

Target Population

Child welfare professionals.

Description

This guide recommends practical strategies and resources to give youth in foster care the secondary education, academic guidance, and support they need to complete postsecondary education or training. The recommendations are based both on the research on access to postsecondary education for underrepresented youth in general and on research and practice with youth in foster care.

The guide is based on 8 specific recommendations:

1. Foster high academic aspirations.
2. Encourage long-term planning for postsecondary education.
3. Stress rigorous academic preparation.
4. Support students in taking standardized tests.
5. Support students in choosing, applying for, and enrolling in postsecondary education.
6. Help students apply for and get adequate financial aid.
7. Engage young adults who have missed out on postsecondary preparation.
8. Help students adjust to and complete their college or training program.

www.casey.org

John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program

Mission/Purpose

To fund state programs that provide independent living services to youth who are or have been in out-of-home care.

Target Population

Youth in long-term out-of-home care (to age 18) and youth formerly in foster care (to age 21).

Description

The John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (also known as the Chafee program or Independent Living/Chafee program) is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, and state child welfare agencies. Funding may be applied to many kinds of education services. For high school students, these services may include tutoring, help with GED completion, computer classes, and help with postsecondary planning. For students in postsecondary education and training, education services may include assistance with tuition and ancillary needs (such as books and fees) and room and board expenses, as well as personal support services needed to remain in a postsecondary program. In some states, Chafee program funds have been used to pay for developing agreements with state colleges and universities for free housing, and for counseling support for former youth in foster care.

For a list of state Independent Living/Chafee program coordinators and comprehensive information on Chafee programs, visit the National Resource Center for Youth Development at www.nrcys.ou.edu.

K–12 School Placement Guide

Mission/Purpose

To provide optimal school placements for youth in out-of-home care, with due consideration for the quality of the schools and the availability of resources to support these placements.

Target Population

All or portions of this guide can be used by social workers, education specialists/advocates, youth, and caregivers for any K–12 youth in out-of-home care.

Description

The *K–12 School Placement Guide* provides a thoughtful protocol for team-based decision making on proposed school placement changes for Casey youth. It outlines a process for holistically evaluating a youth's needs and for judging how well these needs can be met by the current school placement versus the proposed school placement. The guide can be used for assessing any kind of school placement change, such as from public schools to private, alternative, charter, online, or residential schools, or to home school or a GED program. It also accounts for additional factors that influence placement decisions, such as family preferences, financial resources, and agency resources.

The guide includes a checklist for evaluating a youth's academic strengths and needs; personal, social, and cultural needs; and academic and career goals. It also includes checklists for evaluating school quality, programming, and services for public, private, and residential schools, home school programs, and GED programs.

For a free copy, e-mail contactus@casey.org.

Make a Difference in a Child's Life and Toolkit for Change

Mission/Purpose

To teach caregivers and interested parties the skills they need to be effective education advocates for youth in out-of-home care.

Target Population

Foster parents, social workers, teachers, court appointed special advocates (CASAs), and others who are involved in the education of youth in care.

Description

Make a Difference in a Child's Life is a manual on teaching others (or yourself) how to advocate for a youth's education. It covers topics such as basic education rights, special education law, discipline, and resources for young people making the transition to adulthood. It is designed for Washington State. *Toolkit for Change* was created to enable states to adapt the manual to other jurisdictions and as an organizing tool to help create a movement to improve the education outcomes of youth in out-of-home care.

Download the manual at www.teamchild.org. To obtain the toolkit, contact TeamChild at questions@teamchild.org.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Mission/Purpose

To help youth and their families who are experiencing homelessness, and to protect the rights of homeless youth to attend school.

Target Population

All youth who do not have a fixed, regular, and adequate residence. This includes youth who are staying with friends or relatives because they have lost their housing; who are awaiting foster care placement; or who are living in emergency or transitional shelters, motels, domestic violence shelters, campgrounds, inadequate trailer parks, cars, public spaces, abandoned buildings, and bus or train stations.

Description

The federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1997 enables homeless youth (including those awaiting foster care placement) to remain in their school of origin if they wish, and it requires school districts to provide transportation to that school if needed. The act attempts to remove any barriers to a homeless youth's enrollment, attendance, or success in school, such as compulsory residency requirements. It also seeks to enable homeless youth to choose between the local school where they are living, the school they attended before they lost their housing, and the school where they were last enrolled. The underlying intent is to give homeless youth access to the same free, appropriate K–12 public education and services as other youth receive to meet a state's academic achievement standards.

Child welfare professionals working with qualifying youth in out-of-home care may be able to use the provisions of McKinney-Vento to keep a particular youth in his or her home school. Each case should be explored individually with the state's McKinney-Vento coordinator.

For a list of state Coordinators for Education of Homeless Children and Youth: National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 1411 K Street NW, Suite 1400, Washington, DC 20005, (202) 638-2535, www.nlchp.org.

For general information about the act: National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, www.nlchp.org under About NLCHP.

Mythbusting: Breaking Down Confidentiality and Decision-Making Barriers to Meet the Education Needs of Children in Foster Care

Mission/Purpose

To educate individuals involved with the child welfare system on issues of confidentiality and decision making in the context of meeting the education needs of youth in out-of-home care.

Target Population

Individuals involved with the child welfare system, including judges, children's attorneys, parents, youth, caseworkers, and court appointed special advocates (CASAs).

Description

This online publication focuses on meeting the education needs of children in the child welfare system. The goals of the publication are to:

1. Provide context and explain why there is a need to address the education needs of children in foster care.
2. Debunk the myths about confidentiality and decision making.
3. Explain the main federal laws that affect confidentiality of education records and decision making.
4. Suggest strategies to overcome confidentiality and decision-making hurdles when addressing the education needs of children in foster care.

The document can be used in a variety of ways, depending on the audience, level of knowledge, and need. Information for particular audience participants can be accessed as well as specifics on various laws that affect confidentiality and decision making.

Use online, or download from www.abanet.org/child/rclji/education/home.html#11.

National Education Working Group on Foster Care and Education

Mission/Purpose

To ensure successful educational outcomes for children and youth in foster care across the country.

Target Population

Individuals associated with the child welfare system who want to learn more about how national organizations are addressing the educational issues of children and youth in out-of-home care.

Description

The National Education Working Group is a partnership that has grown out of the recognition that only through collaboration can practice, policy, and cultural changes take place that will support educational stability and achievements as priorities in the lives of children and youth in care. The Working Group is committed to heightening awareness of the educational needs of children and youth in care, and to promoting best and promising practices and reforms across the education, child welfare, and court systems.

The goals of this group are to promote:

1. Educational stability for children and youth in foster care
2. Seamless educational transitions for children and youth when education changes do occur
3. High-quality educational experiences, expectations, and aspirations for young people in foster care
4. Greater national attention to the disparate educational outcomes for young people in foster care, particularly youth of color

The group includes members of national organizations that support and focus on the issues of youth in out-of-home care.

www.casey.org

Parent Training and Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers

Mission/Purpose

To provide one-stop access to training, resources, and information on serving the needs of youth with disabilities.

Target Population

Parents and caregivers of children and youth from birth to age 22 who have any kind of disability—physical, mental, learning, emotional, and/or attention deficit disorder—and professionals who work with these children and youth.

Description

The nationwide network of more than 100 Parent Training and Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers (collectively known as Parent Centers) is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and administered nationally by the Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers. The Alliance has one national center (the National Technical Assistance Center in Minneapolis) and six regional centers that maintain information that parents and professionals can use to find the Parent Center nearest them.

Parent Centers offer a wide array of services for caregivers of youth in care who also have disabilities. The centers are usually staffed by parents of children with disabilities or by people with disabilities themselves. The staff members train and inform parents and professionals about raising children with disabilities; assist families in obtaining appropriate education and services for their children with disabilities; resolve problems between families, schools, and other agencies; and connect children with disabilities to community resources. They also provide transition services for older youth with disabilities.

For a list of regional centers that can point you to local Parent Centers: National Technical Assistance Center, contact alliance@taalliance.org.

Person Centered Planning

Mission/Purpose

To enlist people who are important in a youth's life and who can assist him or her in defining and working toward a desirable future.

Target Population

Youth in out-of-home care and all those whom they consider important to helping plan their lives, such as friends, mentors, caretakers, teachers, and employers.

Description

Person Centered Planning (PCP) is an approach that aims to expand the power that youth have to identify valued life choices, and to be supported as they develop problem-solving skills to achieve their personal goals. It was first developed for use with people with disabilities and has since been adapted by professionals working with different populations, including youth who are or have been in out-of-home care.

PCP has a three-phase model of instruction and support: (1) set a goal, (2) take action, and (3) adjust the goal or plan. Each phase presents a problem for the youth to solve by posing and answering a series of questions. Each phase also includes a list of supports that team members can employ to enable the youth to self-direct the planning. The youth is the causal agent for choices, decisions, and actions.

www.ilr.cornell.edu/ped/tsal/pcp/index.html

Possible Selves

Mission/Purpose

To increase the academic motivation of youth in out-of-home care who are struggling to stay interested in their own success.

Target Population

Teachers, social workers, tutors, and others who work with youth age 6 to 22 who are in out-of-home care and losing the motivation to define and achieve their own goals and to do well in life.

Description

The Possible Selves program helps students increase their motivation by thinking about and describing the future as three “possible selves”: their hoped-for possible selves (visions of the self they would very much like to become), their expected possible selves (visions of the self they are fairly sure they will become in the near future), and their feared possible selves (visions of the self they want to avoid becoming).

Through the Possible Selves process, students examine their lives and are challenged to take actions, develop goals, and make plans that will help them become strong, well-balanced human beings.

The Possible Selves program was developed at the University of Kansas, Center for Research on Learning (CRL), in 1998 to supplement the university’s academic strategies for at-risk students. Research with university-level student athletes and middle school students showed that students who went through the Possible Selves program identified significantly more roles they hoped to play in the future than did students who participated in a traditional career-orientation curriculum.

To purchase the manual: Edge Enterprises, Inc., P.O. Box 1304, Lawrence, KS 66044, 877.767.1487

www.ku-crl.edu

PRIDE Education Module: The Foundation for Education Advocacy and Improving Educational Outcomes for Youth in Family Foster Care

Mission/Purpose

To educate foster parents and caregivers around the educational advocacy and supports needs of children and youth in out-of-home care.

Target Population

Foster parents and caregivers.

Description

The PRIDE program is designed to strengthen the quality of family foster care and adoption services by providing a standardized, consistent, structured framework for the competency-based recruitment, preparation, and selection of foster and adoptive parents, and for foster parent inservice training and ongoing professional development.

The education module, to be released in early 2007, was developed by the Children's Welfare League of America (CWLA). The purpose of this Foster PRIDE module is to provide foster parents with the knowledge and skills necessary to improve the educational outcomes for youth in their care and to fulfill tasks performed by education advocates. The work that foster parents and caregivers do to improve educational outcomes for youth in care is related to fulfilling the PRIDE model's competency categories 1 and 2—protecting and nurturing, and meeting children's developmental needs and addressing their developmental delays. The 6-hour inservice training addresses a variety of topics ranging from educational advocacy at IEP meetings to supporting a child's educational success in the home.

www.cwla.org

Sound Partners

Mission/Purpose

To reduce the number of children identified with reading disabilities by supplementing reading instruction to grade-school children.

Target Population

First-graders at highest risk of reading failure, second- and third-graders below their grade level in reading, and students just learning English.

Description

Sound Partners is a phonics-based program that provides one-on-one instruction in early reading skills to students who need it most. Developed by staff from the Washington Research Institute, it is designed to help others teach the early reading skills that most closely predict reading achievement. The program is available to educators, caregivers, tutors, and others who collaborate with school districts; tutoring and literacy programs; social workers; and anyone who can be instrumental in assisting with students' reading in their schools or community.

The program began in 1993 and has been examined extensively for its efficacy with at-risk readers. When Sound Partners staff compared tutored students' scores on literacy measures with a matched group of students who received only regular classroom instruction, data showed that the tutored students significantly outperformed the comparison group on standardized reading, spelling, and decoding measures.

www.wri-edu.org

State Legislation—Foster Care/Education State Legislation (a sampling of states)

California Assembly Bill 490 (Approved 10/12/03—Effective 1/1/2004)

Who is covered

Child supervised by either the county probation or child welfare agency and in, or have been in, relative, kin, foster family, or group home placements.

Right to remain in school of origin

If the child's placement changes, the child has the right to remain in his or her school of origin for the duration of the school year, provided it is in the child's best interest to do so.

Transportation

No mention of who pays for transportation.

Immediate enrollment

When a child in foster care changes schools, the new school must provide for immediate enrollment and attendance even if the child is missing academic and medical records, immunization records, proof of residence, or school uniform or fees or materials that are owed to the prior school.

Expedited record transfers

County placing agency shall notify school immediately with date when student is leaving and request for transfer; local school shall then, within two days, transfer pupil and deliver records (including determination of seat time, full or partial credits earned, classes, grades, immunizations, and IEP); new school shall contact last school attended to obtain records within two days of request for enrollment.

Designated staff resource

Requires each local educational agency to designate a staff person as the educational liaison for foster children.

Other

No lowering of grades for time out of school resulting from a new placement or time in court. Requires school to accept full or partial credit for coursework completed, including in a nonpublic institution. Decision regarding placement should take into account proximity to child's school attendance area in order to promote educational stability.

www.acfya.org/documents/e-mail-AB490QuestionsAnswers/pdf

Additional information about AB 490 can be found at www.clcla.org.

Delaware 14 Del. C. 202 c HB279 (Released 6/22/2005—Effective 7/7/2005)**Who is covered**

Includes all children in foster care in definition of “awaiting foster care placement” (children in the care and custody of the child welfare agency who are in foster care).

Right to remain in school of origin

Same as for McKinney-Vento (see McKinney-Vento).

Transportation

Same as for McKinney-Vento (see McKinney-Vento).

Immediate enrollment

Same as for McKinney-Vento (see McKinney-Vento).

Expedited record transfers

Same as for McKinney-Vento (see McKinney-Vento).

Designated staff resource

Same as for McKinney-Vento (see McKinney-Vento).

See McKinney-Vento overview: www.naehcy.org/EdRightsforLEAs.pdf.

Oregon HB 3075 (Approved 7/15/2005—Effective 7/1/2005)

Who is covered

Child placed by public or private agency in substitute care program.

Right to remain in school or origin: Yes, if determined by juvenile court to be in the child's best interest to do so. Student may continue in that school through the highest grade level in that school.

Transportation

Child welfare agency (only when funds have been designated for this purpose) responsible for providing the child with transportation to and from school when the need for transportation is due to the placement by the public agency.

Immediate enrollment

No provision.

Expedited record transfers

For student in substitute care programs, new school shall request records from old school within 5 days of student seeking initial enrollment; old school shall transfer records no later than 5 days after receipt of the request (for other students, the requirement is 10 days for requests and for transfers).

Designated staff resource

None.

jrplaw.org/legvictory.htm

State Tuition Waivers

Mission/Purpose

To expand the opportunity for emancipated youth in care to attend publicly funded higher education institutions by waiving certain costs.

Target Population

Youth who have aged out of out-of-home care.

Description

State tuition waivers enable qualifying youth to attend publicly funded postsecondary schools by waiving tuition and fees according to certain criteria. The terms and conditions for using the tuition waivers—such as eligibility requirements, the number of school terms funded, and the process for accessing the waivers—vary by state. For instance, some states permit tuition waivers for all publicly funded higher education institutions in the state, while others allow them only for select schools. Some states allow a youth to attend a school in any state, while others limit the attendance to the youth's home state.

Note

In lieu of tuition waivers, several states offer scholarships for youth who have been in out-of-home care. These states include Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Washington, and Wisconsin. The National Resource Center for Youth Development also has information online about these scholarships.

For current state tuition waiver or state scholarship information: National Resource Center for Youth Development, www.nrcys.ou.edu.

Strategic Tutoring Program

Mission/Purpose

To provide a customizable education support program for at-risk youth.

Target Population

This program is most effective for youth who can read at the fourth-grade or higher level. However, with accommodations, youth at lower reading levels will find its methods quite effective.

Description

The Strategic Tutoring Program includes training, resources, technical assistance, and support so that social workers, education specialists, resource families, and tutors can provide effective tutorial support to youth.

The program's primary focus is to teach skills and strategies that support learner independence. Its instructional methods are based on more than 25 years of research conducted at the University of Kansas, Center for Research on Learning (CRL), which focuses on teaching learning strategies to academically underprepared students.

Program tutors fulfill many roles. Specifically, they help students complete the assignment at hand while ensuring that they understand the information to be learned. They teach the students effective strategies for completing similar assignments in the future. Finally, they develop a trusting, mentoring relationship with each student as a means of encouraging the student to put forth the effort required to be academically successful. This is particularly critical for youth in out-of-home care, who often face personal, social, academic, or transitional challenges.

To purchase the manual: Edge Enterprises, Inc., P.O. Box 1304, Lawrence, KS 66044, 877.767.1487

www.ku-crl.org

Summer Bridge Programs

Mission/Purpose

To provide an on-campus academic and residential experience designed to prepare new students for successful transition to college.

Target Population

Students who are from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.

Description

Summer bridge programs are designed to provide assistance to individuals entering college in the fall. The focus of programs varies depending on the specific program mission and goals. The main thrust of the program is to retain these new populations within higher education and to provide them an equal footing with other students.

Program activities range from academic support for reading, writing, and mathematics to study skills such as time management, individual learning style, study strategies, and expectations for college work. Since students in summer bridge programs are often first-generation college students, a section on the goals of a liberal arts education or general education and discussions about college life is included.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

Mission/Purpose

To provide financial supports and work opportunities to needy families, thereby enabling them to obtain gainful employment and move out of poverty.

Target Population

Low-income families, as defined by each state's implementation of the program. Note: Many youth who emancipate from foster care at age 18 and are pregnant or have children may fall into this category; kinship care families may also qualify.

Description

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) is a federal program of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance. It provides federal funds to states for assistance to low-income families, and it grants states wide flexibility in developing their own TANF welfare programs. A primary purpose of the program is to fund education and training opportunities that will improve wages and working conditions for low-income families. The Workforce Strategy Center and the Center for Law and Social Policy have both pointed out that TANF can be a significant source of funding to promote education and career development for youth, including youth in out-of-home care and emancipated youth who are pregnant or who have children.

For information on your state's TANF programs: Use the resource below to find the name of the TANF program and your state's social services administrator, then see your state's Department of Human Services or Department of Social Services.

www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/

Treehouse

Mission/Purpose

To help youth in out-of-home care attain self-esteem, confidence, and their fullest potential through supplemental enrichment and educational programs.

Target Population

Abused and neglected youth living in King County, Washington

Description

Treehouse is a privately funded child welfare agency dedicated to providing enrichment and education services to youth who have open case files in the Washington State Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Treehouse's three education programs are Treehouse Tutoring, Educational Advocacy, and Coaching-to-College.

The Treehouse Tutoring program provides one-on-one educational assistance for students whose academic performance, due to their life circumstances, is far below that of their peers.

In the Educational Advocacy program, education advocates work with DCFS social workers, foster parents, and school staff on academic challenges facing specific youth, including attendance issues, behavior and discipline problems, special education needs, and other obstacles to school success. Advocates provide classroom training to foster parents and social workers in addition to individual advocacy coaching for youth.

The Coaching-to-College program matches trained volunteer coaches with youth to help them achieve their postsecondary goals. Youth work to identify their education objectives, break those objectives into benchmarks, enroll in school, and begin the work of reaching their dreams.

www.treehouseforkids.org

TRIO Programs

Mission/Purpose

To increase enrollment and graduation from undergraduate and graduate-level programs by youth from low-income backgrounds by providing postsecondary educational opportunities regardless of race, ethnic background, or economic circumstances.

Target Population

Low-income Americans age 11 to 27. Specific age and background criteria vary by program.

Description

The seven federal TRIO programs are educational opportunity and outreach programs that motivate and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO programs provide:

- *Talent Search*, which assists youth in grades 6 through 12 with college selection and application
- *Upward Bound*, which prepares youth for higher education through summer and weekend programs on college campuses
- *Upward Bound Math/Science*, which focuses on strengthening math and science skills
- *Student Support Services*, which provide tutoring, counseling, and remedial instruction to low-income students, including students with disabilities, to help them stay in college and complete their degrees
- *Educational Opportunity Centers*, which help displaced and underemployed workers apply for college and financial aid
- *Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement*, which provides research opportunities and faculty mentoring to low-income and minority students

For more information, contact the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, at OPE_TRIO@ed.gov.

www.ed.gov

Tutor Connection

Mission/Purpose

To provide education supports to youth who are, or have been, in out-of-home care, and to educate future teachers about their unique needs.

Target Population

Postsecondary colleges of education that will commit to educating their education students about the needs of students in foster care and to supporting youth in out-of-home care.

Description

Tutor Connection is a collaborative program offered as a Community Service course at California State University at San Marcos (CSUSM) College of Education. The program is intended to change the way future educators see and understand the issues surrounding youth in out-of-home care, and to provide tools for helping these future teachers competently address the youth's education needs. This program is administrated by San Diego County Office of Education, Foster Youth Services (SDCOE, FYS) in collaboration with CSUSM, San Diego County Health and Human Services, Child Welfare Services, and supported by Casey Family Programs' San Diego Field office.

To accomplish the dual goals of the program, a SDCOE, FYS project supervisor and FYS education liaison provide a supplemental curriculum as part of a Diversity in Education course, which is a prerequisite for entrance into CSUSM's Teacher Credential Program. The curriculum covers topics such as child welfare issues; the impact of trauma, child abuse, and neglect on educational success; the need for professional boundaries; educational and behavioral interventions; and learning disabilities. The CSUSM students are then expected to apply this knowledge by participating in a community service project in which they provide one-on-one tutoring to a youth in foster care for one semester.

Participating education students are given a pre- and post-training Child Welfare Knowledge Questionnaire about their self-perceived knowledge of the child welfare system and issues pertaining to youth in out-of-home care. Extensive analysis of these questionnaires shows a statistically significant increase in their knowledge about the child welfare system, which can lead to better education service for youth in care. To date, over 1,000 pre-teachers have completed this program.

For more information, contact the San Diego County Office of Education, Foster Youth Services (858) 503-2620.

www.sdcoe.net/students/ss/fys.asp

vMentor Program

Mission/Purpose

To provide safe, effective online college and career mentoring and personal support to youth emancipating from out-of-home care that will enable them to complete postsecondary education and/or successfully move into adulthood.

Target Population

Youth in care, age 16 to 22, who either are receiving a scholarship from the Orphan Foundation of America or are in an Independent Living/Chafee program

Description

Sponsored by the Orphan Foundation of America (OFA), the vMentor Program is a national online mentoring program that provides youth in care with personal support and academic and career guidance through their college years. It is available through OFA scholarship programs (including the Casey Family Scholars Program of the Orphan Foundation of America) or through a state Independent Living/Chafee program that has contracted with OFA to provide an online mentoring component for their youth, whether or not these youth are in a postsecondary program.

Mentors are carefully screened, trained, and matched with youth according to mutual career and personal interests. They work with youth on goal setting, strategies for success in the workplace and in school, time management, and other career-related skills. Mentors are selected from all walks of life and make a one- to two-year commitment to the program. All mentoring is done online using a secure portal, and all communication is monitored to ensure participant safety.

For more information, e-mail vMentor@orphan.org.

www.orphan.org

Workforce Investment Act

Mission/Purpose

To provide a framework for a national workforce preparation and employment system that meets the needs of businesses, job seekers, and those wishing to further their careers.

Target Population

Adults, dislocated workers, and teenage youth to age 21 who are low-income and/or face specific barriers to high school completion and employment. Foster care status is named as a barrier.

Description

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) provides federal funding to states for educational and occupational training for youth and adults who face barriers to completing their education and entering the workforce. WIA-funded youth services prepare qualifying low-income youth for postsecondary education and/or employment. Youth in out-of-home care are specifically listed as potentially eligible youth. Services can include paid and unpaid work experience, summer jobs, occupational skills training, and tutoring. One form of WIA funding is the Youth Opportunity Grant. These grants offer resources to programs in high-poverty areas in Empowerment Zones/Enterprise Communities, tribal reservations, and other areas, with all youth in the area eligible for the program's services.

Local and state agencies distributing WIA funds go under a variety of names, including Workforce Investment Boards, Employment Consortiums, and Private Industry Councils. To find the WIA agencies in your state, go to the U.S. Department of Labor's search site, www.dol.gov/dol/location.htm.



Section 3

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Handouts and Checklists

Things Teachers Can Do to Support Good Educational Outcomes for Students in Out-of-Home Care

Know why children are placed in out-of-home care

- Sometimes children and youth in care feel that educators believe they are in out-of-home care because they have done something wrong. In fact, children in foster care are there because of events beyond their control.

Connect with child welfare staff

- Find out which students are living with foster or adoptive families, kinship caregivers, or in group living arrangements.
- Seek appropriate support from school administrators. Take the initiative to learn and then share information with administrators and school counselors about out-of-home care in general and the agency associated with your school district.
- Get clarity on what can and cannot be disclosed by child welfare staff. Stay focused on what you need to know to help the student in school, and get what information you can within the limits of confidentiality.
- Build your relationships with child welfare staff over time; learn from them about the system that they work in and how it can mesh with the one you work in.

Explore the student's academic history

- Contact the student's former teachers and school to find out about academic status, strengths, challenges, and history. Help ensure that school records are delivered to your school in a timely fashion.

- Be aware that each move a student is forced to make can delay academic progress by months, that many children and youth in foster care have a harder time learning because of their experiences, and that they may have been in educational settings in which they were not supported well because they were seen as transient students bound to be moved again.
- Invite the resource parents, foster parents, kinship caregivers, adoptive parents, etc., to work with you in assessing the student's current level of achievement and setting reasonable goals for the academic year.

In the classroom

- Be aware that children and youth in care generally tend not to perform as well in school as others. About 30 to 40 percent of kids in foster care are also in special education, so your student may already have an IEP or may need one. While the student may have a learning disability due to poorer maternal health during pregnancy or prenatal exposure to drugs and alcohol, the enormous emotional burdens of grief, loss, and uncertainty about the future can also impair a child's ability to concentrate, learn, and acquire new skills.
- Determine the student's academic, social, and emotional level, and then find ways to help him or her fit into the class by using accommodations and adaptations to support educational success.
- Respect the child's right to privacy. Students and teachers who do not have responsibility for teaching the child do not need to know his or her foster care status.
- Structure materials and tasks in the classroom to help the student achieve success, even if academics are a problem. Help offset the chaos in the student's life by providing structure and predictability in the classroom.
- Broaden the diversity of families depicted in the books and materials in your classroom to include foster, adoptive, and kinship caregiving families.
- Keep in mind that a child or youth in out-of-home care or one who has been adopted may not be able to complete certain assignments. For example, constructing a family tree or bringing in a baby picture can be impossible for a child who has been frequently and suddenly

moved or has little contact with his or her birth family. Similarly, getting permission for a special activity such as a field trip can be problematic when the current caregivers do not have legal authority to give permission.

- Consider doing a unit on foster care during May. A list of books about foster care and adoption is available on the National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning site at www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/support-and-retention/books-on-foster-care-and-adoption.html along with a section on Educational Issues and Children in Care at www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/support-and-retention/education.html.

Your relationship with the child and family

- Like other students, a child or youth in foster care does not want to be treated differently, but he or she also needs to be accommodated. Strive to ensure that the student does not feel exposed as a special case as he or she does in so many other settings. At the same time, be lenient when circumstances warrant it.
- Remember that many children and youth in foster care find it difficult to trust adults, often for good reason. Recognize your own status as a potential disappointment and work to achieve a trusting relationship over time. Behavior and attitudes intended to be caring can appear just the opposite when they have been experienced in a negative context in the past. Be patient.
- Some teachers may feel challenged by highly involved resource parents who advocate very strongly for the student. Remember that these children and youth need someone who is on their side, even if that person seems over-involved. Try to work with the energy the parents bring to their child's academic life.
- What children and youth in foster care need are strong advocates in the schools. Educators, resource parents, agency staff, and birth families can all contribute to school success when they understand the challenges and have the opportunity to collaborate in providing support to these students.

www.fostercaremonth.org

Quality Assurance Standards and Program Recommendations for Tutoring and Mentoring

Recommendations for Tutoring Programs

Tutoring goals

- Tutoring goals should be developed jointly by the youth, tutor, caregiver, social worker, and education specialist. Goals should be stated clearly, in writing, and understood by all.
- The goals should clearly state whether the tutoring will focus on skill development, support for homework, or both.

Tutor qualifications and screening

- All tutors should have teaching credentials. The exception to this may be noncertified teachers with experience teaching in independent schools or qualified individuals with subject-matter expertise in a content area where it is difficult to find tutors (e.g., an engineer might tutor higher-level math).
- All tutors should have criminal background checks and child abuse registry checks. If the tutor has lived in other states, an FBI national criminal background check may also be recommended.
- All tutors should have personal and professional references that are checked by the social worker and/or education specialist.

Tutor orientation and training

- Prior to working with the youth, the tutor should meet with the youth's social worker, the education specialist, and possibly the caregiver for orientation. The orientation should include:
 - Information on the program and the role of the social worker, education specialist, and caregiver
 - A brief overview of the foster care system and the academic and emotional issues facing youth in foster care
 - Relevant educational assessment data on the youth
 - Relevant background information on the youth, within the bounds of confidentiality

- Information on maintaining appropriate boundaries
- Guidelines on transporting the youth
- Child abuse/neglect reporting requirements
- Guidelines regarding physical discipline
- Expectations regarding communication with family, schools, education specialists, and social workers
- Training should be provided to tutors annually for purposes of updating instructional skills and giving tutors the opportunity to network with each other.
- If possible, gatherings should be arranged for tutors to discuss their experiences and share with each other.

Communication

- Tutors are expected to maintain close communication with the youth's teachers. Frequency of contact depends upon the needs of the student.
- Tutors may be asked to attend Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, meetings with teachers and counselors, and school conferences.
- Tutors may be asked to attend case staffing meetings at field offices for the youth(s) they tutor.
- Tutors should have a point of contact at the field office—either the education specialist or the youth's social worker—and should keep that person informed of any problems that arise.
- Tutors should maintain regular communication with parents about the youth's progress and any home support the youth may need for academics.
- Education specialists should have contact with the tutor by phone or in person at least once per month.
- Youth are expected to inform the tutor of school assignments.

Best practices

- Instructional approaches used by the tutors should reflect research-based best practices.
- Education specialists should take responsibility for providing training in best practices and working with the tutors on instructional plans.

Tutoring setting

- Tutoring may take place in a variety of settings, such as the youth's school, the youth's home, the tutor's home, the field office, a public library, or a community center. It is important that the setting be free of distractions and conducive to concentration and productivity.
- School-based tutoring is often preferable because it facilitates communication among youth, teacher, and tutor.

Evaluation

- When tutoring is initiated, baseline data related to the tutoring goals should be available. This could be obtained from both formal and informal assessment.
- Tutors should conduct ongoing, formative assessments of student progress toward tutoring goals.
- Youth should be involved in self-assessments and in recording their progress.
- At the end of the school year or at the end of the tutoring, a final assessment should be done.

Recommendations for Mentoring Programs

These recommendations were adapted from the National Mentoring Center. See **Recommended Mentoring Resources** on page 156 for contact information.

Mentor screening

Mentor screening procedures should be reviewed by legal and risk management staff of the operating programs. Comprehensive, rigorous screening includes:

- A written application
- Three references and reference checks
- An in-person interview
- Observation during training, with the option of rejecting the applicant at the end of training
- A criminal records check, driver's record check, and child abuse registry check. If the applicant has lived out of state, a national criminal records check should be done.
- A clear explanation, for the applicant, of the program's expectations in terms of time, activities, and progress reports
- A consent form signed by the applicant, giving permission for local, state, and federal records checks
- Proof of valid driver's license and automobile insurance
- Established criteria for factors in an applicant's background that would automatically disqualify him or her

Screening materials to be adapted or developed include the following:

- Mentor job description
- Application form
- Interview form
- Consent form
- Screening summary form

Matching strategy

Match mentor and youth according to interests. (Research shows a correlation between similar interests and successful matches.)

Mentoring agreement

Both mentor and youth should sign an agreement consenting to the program's expectations. Mentor expectations to be covered include the following:

- Reporting and confidentiality requirements
- Guidelines for taking youth on overnight trips and to the mentor's home
- Guidelines for appropriate conduct in the presence of the youth
- Expectations for training attendance, contact with youth and staff, and duration of the mentoring relationship
- Guidelines on gifts, transportation, and safety for activities
- Compensation guidelines
- Agreement to refrain from imposing religious or political beliefs on youth

Mentor training

A minimum of 8 hours of initial training should be required of mentors.

Key training elements include:

- Program goals and role description
- Information on developmental stages of youth
- As necessary, information on working with youth who have ADHD or learning disabilities
- Information on characteristics of effective mentors
- Cultural awareness and diversity training
- Communication skills
- General information on attachment and loss issues and accompanying emotional problems of youth in foster care, birth family issues, and transition issues for older youth in foster care
- Strategies for building trust with youth in foster care
- Information on confidentiality, liability issues, and reporting requirements
- Crisis management

- Boundary issues
- Skills training related to type of mentoring, e.g., independent living skills and self-advocacy
- Within the bounds of confidentiality, relevant background information on the youth

Duration of mentoring relationship

Mentors should commit to a relationship of at least one year. Relationships of less than three months should be avoided.

Characteristics of mentoring relationship

Mentors should focus first on the development of trust as the core of the relationship with the youth. Mentors should avoid an authoritarian approach. Other characteristics of effective mentors include:

- Consistency and dependability
- Respect for the youth's viewpoint
- Paying attention to the youth's need for fun
- Getting to know the youth's family but avoiding too much involvement
- Seeking and using the program support

Mentor supervision

All mentors should receive regular, ongoing support and supervision from a staff person—either the youth's social worker or another individual who is designated to supervise the mentoring programs. Supervision should include weekly contact the first month of a match and monthly contact thereafter, in addition to written monthly reports from the mentor. The supervisor should also receive regular (at least monthly) feedback from the youth, foster parents, and the social worker (assuming that the social worker is not the mentor's supervisor). In addition, supervision should include the following:

- A system for notifying the mentor of significant changes in the child's life
- A tracking system for managing supervision information
- Mentor training in identifying progress toward mentoring goals

- A process for managing interpersonal problems, termination of the relationship, and other such issues

Youth recruitment and orientation

All participation in mentoring should be voluntary. The program should be explained to youth in a positive, nonstigmatizing way.

Risk management

Mentor program guidelines should be reviewed by a program's legal and risk management staff. Staff also need to be aware of the applicable legal requirements of their own state.

Program evaluation

A supervisor should evaluate the relationship every three to six months, looking at these factors:

- Progress toward mentoring goals
- Degree of satisfaction expressed by the youth, foster parent, and mentor

Content and focus of mentoring activities

Depending on the goal of the relationship and the age of the youth, a variety of mentoring activities will be appropriate. Mentors should receive some guidance on appropriate recreational, cultural, and transition activities.

Recommended mentoring resources

- National Mentoring Center, part of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 503.275.9515, www.nwrel.org/mentoring
- National Mentoring Partnership, www.mentoring.org

Indicators of Systems Change for Improving Educational Outcomes for Youth in Out-of-Home Care School Systems

Dimension	Expected Policy Change	Expected Procedural Change <i>What procedures need to change or be implemented?</i>	Expected Practice Change <i>How can we see evidence of the change when visiting a district or building?</i>
Belief	<p>Indicator: Staff must be aware of the characteristics and needs of youth in out-of-home care and the impact of the out-of-home experience as a unique part of the diversity of the school's population.</p> <p>Evidence: Statement is written in policy manual or district documents.</p>		
Identification	<p>Indicator: Staff needs to establish a system with the state social service agency to identify youth who are enrolled in school and either are or have been in out-of-home care.</p> <p>Evidence: Statement is written in policy manual or district documents.</p>		

<p>Communication</p>	<p>Indicator: Staff needs to communicate regularly to ensure the educational participation and progress of youth who have experienced out-of-home care.</p> <p>Evidence: Statement is written in policy manual or district documents.</p>		
<p>Social Skills and Self-Advocacy</p>	<p>Indicator: Youth who have experienced out-of-home care sometimes need to be taught a specific social skills curriculum as well as to be involved in planning and implementing plans to ensure their educational and transition success.</p> <p>Evidence: Staff researches the type of curriculum and programs that work best for youth who have experienced out-of-home care.</p>		
<p>Referral</p>	<p>Indicator: Staff will refer youth in out-of-home care for services when there is evidence that they are not making expected educational progress.</p> <p>Evidence: Districts have a current list of agencies and foundations that support youth who have experienced out-of-home care.</p>		

<p>Support Services</p>	<p>Indicator: Educational supports beyond those typically provided during the school day should be provided to youth in out-of-home care when additional support is needed to ensure educational participation and progress.</p> <p>Evidence: Staff referrals are made for students to school-based and beyond-school-day programs.</p>		
<p>Collaboration</p>	<p>Indicator: Staff needs to collaborate with social and judicial agencies and groups outside of the school to ensure the educational success of youth who have experienced out-of-home care.</p> <p>Evidence: Statement is written in policy manual or district documents.</p>		
<p>Curriculum and Instruction</p>	<p>Indicator: Staff needs to be sensitive to the needs of youth in out-of-home care in ways that increase learning.</p> <p>Evidence: Staff researches the type of curriculum and programs that work best for youth in care.</p>		

<p>Family Interaction and Training</p>	<p>Indicator: Staff must build strong relationships with families involved with youth who have experienced out-of-home care.</p> <p>Evidence: A key person is identified by the district to families of youth who have experienced out-of-home care to identify appropriate schools and programs.</p>		
<p>Education Evaluation</p>	<p>Indicator: Staff must develop evaluation procedures for the educational success of youth who have experienced out-of-home care.</p> <p>Evidence: Specific evidence for all of the indicators is evaluated for policy, procedures, and practice.</p>		

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Educational Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster and Out-of-Home Care

For the over 800,000 children and youth served in foster care each year in the United States, educational success is a potential positive counterweight to abuse, neglect, separation, and impermanence. Positive school experiences enhance their well-being, help them make more successful transitions to adulthood, and increase their chances for personal fulfillment and economic self-sufficiency, as well as their ability to contribute to society.

Unfortunately, the educational outcomes for children and youth in foster care are dismal. As this current research summary reveals, young people in foster care are in educational crisis. However, the paucity of research on this subject (particularly data from national sources) is problematic in leading efforts for change. And change leading to their educational success is imperative—as well as the responsibility of us all.

SCHOOL PLACEMENT STABILITY

School mobility rates

- Children and youth have an average of one to two placement changes per year while in out-of-home care.⁶⁰
- A 2001 study of more than 4,500 children and youth in foster care in Washington State found that at both the elementary and secondary levels, twice as many youth in foster care as youth not in care had changed schools during the year.⁶¹
- In a New York study of 70 children and youth in foster care, more than 75% did not remain in their school once they were placed in foster care, and almost 65% had been transferred in the middle of the school year.⁶²
- A three-state study of youth aging out of care (the Midwest Study) by Chapin Hall revealed substantial levels of school mobility associated with placement in out-of-home care. Over one-third of young adults reported having had five or more school changes.⁶³

⁶⁰ National AFCARRS data, 2002.

⁶¹ Burley & Halpern, 2001, p. 1.

⁶² Advocates for Children of New York, Inc., 2000, p. 5.

⁶³ Courtney et al., 2004, p. 42.

- School mobility rates are highest for those entering care for the first time. According to another Chapin Hall study of almost 16,000 children and youth in the Chicago Public School system, over two-thirds switched schools shortly after their initial placement.⁶⁴

Effect of mobility

- A 1996 study of students in Chicago Public Schools found that students who had changed schools four or more times had lost approximately one year of educational growth by their sixth year.⁶⁵
- A 1999 study found that California high school students who changed schools even once were less than half as likely to graduate as those who did not change schools, even when controlling for other variables that affect high school completion.⁶⁶
- In a national study of 1,087 alumni from foster care, youth who had had one fewer placement change per year were almost twice as likely to graduate from high school before leaving care.⁶⁷
- In the New York study, 42% of the children and youth did not begin school immediately upon entering foster care. Nearly half of these young people said that they were kept out of school because of lost or misplaced school records.⁶⁸

Suspensions/Expulsions

- 66.8% of youth in out-of-home care in the Midwest Study had been suspended at least once from school (compared to a national sample of 27.8%). About one-sixth (16.5%) had been expelled compared with 4.6% of the national sample.⁶⁹

ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

Test scores

- The 2001 Washington State study found that children and youth in foster care attending public schools scored 16 to 20 percentile points below non-foster youth in statewide standardized tests at grades 3, 6, and 9.⁷⁰

64 Smithgall et al., 2004, p. 46.

65 Kerbow, 1996, p. 20.66 Rumberger et al., 1999, p. 37.

67 Pecora et al., 2003, p. 44.

68 Advocates for Children of New York, Inc., 2000, p. 4.

69 Courtney et al., 2004, p. 42.

70 Burley & Halpern, 2001, p. 13.

- Youth in foster care in the Midwest Study, interviewed primarily after completing 10th or 11th grade, on average read at only a 7th-grade level. Approximately 44% read at high school level or higher. Few excelled in academic subjects, especially relative to a comparable national sample. Less than one in five received an “A” in English, math, history, or science.⁷¹
- Chapin Hall’s research on Chicago Public School children and youth in out-of-home care indicates they lag at least half a school year behind demographically similar students in the same schools. (There is an overall achievement gap of upwards of one year. However, some of this is attributed to the low-performing schools that many of them attend). Almost 50% of 3rd- to 8th-grade students in out-of-home care scored in the bottom quartile on the reading section of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) test.⁷²

Grade retention/Old for grade

- In the Washington State study, twice as many youth in foster care at both the elementary and secondary levels repeated a grade compared to youth not in care.⁷³
- Nearly 45% of youth in care in the New York State study reported being retained at least once in school.⁷⁴
- In the Midwest Study, 37.2% of youth in foster care (compared with 21.5% of a comparable national sample) reported repeating a grade.⁷⁵
- Chicago Public School students in out-of-home care were almost twice as likely as other students to be old for their grade, by at least a year, even after demographic factors were taken into account and comparisons made to other students attending the same schools.⁷⁶

71 Copurtney et al., 2004, pp. 43, 45.

72 Smithgall et al., 2004, pp. 14, 17.

73 Burley & Halpern, 2001, p. 1.

74 Advocates for Children of New York, Inc., 2000, p. 45.

75 Courtney et al., 2004, p. 42.

76 Smithgall et al. 2004, p. 22.

SPECIAL EDUCATION ISSUES

Number of youth in special education

- Numerous studies indicate anywhere between one-quarter and almost one-half (23%–47%) of children and youth in out-of-home care in the U.S. receive special education services at some point in their schooling.⁷⁷
- At both the elementary and secondary levels, more than twice as many youth in foster care as youth not in care in the Washington State study had enrolled in special education programs.⁷⁸
- Nearly half of the youth in foster care in the Midwest Study had been placed in special education at least once during the course of their education.⁷⁹
- Chicago Public School students in out-of-home care between 6th and 8th grades were classified as eligible for special education nearly three times more frequently than other students.⁸⁰

Advocacy regarding services

In research done in 2000 by Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.:

- 90% of biological parents surveyed did not participate in any special education processes concerning their child.⁸¹
- 60% of caseworkers/social workers surveyed “were not aware of existing laws when referring children to special education” and over 50% said “that their clients did not receive appropriate services very often while in foster care.”⁸²
- A 1990 study in Oregon found that children who had multiple placements and who needed special education were less likely to receive those services than children in more stable placements. In that same study, 39% of children in foster care had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 16% received special education services.⁸³

77 Courtney et al., 2004 (47% of 732); Smithgall et al., 2004 (45% of 1,216 6th–8th graders); Burley and Halpern, 2001 (23% of 1,423 3rd graders, 29% of 1,539 6th graders, 24% of 1,597 9th graders); Choice et al., 2001 (36% of 303); Advocates for Children of New York, Inc., 2000 (30% of 70); Zanghi, 1999 (41% of 134); Jones et al., 1998 (23% of 249); Goerge et al., 1992 (29.1% of 14,714).

78 Burley & Halpern, 2001, p. 16.

79 Courtney, et al., 2004, p. 40.

80 Smithgall et al., 2004, p. 58.

81 Advocates for Children of New York, Inc., 2000, p. 6.

82 Advocates for Children of New York, Inc., 2000, p. 6.

83 White, 1990, cited in Burley & Halpern, 2001, p. 8.

- A 2001 Bay Area study of over 300 foster parents found that “missing information from prior schools increased the odds of enrollment delays by 6.5 times.”⁸⁴

SOCIAL BEHAVIORAL ISSUES

Mental health

- In a recent study of alumni from foster care in Oregon and Washington (Northwest Alumni Study), 54.4% of alumni had had one or more mental health disorders in the past 12 months, such as depression, social phobia, or panic syndrome (compared with 22.1% of general population).⁸⁵
- In the same study, 25.2% had had post-traumatic stress disorder within the past 12 months (compared with 4.0% of general population), which is twice the rate of U.S. war veterans.⁸⁶

Social-behavioral

- Several studies have found that children and youth in foster care are significantly more likely to have school behavior problems and that they have higher rates of suspensions and expulsions from school.⁸⁷
- Recent research in Chicago confirmed previous statewide research findings that children in foster care are significantly more likely than children in the general population to have a special education classification of an emotional or behavioral disturbance.⁸⁸
- In the Midwest Study, by about 19 years of age, almost half of the young women had been pregnant, a significantly higher percentage than the 20% in a comparative national sample.⁸⁹

84 Choice et al., 2001, p. 44.

85 Pecora et al., 2005, p. 34.

86 Pecora et al., 2005, p. 34.

87 Courtney, et al., 2004, pg. 42; Barber & Delfabbro, 2003, pp. 6, 7; McMillen et al., 2003, p. 475; Zima et al., 2000, pp. 98, 99.

88 Goerge et al., 1992, p. 3; Smithgall et al., 2004, p. 58.

89 Courtney et al., 2005, p. 54.

HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES

High school completion rates/Drop-out rates

- A recent report by the EPE Research Center indicates that the nationwide high school completion rate for all students is 70%. More are lost in 9th grade than in any other grade (9th: 35%; 10th: 28%; 11th: 20%; 12th: 17%).⁹⁰
- In the Washington State study, 59% of youth in foster care who were enrolled in 11th grade completed high school by the end of 12th grade.⁹¹
- The young adults in the Northwest Alumni Study completed high school (via diploma or GED) at 84.8%, which is close to the general population rate of 87.3%.⁹²
- Over one-third of the young people in the Midwest Study had received neither a high school diploma nor a GED by age 19, compared to fewer than 10% of their same-age peers in a comparable national sample.⁹³
- A national study in 1994 of young adults who had been discharged from foster care found that 54% had completed high school.⁹⁴
- In the Chapin Hall study of Chicago Public School youth, 15-year-old students in out-of-home care were about half as likely as other students to have graduated 5 years later, with significantly higher percentages of students in care having dropped out (55%) or been incarcerated (10%).⁹⁵

Factors contributing to dropping out

- Multiple studies on the issue suggest that retention significantly increases the likelihood of dropping out.⁹⁶ For example, one study found that being retained even once between 1st and 8th grade makes a student four times more likely to drop out than a classmate who was never held back, even after controlling for multiple factors.⁹⁷

90 EPE Research Center, 2006.

91 Burley & Halpern, 2001, p. 1.

92 Pecora et al., 2005, p. 35.

93 Courtney et al., 2005, p. 22.

94 Cook, 1994, p. 218.

95 Smithgall et al., 2004, p. 28.

96 Studies quoted in Rumberger, 2000, p. 14.

97 Rumberger, 1995, p. 601.

- The recent report by the EPE Research Center indicates that repeating a grade, changing schools, and behavior problems are among the host of signals that a student is likely to leave school without a traditional diploma.⁹⁸
- The book, *Drop Outs in America*, also suggests the following students are at-risk for dropping out: students of color, students who have been held back, students who are older than others in their grade, and English-language learners.⁹⁹

POSTSECONDARY ENTRANCE/COMPLETION RATES

Postsecondary entrance/Completion rates

The Northwest Alumni Study found that of the foster care alumni included in the research¹⁰⁰:

- 42.7% completed some education beyond high school.
- 20.6% completed any degree/certificate beyond high school
- 16.1% completed a vocational degree (21.9% among those age 25 or older).
- 1.8% completed a bachelor's degree (2.7% among those age 25 or older); (24% is the completion rate among the general population of same age).
- Recent longitudinal data (from the general population) suggests that 39% of students who enrolled in a public two-year institution received a credential within six years (28% with an associate's degree or certificate, 11% with a bachelor's degree).¹⁰¹

College preparation/Aspiration

- The majority of those youth in out-of-home care interviewed in the Midwest Study at age 17–18 hoped and expected to graduate from college eventually.¹⁰²

98 EPE Research Center, 2006.

99 Orfield, 2004, p. 157.

100 Pecora et al., 2005, p. 36.

101 ACE Center for Policy Analysis, 2003, p. 3.

102 Courtney et al., 2004, p. 39.

- Another report stated that only 15% of youth in foster care are likely to be enrolled in college preparatory classes versus 32% of students not in foster care.¹⁰³

Strong academic preparation has been found to be the single most important factor in enrolling and succeeding in a postsecondary program. However, in the United States, studies of the general population have found that:

- Only 32% of all students leave high school qualified to attend a four-year college.¹⁰⁴
- Only 20% of all African American and 16% of all Hispanic students leave high school college-ready.¹⁰⁵
- Statistics suggest that between 30-60% of students “now require remedial education upon entry to college, depending on the type of institution they attend.”¹⁰⁶

103 Blome, 1997, cited in Sheehy et al., 2001. P. 9.

104 Greene & Winters, 2005, p. 9.

105 Greene & Winters, 2005, p. 9.

106 Conley, 2005, p. xi.

Statistics References

ACE Center for Policy Analysis (2003, August). *Student success: Understanding graduation and persistence rates*. Issue Brief. Washington DC: American Council on Education. Data analyzed was from the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which recently followed students across institutions and included the progress of students who transferred and graduated from institutions other than the first one in which they enrolled. Data were collected from 1995 to 2001.

Advocates for Children of New York, Inc. (2000, July). *Educational neglect: The delivery of educational services to children in New York City's foster care system*. Data collection included 281 surveys filled out by the following individuals in New York City: social workers/case workers (34%), children in care (25%), law guardians (16%), foster parents (5%), biological parents (7%), Committee of Special Education chairpersons (7%), and early intervention specialists (5%).

Barber, J. G., & Delfabbro, P. H. (2003). The first four months in a new foster placement: Psychosocial adjustment, parental contact, and placement disruption. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 30*(2), 69-85. Intake and four-month follow-up measures were obtained from social workers for 235 children (ages 4-17) referred into a new foster care placement over a 12-month period in the Australian State of South Australia. Adolescents in this group were also compared to a normative sample of 985 adolescents in the general population.

Burley, M., & Halpern, M. (2001). *Educational attainment of foster youth: Achievement and graduation outcomes for children in state care*. Olympia, WA: Washington State Institute for Public Policy. The sample of 4,559 children and youth in foster care in Washington State was generated by merging foster care data from the Division of Children and Family Services with Iowa Standardized Test Scores received from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction for grades 3, 6, and 9.

Choice, P., D'Andrade, A., Gunther, K., Downes, D., Schaldach, J., Csiszar, C., & Austin, M. (2001). *Education for foster children: Removing barriers to academic success*. Berkeley, CA: Bay Area Social Services Consortium, Center for Social Services Research, School of Social Welfare, University of California, Berkeley. Data included telephone surveys of foster parents for 303 school-age children in nine Bay Area counties.

Conley, D. (2005). *College knowledge: What it really takes for students to succeed and what we can do to get them ready*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Cook, R. (1994). *Are we helping foster care youth prepare for the future?* *Children and Youth Services Review*, 16 (3/4), 213-229. Data were collected via in-person and telephone interviews of 810 young adults aged 18-24 years old 2.5 to 4 years after leaving foster care. These cases were chosen by probability sampling and represented a national estimate of 34,600 youth.

Courtney, M.E., Terao, S., & Bost, N. (2004). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Conditions of youth preparing to leave state care*. Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. Wave One of a longitudinal study in three waves following 732 youth ages 17 or 18 still in jurisdiction in Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin as they age out of foster care. Youth were also compared to 19-year-olds who were part of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, as a comparison national sample.

Courtney, M.E., Dworsky, A., Ruth, G., Keller, T., Havlicek, J., & Bost, N. (2005). *Evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 19*. Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. Longitudinal study in three waves following 736 youth ages 17 or 18 still in jurisdiction in Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin as they age out of foster care. Wave Two (current report) included 603 (82%) of the original interviewees. Included both urban and rural placements with contrasting policy and service delivery environments. In this report, the outcomes of 282 young adults (43%) still in care were compared to 321 (53%) who had already been discharged. Also compared to 19-year-olds who were part of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health.

Editorial Projects in Education Research Center (2006, June). *Diplomas count: An essential guide to graduation policy and rates*. Diplomas Count 2006, 1st. Education Week. Graduation rates were calculated by the EPE Research Center using the Cumulative Promotion Index method, developed by EPE Center Director Christopher B. Swanson.

Goerge R.M., Van Voorhis, J., Grant, S., Casey, K., & Robinson, M. (1992). Special-education experiences of children in care: An empirical study. *Child Welfare*, 71(5), 419-437. Study looked at all students enrolled in Illinois schools and found that 29.1% of students in foster care were in special education.

Greene, J.P., & Winters, M.A. (2005). *Public high school graduation and college-readiness rates: 1991–2002*. The Center for Civic Innovation at the Manhattan Institute. Retrieved December 6, 2005, from www.manhattan-institute.org/html/ewp_08.htm. Data was gathered from the U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data (CCD), a national clearinghouse for education data.

Jones, E., Zanghi, M., St. Onge, A., Sheehy, A., & Oldham, E. (1998). *Improving economic opportunities for young people served by the foster care system: Three views of the path to independent living*. Phase II—Survey. Portland, ME: Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine.

Kerbow, D. (1996). *Patterns of urban student mobility and local school reform*. Technical Report No. 5, October. Washington, DC: Center for Research on the Education of Children Placed at Risk. The data used included students in a stratified, random sample of public elementary schools and 6th-grade students in the Chicago Public Schools in the spring of 1994. The students and schools (N=13,908 students; N=270 elementary schools) are representative of the Chicago Public Schools in both their racial composition and the percentage who are from low-income families. The students' mobility histories were taken from the School Administrative History files provided by the Chicago central office.

McMillen, C., Auslander, W., Elze, D., White, T., & Thompson, R. (2003). Educational experiences and aspirations of older youth in foster care. *Child Welfare*, 82(4), 475-495. Data were collected via in-person one-hour structured interviews of 262 youth ages 15-19 from the foster care system of one Midwestern U.S. suburban county who were referred for independent-living preparation.

National AFCARS data (2002). National 2002 AFCARS case level data available from the Child Welfare League of America's National Data Analysis System (NDAS) indicate a mean of 2.5 placements with an average stay of 22 months in care or a median of 2 placements for a median length of stay of 12 months. (Personal communication, Carrie Friedman, March 23, 2005). Note that the placement change rate is inflated by the large percentage of children who have a short-term shelter care placement before being placed in a regular foster home.

Orfield, G., Ed. (2004). *Dropouts in America: Confronting the graduation rate crisis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Pecora, P.J., Williams, J., Kessler, R.C., Downs, A.C., O'Brien, K., Hiripi, E., & Morello, S. (2003). *Assessing the effects of foster care: Early results from the Casey National Alumni Study*. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs. Case record reviews and interviews were conducted for 1087 alumni served by the 23 Casey Field offices in operation in 1998. Youth served by Casey offices between 1966 and 1998 were included in the study sample if they had been placed with a Casey foster family for 12 months or more and had been discharged from foster care for at least 12 months.

Pecora, P., Kessler, R., Williams, J., O'Brien, K., Downs, C., English, D., White, J., Hiripi, E., White, C.R., Wiggins, T., & Holmes, K. (2005). *Improving family foster care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study*. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs. Case record reviews were conducted for 659 alumni (479 of whom were interviewed) who had been in the care of Casey Family Programs or the Oregon or Washington state child welfare agencies between 1988 and 1998 for at least 12 months between the ages of 14 and 18.

Rumberger, R.W. (1995). *Dropping out of middle school: A multilevel analysis of students and schools*. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 583-625. Data included 17,424 students from 981 schools nationwide.

Rumberger, R.W., Larson, K.A., Ream, R.K., & Palardy, G.J. (1999). *The educational consequences of mobility for California students and schools*. Policy Analysis for California Education, University of California at Berkeley. The data used for this report included surveys of 1,114 California 8th-grade students who were followed and interviewed over a six-year period from 1988 to 1994; surveys of 51 California high schools and their 10th-grade students who were followed and interviewed between 1990 and 1992; interviews with 19 mobile high school students and their parents from Los Angeles; and interviews with 32 urban school administrators, counselors, and teachers from 10 secondary schools in one urban and one suburban district in Southern California.

Rumberger, R. (2001). *Who drops out of school and why*. Paper presented at the School Completion in Standards-Based Reform: Facts and Strategies Workshop, National Research Council, Committee on Educational Excellence and Testing Equity, Washington, DC (July 17-18). Available: University of California, Santa Barbara.

Sheehy, A.M., Oldham, E., Zanghi, M., Ansell, D., Correia, III, P., & Copeland, R. (2001). *Promising practices: Supporting transition of youth served by the foster care system*. Portland, ME: Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Main and Tulsa, OK: National Resource Center for Youth Services, University of Oklahoma.

Smithgall, C., Gladden, R.M., Howard, E., Goerge, R., & Courtney, M. (2004). *Educational experiences of children in out-of-home care*. Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. This report compared children in the Illinois Chicago Public Schools system. Data were pulled from the Integrated Database on Child and Family Services' Child and Youth Center Information System and matched using probabilistic record-matching with the Chicago Public Schools Student Information System to almost 16,000 students. Academic performance indicators used included elementary students' scores on the reading section of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), the percent of elementary students who were at least one grade level behind for their age, and high school dropout rates. Also conducted were 31 in-person semi-structured interviews with DCFS and private agency caseworkers, foster parents, and school staff.

White, J., Carrington, J., & Freeman, P. (1990, November). *A study of the educational status of foster children in Oregon: Research & statistics*. Portland: Oregon Department of Human Resources, Children's Services Division, 5.

Zanghi, M., Oldham, E., Sheehy, A.M., & Riebman, D. (1999). *Maine study on improving the educational outcomes for children in care*. Portland, ME: University of Southern Maine, Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service, Institute for Child and Family Policy. Data compiled by 134 youth surveys from youth age 14 to 21. Surveys were distributed at a teen conference and to all youth with cases at four county offices in Maine (24% response rate).

Zima, B.T., Bussing, R., Freeman, S., Yang, X., Belin, T.R., & Forness, S.R. (2000). Behavior problems, academic skill delays and school failure among school-aged children in foster care: Their relationship to placement characteristics. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 9 (1): 87-103. Data were collected via foster parent and child home interviews and teacher telephone interviews from a randomly selected sample of 302 children age 6 through 12 living in out-of-home placement in or near Los Angeles County.

Note: Research compiled by the National Working Group on Foster Care and Education.



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