



Arizona Systems Change Through Co-Location Report

Prepared for FosterEd Arizona, a Compassionate Systems Campaign of the National Center for Youth Law

RTI International

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About the Evaluation

Since 2013, FosterEd Arizona has partnered with RTI International to conduct evaluations on the effectiveness of the organization's education support model for youth experiencing foster care. Early years of the collaboration focused on studying the development, launch, and full implementation of FosterEd's pilot program in Pima County. As the FosterEd program expanded statewide in Arizona, RTI's evaluations evolved to study that expansion.

Since the Pima County pilot, FosterEd Arizona has implemented a collaboration initiative with the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) referred to as *co-location*. In alignment with their advocacy theory of action, the initiative is characterized by the physical presence of Education Liaisons, who are FosterEd staff, in DCS offices. Following the Pima pilot program, the initiative expanded to include co-location of Education Liaisons within school campuses. To date, approximately ten Education Liaisons have been co-located at approximately 15 DCS and school sites.

Facilitated through structured, scheduled engagement in shared space, the co-location approach aims to build rapport and establish meaningful professional relationships, which are used in joint efforts to advocate for the rights and educational well-being of youth experiencing foster care. The Education Liaisons are available to partner with DCS and school staff to support the educational needs of individual youth experiencing foster care and to provide access to resources and information these partners can use to support other youth experiencing foster care.

The focus of the evaluation during the 2023-24 school year was specifically designed to expand the depth and breadth of FosterEd's understanding of the cultural impact of their partnerships and collaborative efforts by hearing directly from their advocacy partners at DCS offices and at school campuses about their co-location experience. The following findings describe the impact of co-location and identify opportunities for FosterEd Arizona to improve collaborative initiatives with their child welfare and education partners.

Methodology

Between November 2023 and May 2024, RTI conducted interviews with 12 adult professionals located in the three counties served by FosterEd: Maricopa, Pima, and Yavapai. The scope of interviewing 12 adult professionals was agreed upon between RTI and FosterEd Arizona in accordance with the resources available for this evaluation activity. RTI asked FosterEd to nominate potential interviewees who had current or prior co-location experience with FosterEd, with the goal of RTI scheduling six interviews with DCS staff and six interviews with school district staff, and with geographic diversity. FosterEd initially nominated approximately 10 DCS staff and 10 school staff.

FosterEd sent emails to those staff introducing RTI and the purpose of the interviews. RTI then followed up with each person to request an interview, sending up to two requests for interviews. If a potential interviewee did not respond after two requests from RTI, RTI considered this a passive decline. If a potential interviewee actively declined RTI's interview requests, RTI thanked them for their considerations and stopped contacting them. When the first set of approximately 20 nominations did not yield 12 interviews, RTI asked FosterEd to nominate additional DCS and school district staff. FosterEd ultimately nominated 17 DCS and 12 school staff for interviews, and RTI was able to schedule interviews with six DCS staff and six school staff. Table 1 displays information about the interviews conducted. These professionals included DCS and school staff who either currently have or no longer have a FosterEd Education Liaison co-located at their office or campus site. The interview participants each held professional roles in youth support services, ranging from Social Worker, Community Liaison, and School Counselor to DCS Specialist and Student Success Coordinator.

Table 1. Count of Interview Participants by Co-Location Status, County, and Partner

	Department of Child Safety (<i>n</i> = 6)			Arizona School Districts (<i>n</i> = 6)			Total
	Maricopa	Pima	Yavapai	Maricopa	Pima	Yavapai	
Current Co-Location	2	2	1	0	1	1	7
Former Co-Location	0	1	0	3	1	0	5

To collect information on the strengths of co-location, including an understanding of how it looked and was implemented at each site, RTI developed a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix A). The questions were designed to ascertain the efficacy and impact of the collaboration strategy on FosterEd's professional partnerships with DCS, Arizona schools, and the students and families they serve together. The protocol also inquired about recommendations for enhancing student advocacy efforts. Team members from FosterEd Arizona, including the Education Liaisons, Director of Programs, Senior Program Manager, Deputy Director & Counsel, and Senior Director played key roles in the evaluation process because of their extensive knowledge and active participation in the project. They provided collaborated in the development of the interview protocol and, as described above, assisted in recruiting interview participants from various co-location sites. DCS required that RTI submit a research application describing the purpose of the interviews, how they aligned with and would support the mission of DCS, and how RTI would maintain the confidentiality of the interviewees. During the review process, DCS requested the inclusion of a few additional questions.

Findings

The following findings describe the impact of *co-location* and identify opportunities for FosterEd Arizona to improve collaborative initiatives with child welfare and education systems.

Introducing Co-Location to Partners

To evaluate the implementation of co-location services, RTI asked the adult partner interviewees of DCS and Arizona schools to share their experiences regarding how they were initially informed about the Education Liaison as a collaborative resource within their office.¹ Responses varied among interviewees, with some reporting that their initial introduction was an effective start to the partnership:

"[The Education Liaison] was very knowledgeable and informative and helped explain to us how she could be utilized and what her role was. And then we built that partnership here based on that." – Maricopa School Respondent, Social Worker

"[The Education Liaison] started messaging us different things and came to our meeting to introduce herself and work with the counselors." – Maricopa School Respondent, Student Success Coordinator

Feedback from some participants highlighted the need for clearer direction and communication from school district or DCS leadership regarding the purpose and benefits of co-location. For example, a school counselor in Maricopa County shared, "I think our district didn't handle that partnership well at all. [...] we got no heads up or guidance from our district." **Those who did receive guidance from their leadership about the co-location found it beneficial to their dynamic with the Education Liaison**, as explained by a Pima DCS Specialist, "I did get guidance, like I can contact them when it's needed, especially if we're having primarily issues with some of our foster children that are facing problems within the school that we can contact them so we can get their guidance, the appropriate way of education being provided to them." To ensure that the co-located Education Liaison is seen as a valuable advocacy resource, it is recommended that DCS and school leaders continue providing advance notice and information about FosterEd, rather than potentially leaving their staff feeling unprepared or surprised.

By sharing physical workspace in Arizona schools and DCS offices, the Education Liaisons were highly accessible to their adult professional partners. The shared physical workspace facilitated a dependable communication channel for updates and information exchange to support youth advocacy efforts. Many respondents indicated how co-location established a norm of

¹ A few respondents were unable to provide information regarding their office's transition to a site of co-location due to factors such as starting their professional role after the initiative began or simply not being able to recall the specifics of the implementation.

consistently connecting with the Education Liaison to address student issues and challenges and collaborate on finding solutions as partners. When asked about the specific frequency and format of interactions with a co-located Education Liaison, the adult professional partners described a semi-structured approach. For example, while there was no fixed, recurring meeting, they typically met at least once a week, on an as-needed basis, to discuss specific student cases, as described by the following illustrative excerpts:

"It usually starts with a consultation. You explain the issues that you're experiencing, the needs of the child, or at least the needs that you understand based off of the information you have available. And then we go from there. If we're having difficulties with the school not wanting to assess a child for an IEP, then we'll talk about routes and how to get that child assessed. [...] it just depends on what the issue we're experiencing. If it's transportation, then she can point us in the direction of who we need to talk to and kind of what the rules are in regards to the school district and their requirements." – Pima DCS Respondent

The researchers observed some variation in the interview participants' understanding and awareness of the Education Liaison's co-location schedule and in-office availability and, at times, the current co-location status of their site. For example, one respondent at a site with a co-located FosterEd Liaison noted "she's not really here that much."

FosterEd can address existing discrepancies by implementing a threshold for Education Liaisons to be physically present at sites (e.g., at least twice a week) and providing regular communication regarding any changes to the co-location status, including the discontinuation or temporary pause of the initiative.

As previously discussed, **the communication between adult professionals and the FosterEd Education Liaison was centered around individual student cases. While the interview participants did not mention having general discussions with and questions for their Education Liaison, they often referenced using insights gained from specific case discussions to assist other youth experiencing foster care and applying it to similar situations.** The main focus of the discussions was often the educational rights of youth in foster care, Special Education and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), school transition challenges, concerns of truancy/student attendance, and postsecondary educational opportunities (Table 2).

Table 2. Most Frequent Content Themes of Discussions with Co-Located Education Liaisons

Characteristic	Representative Quote
Educational Rights and Special Education (IEPs)	"A lot of times our case managers have never been to IEP meetings, so they don't know what to expect. They don't know what they can advocate for, but we are required to go as the child's guardian. So when they go, we've honestly faced schools who don't want anything

Characteristic	Representative Quote
	<p>to do with IEPs, and so they know what to say to get out of it. And when we have new case managers who don't understand that and the impact it would have on the child, they could just go along with it. And in the long run, that's not going to help. But if we have a FosterEd [Liaison] there to support them, then they can help make sure the conversation goes in the direction that it should. They know the questions to ask." – <i>Pima DCS Respondent</i></p> <p>"[There was an] IEP that was not following protocol or policies in regard to harassment with another peer with my youth along with sexual harassment and bullying and [the education liaison] was very beneficial with helping with barriers of communication with schools or schools not responding or following up to their part of the kids' educational needs." – <i>Maricopa DCS Respondent</i></p>
School Placement and Transition	<p>"[The Education Liaison] has some really good resources for students when it comes to transitions, transition programs, things that I know about out here, but I don't necessarily have all the details or work closely with, so if I ever have any questions or needs or concerns, I always refer to her and push to her on that. I think she brings that to the table and again, she usually has the most updated resources for students in foster care when it comes to just very simple things, physical resources." – <i>Pima School Respondent</i></p>
Attendance and Truancy	<p>"One of my other kids refused to go to school for almost a year, and I was kind of stuck of how to proceed with that. I know legally the child needs to be at school, so it got to a truancy officer and the fostered liaison did help me with all of that, trying to get truancy involved, trying to get the school involved of what can we do to better assist this youth due to her social emotional disability." – <i>Maricopa DCS Respondent</i></p>
Postsecondary Pathways and education opportunities	<p>"I did talk to the FosterEd person who I knew from another student and just asked about specific services and helping this young person get into college and move on. And I would say we could have a lot of open conversations about that just because she knew a lot and our foster student was not in special education, so not on her caseload, but she knew a lot of people and things that we could connect with." – <i>Pima School Respondent</i></p> <p>"[The Education Liaison] let me know that if the child is adopted before his 16th birthday, that he would risk losing a potential \$5,000 annually to go towards extended education [...]. [The Education Liaison gave me the information in a very timely manner so that I could get the information to placement as timely and then they could make a decision as a family what they want to do." - <i>Yavapai DCS Respondent</i></p>

During the interviews, multiple participants highlighted the valuable role that their Education Liaisons played in enhancing their knowledge of the educational rights of youth in foster care given prevalent and frequent concerns of noncompliance and challenges advocating for students within schools. When asked about what specific resources were made available to them through the co-

location, the interviewees said they benefited most from being connected with external partners such as an Arizona disability law attorney and Arizona Friends of Foster Care and receiving access to GED information, scholarships, tuition waivers, tutoring organizations, behavioral health resources, and postsecondary options.

Benefits of Co-Location as a Collaboration Strategy

DCS and school partners described a number of benefits from having an Education Liaison co-located at their office or campus. Among the most common was **having clear access to a professional partner with combined expertise in both the education and the child welfare systems** (Table 3). DCS partners appreciated being able to ask for advice and assistance related to educational concerns and resources, while school partners appreciated Education Liaisons' knowledge of the child welfare agency. The physical presence of the Education Liaison in the partners' office or campus served as a reminder that the Education Liaison was available to help.

Dependable access to a responsive Education Liaison helped these other adult professionals increase their own knowledge and skills for supporting the educational experiences of youth experiencing foster care. While there were few explicit comments suggesting clear shifts in organizational cultures within DCS offices or on school campuses, there were implied and subtle signs of change in terms of the adult professionals feeling more knowledgeable about some of the educational barriers faced by students in foster care, what resources are available to support these students, and how the adult professional can access these resources and generally navigate through barriers. For example, DCS partners described knowing more about the educational rights of students, especially concerning IEPs, and feeling at least somewhat more confident about partnering with schools to ensure students were receiving supports they needed to be successful.

Perhaps the clearest sign of a shift in culture was provided by a school counselor who described learning from an Education Liaison how important it is to listen to students experiencing foster care and to support these students in advocating for themselves. This counselor learned from the Education Liaison that students experiencing foster care often feel disempowered and that many decisions are made for them without their input. With this increased awareness, the school counselor reported that she and her school colleagues were starting to more intentionally seek and listen to what these students want for themselves and involve them in decision-making. This same interviewee noted staff are using more inclusive language at the school, moving away from saying "mom or dad" to instead saying "parent, guardian, or whoever you live with."

Co-location helps adult professionals collaborate with each other and with families. Education Liaisons were able to connect the potential partners with each other, helping them to collaborate more effectively on behalf of the youth, including supporting

caregivers in advocating for the needs of their students with school and child welfare staff.

Co-location also helped Education Liaisons build trusting relationships with students, as Education Liaisons and students were able to see each other in person on a regular basis.

Table 3. Most Commonly Described Benefits of Co-Location

Characteristic	Representative quote
Provides access to dependable, responsive Education Liaison with combined expertise in education and child welfare	<p>"[Education Liaison] is extremely knowledgeable. There's never been a situation where the question has not been asked or answered. If she doesn't know something, she has that support where she's asking [her other colleagues]." – <i>Maricopa DCS Respondent</i></p> <p>"Having the resource within the facility, it's a good reminder that we need to use them. It's a good reminder that we can ask questions. It makes our job easier when you have an expert available that can provide you all the necessary information, especially in that area where we don't have the expertise. Those type of resources are so good to have and to be able to count on to make our children's education successful." – <i>Pima DCS Respondent</i></p> <p>"I knew that if [Education Liaison] was working with one of my kids I could be the social and emotional support. I could rely on her to do more of the advocacy and case management pieces." – <i>Maricopa School Respondent</i></p>
Supports increased knowledge, skills, and confidence of partners in supporting youth experiencing foster care	<p>"There is something to be said for the students advocating for something that they want or that they need, even when it's not the most popular as far as what we think is best ... we're trying to incorporate and include that and part of that has come from our liaison. She's always makes sure that she reminds us the student has a say in this, or sometimes we need to talk to them about this and they should be included in the decision-making. They should have their voice heard. I think we're doing a better job at that than maybe we used to." – <i>Pima School Respondent</i></p>
Facilitates collaboration between child welfare, school, and families	<p>"I reached out to DCS ... and sometimes [they weren't] answering my calls. [The Education Liaison] got involved and I got phone calls, we had meetings. I don't think that we would've helped our students as much [without the help the Education Liaison]. I felt like [the Education Liaison] was such a strong presence." – <i>Maricopa School Respondent</i></p> <p>"The [Education Liaison] joined me and mom for formal district meeting to present our case how the child was being treated unfairly and it made a huge difference. The school changed how they worked with the child and child didn't have to change schools ... which wouldn't have helped his academic success in the long run. So that was huge." – <i>Pima DCS Respondent</i></p>
Helps Education Liaison build trusting relationships with	<p>"Kids really connected with her and wanted her to be there." – <i>Maricopa School Respondent</i></p>

Characteristic	Representative quote
students and better understand their needs	"FosterEd placements within districts, and at least in and around the area where they work, is greatly needed and important because they can meet face-to-face specifically. Maybe not even with me, the students." – <i>Yavapai DCS Respondent</i>

In locations where co-location was discontinued, adult professionals reported that their Education Liaison remained a responsive and supportive collaborator, **even though they were no longer physically present in the office** to work together. *"She's always available. So I called her maybe at 8:15 AM on Monday morning, something like that, and she contacted me back like 10 minutes later. So I don't feel like it's really affected the communication or the way that she operates and works. It does make it a bit easier when you have a question right then and there just to go to the office and have a conversation. But no, it doesn't affect how we communicate."*

The adult professionals who had previously been but are not currently co-located with an Education Liaison at their DCS office or school campus largely reported that the collaborative relationships they established during co-location have endured. They have been able to request the support of an Education Liaison via emails and calls, and the Education Liaisons have been responsive in those circumstances. A few, however, reported reductions in effective advocacy and support for students experiencing foster care once the co-location arrangement ended. One school counselor noted that a recent incident involving a student escalated before staff at the school knew that student was in foster care. Without an Education Liaison at the school site helping to identify and support students experiencing foster care, it took longer for the school staff to understand the student's circumstances and connect that student with needed supports. A school Social Worker at another campus that no longer has a co-located Education Liaison noted they missed having on-site access to the Education Liaison's deep expertise in education law.

Specific Questions asked of DCS Staff

In reviewing RTI's research application, DCS requested a few additional questions be asked of the DCS interviewees to support the agency in more fully understanding the experiences of their staff partnering with FosterEd and to gauge their staff's understanding of FosterEd services. These questions and responses of the DCS interviewees are included in this section.

What did you (DCS Staff) understand the role of FosterEd to be? Did that align with what you observed?

The DCS staff interviewed consistently described the role of FosterEd as a resource for effectively supporting students' education and responded that their observations of the program and work of Education Liaisons aligned with that understanding. They saw FosterEd as both a resource for DCS case managers and for students directly. Specific supports described by DCS interviewees include resolving communication barriers with school, helping clarify the rights and processes for supporting school stability and for immediate school enrollment when a student changes schools, and providing information on checking IEP progress and graduation planning. This illustrative quote exemplifies how DCS staff viewed FosterEd as a resource for DCS in supporting the students:

"We have a really good partnership with our Liaison, the role that she has played as being an advocate for, not just for kids, but for us as well. Things that we don't understand, things that if we ask questions might be [about] some sticky situations in the school district [...] There's things that she has been able to really help us on and give us a sense of understanding of why certain things are into play and what we need to do as our role as the legal guardian and what the school district role is as well." – Maricopa DCS Specialist

Were there efforts made by FosterEd that did not go well? If so, why? What was challenging around coordination?

The DCS interviewees did not report efforts made by FosterEd that did not go well, although one DCS respondent clarified that FosterEd supports did not always result in a positive outcome for a student. This person noted, "Sometimes it is out of the FosterEd Liaison hands ... sometimes we're just stuck with a youth that is just refusing and there is nothing really further we could do with the youth." Challenges were expressed related to helping staff new to DCS become aware of the resources and support FosterEd could provide.

Where do staff feel more educational support is needed?

DCS staff described more educational support being needed when a young person is supported by a new DCS worker and when the youth has special education needs. Often, new DCS Specialists do not have training on when and how to request a special education assessment, or how to check if an IEP is current and the specified supports are being provided. One DCS Specialist noted confusion about who should be notified and attend IEP meetings for the student. Another DCS Specialist suggested additional educational support is needed when cases are in the investigations stage or when dependency is just starting. Sometimes schools push back about helping to keep the child in the school or otherwise

provide them with additional supports, and the advocacy and collaboration skills and legal expertise of an Education Liaison can be particularly helpful as DCS is newly engaging with a family.

Are the services voluntary? Were there any youth or families unwilling to engage? If so, why?

The DCS interviewees understood the services provided by FosterEd to be voluntary and said they were not aware of any youth or caregivers who were unwilling to engage with FosterEd.

If a referral is made for Foster Ed and there is no response from the caregiver, what is the engagement with the caregiver?

Most of the DCS interviewees were unaware of situations in which a caregiver did not respond to a FosterEd communication and were not sure what would occur under those circumstances. However, one DCS Specialist noted that sometimes Education Liaisons have had trouble contacting a youth's placement and a DCS Specialist has helped to connect the Education Liaison with the adult caregiver.

If a child returns home, is the FosterEd intervention sustainable?

The DCS interviewees seemed somewhat unsure if the FosterEd supports continued when a child returned home. One DCS Program Manager explained there had been instances where FosterEd assisted in-home cases and continued to maintain that relationship and to advocate for the child, so this respondent did say the intervention was sustainable.

Conclusions and Recommendations

These interviews with DCS and school staff reveal that co-location has been an effective strategy in supporting collaboration between FosterEd, childcare, and education partners. By having reliable and clear access to the expertise and assistance of FosterEd Education Liaisons, these partners have increased their own knowledge, skills, and confidence in supporting the education of youth experiencing foster care. Interviewees who had previously worked but do not currently work at an office or campus with a co-located Education Liaison reported that the collaborative relationships they established during co-location have persisted and they and their students continue to benefit from the support of Education Liaisons.

RTI has compiled recommendations and presented them below by aligning challenge areas with specific action strategies to address them. (Table 4).

Table 4. Key Recommendations for Improving Collaboration Strategies

Collaboration Challenge	Recommended Action Strategy
<p>High Turnover: Arizona DCS and schools experience high employee attrition, which may result in newer employees being unaware of FosterEd and Education Liaisons as valuable resources for assistance.</p> <p><i>"DCS has a high turnover rate. [...] we have new people here who really don't know."</i></p>	<p>Increased Visibility at Meetings and Onboarding: FosterEd can enhance their visibility and promote awareness of their organization's services through various strategies, such as participating in unit/section/district meetings and being included in the onboarding materials for new employees of DCS and the school district. Additionally, introductions of FosterEd and guidance on the role of Education Liaisons from DCS and school district leadership will help establish rapport, familiarity, and goodwill. This, in turn, benefits their collaborative advocacy efforts.</p> <p><i>"I try to incorporate FosterEd in our section meetings as much as possible because sometimes we have people that leave and we have new people that come and they may not know what her role is. We also discussed the other day of her reaching out to the units and to the supervisor and the staff directly and coming to their unit meetings so that she can have a more intimate conversation with them. [...]She did say that she's going to make more of an effort in making herself more noticeable so people know to come to her. The supervisors know who she is the staff don't." – Maricopa DCS Specialist</i></p>
<p>Communication Barriers: Respondents shared instances of miscommunication with placement.</p> <p><i>"Placement was not happy when she heard that [the EL] had met with the student at school, not letting placement know that he was meeting with them."</i></p>	<p>Standardized Notification Systems: To resolve communication barriers, a standardized set of procedures is recommended in which the youth's placement is invited to be involved in the education services provided by FosterEd.</p> <p><i>"I really think that it would behoove the foster care liaison to loop in placement potentially before that first encounter or shortly thereafter so that placement can come along and partner with the foster ed liaison for this child and partnering with me and partnering with all the other providers that are trying to help these children. Don't forget placement being an important piece of that puzzle." – Yavapai DCS Respondent</i></p>

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you very much for taking the time to meet with us today. I'm [Jen Laird/Cheyane Mitchell]. I work at RTI International and am one of the independent evaluators of the FosterEd Arizona program.

During this month, we are interviewing adult professionals at DCS offices and school districts to hear about your experiences of advocacy and collaboration with FosterEd team members through structured, intentional interactions in shared physical spaces. FosterEd often refers to this as co-location. They partner with DCS and school districts to have one of their staff members located within a DCS or district, and sometimes school, office.

We are especially interested in hearing feedback you may have regarding the support and resources FosterEd provides to adults like yourself so that together, you and FosterEd can better support young people experiencing foster care, with regard to their education.

We will keep any information you share with us anonymous and de-identified. That is, we won't attribute any particular quote or sentiment to your name. We're interviewing about 12 adults and will summarize what we hear across these interviews.

Please do not mention any child's name or other identifying information. You may want to provide examples on how you have partnered with FosterEd on behalf of a child in care. When you do that, please don't use the child's name.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Would it be ok with you if I audio record? This will help me produce clear notes from the interview. The recording will not be shared with anyone outside of our evaluation team.

Warm Up

1. Our understanding is that [a FosterEd EL is/was present in your district/DCS office (Y/N) and co-location duration dates]. How does that align with your understanding? Were you there before they came?
2. What did you understand the role of the FosterEd Education Liaison to be? Did that align with what you observed?
3. On average, how often do you interact with a physically present FosterEd Education Liaison? Do you meet on a regular basis?
 - a. What is the frequency of your interactions with other FosterEd team members?

Reflection on Collaboration

4. When interacting with the FosterEd team member at your DCS office/school, what do you tend to talk about? What concerns or issues do you discuss? Please give some examples.
 - a. Do you tend to talk with them about a specific youth experiencing foster care or about general questions that may pertain to many youth (e.g., general education rights for youth experiencing foster care)?
 - b. How do you work together to find resolutions on the issue?

5. What resources (e.g. community partnerships, tutoring support, quick guides on SPED/ESSA, support groups for families, scholarship opportunities, reunification, school change decisions and transition) has an Education Liaison or other FosterEd team member connected you to that have been most helpful to your schools/DCS office?
 - a. How do you use and incorporate resources and information from your FosterEd Education Liaison into your school districts/DCS office's initiatives, practices, or interactions with youth experiencing foster care?
6. Since [no longer] having a FosterEd team member placed in your DCS office/School district what changes, if any, have you observed in yourself or your colleagues (e.g., knowledge of general education rights, increased awareness of educational needs and issues, person-first language, new initiatives for youth experiencing foster care, more open attitude/perception to collaboration)? **(see below for optional prompts). Can you give examples and please exclude the names or other identifiable information of students?**
 - a. From your interactions with the physically available FosterEd team member, what have you learned? Also, what have they learned from you?
 - b. What, related to the educational needs of youth experiencing foster care, do you have a better understanding of?
 - c. Have you gained skills for being able to more effectively help youth experiencing foster care with educational challenges. And if so, what skills and strategies have you gained?
 - d. How have you applied what you've learned, for example, do you now work differently with youth experiencing foster care?

Overall Perspective on Approach

7. We'd like to ask your overall impressions of "co-location/physically present Education Liaison" as a facilitator of increased collaboration among adult professionals who support youth experiencing foster care.
 - a. Please describe aspects of co-location that you perceive as working well within your school district/DCS office.
 - b. Please describe aspects of co-location that you perceive as needing to be improved.
 - a. Were there efforts made by FosterEd that did not go well, if so why?
 - b. What was challenging around coordination?
8. The intention behind placing FosterEd team members within DCS offices/school districts was to encourage collaboration through structured, meaningful engagement. What suggestions do you have for other steps FosterEd can take towards effective, collaborative advocacy with DCS/school/families/students on behalf of youth experiencing foster care? This can be a recommendation to continue working the way they are or a change you would like to see implemented. Where do you think more educational support is needed?
9. I have a few questions about your understanding of FosterEd's practice. To your knowledge,
 - What is your understanding of FosterEd as an organization, and their relation or role with DCS?
 - Are the services voluntary? Were there any youth or families unwilling to engage, and if so why?
 - If a referral is made for FosterEd and there is no response from the caregiver, what is the engagement with the caregiver?

- If a child return's home, is the FosterEd intervention sustainable?

10. Is there anything else that you'd like to share that would be helpful for us and FosterEd to know for the sake of today's conversation?

RTI International is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to conducting innovative, multidisciplinary research that improves the human condition. With a worldwide staff of more than 5,700 people, RTI is active in education, child welfare, justice systems, health and medicine, environmental protection, and international development. RTI maintains company headquarters in North Carolina, eight regional offices in the United States, 10 international offices, and many project-specific offices around the world. This project is conducted out of the Berkeley, California, and Washington, DC, offices.

RTI's Center for Education Evaluation and Research (CEER) works with an array of public and private partners to conduct rigorous research and evaluations that enhance educational policies and programs. To this end, we forge committed partnerships with communities and stakeholders, bringing a great breadth of education experience and a wide array of rigorous research methods. Together, we conduct studies that identify effective practices for improving outcomes across demographic groups. CEER is distinguished especially through our focus on increasing educational equity, both in terms of opportunities and outcomes. Our work enhances current approaches to education and equity through our publications, partnerships, and scientific advocacy. The high quality of CEER's research and its positive influence set a standard to which others in our field aspire.

