

# Everyone Can Make a Difference

## Small Ideas Creating Big Change for Students in Foster Care

For students in foster care, education is the door out of instability into a more promising life. But with many of the 400,000 youth in foster care nationwide struggling in school, the challenge we face can seem insurmountable.

The good news is that many students in foster care are succeeding because of the creativity and determination of the people in their lives. Broader, system-wide changes are

needed to help all youth succeed, but the big impact of these small ideas are a reminder that each of us has a role in helping students in foster care succeed in school.

**Teachers matter. Caregivers matter. Social workers matter. Elected officials matter. And each of us can make a difference.**

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### School and Home Stability in Baltimore

Molly McGrath and Jonathan Brice knew there had to be a more effective way to place youth in good homes and prevent them from changing schools when they first enter foster care. So Molly, from Baltimore City Department of Social Services, and Jonathan, from Baltimore City Public Schools, put their heads together and got creative. The result was a simple protocol for the social services department to access students' school records in order to obtain their emergency contact cards: listing trusted individuals who already know and love the child—and often live close by.

Learn more: <http://huff.to/SchoolStabilityBaltimore>

Fast access to this information is helping to place youth in stable homes quickly and keep them in the same school, maintaining stability in their education.

### Fewer Suspensions in Sacramento

Teacher Mike Jones and Vice Principal Hasan Abdulmalik noticed that students in foster care at their school were getting suspended at an alarming rate. In response, they created a no-cost program on the Laguna Creek High School campus called Courageous Connection. The program, designed in partnership with the youth themselves, provides a homeroom period especially for youth in foster care, a clothes closet and emergency school supplies, and training and support for foster parents and caregivers.

Learn more: <http://www.courageousconnection.org>

In the two years since Courageous Connection was founded, suspensions have dropped by 80 percent and 100 percent of the seniors in foster care have graduated on time.

### Access to Laptops in Alaska

State Representative Les Gara and Amanda Metivier of Facing Foster Care in Alaska believe students in foster care deserve the same opportunities as all children. So they put out a call to Alaskans to donate their used but functioning laptops which end up in the grateful hands of students in foster care. Students use the laptops for schoolwork, as well as storing family photos and important personal documents so they are not lost if they change home placements.

Learn more: <http://bit.ly/LaptopsAlaska>

“If I didn't have this laptop, I would not be graduating on time. It's a very big influence on my academic life.”

—Kearra Ratcliff, 17-year-old student in foster care

Know of other small ideas creating big change for students in foster care? Email [cleducation@americanbar.org](mailto:cleducation@americanbar.org) so we can spread the word.

