Improving the educational outcomes of children and youth in foster care.

“Building the Capacity of Educational Advocates for Children in Foster Care”
National Conference on Child Abuse & Neglect
April 30th, 2014
The average educational outcomes of foster youth are heartbreakingly poor. Foster youth:

• Have significantly higher rates of absenteeism and disciplinary referrals than their peers;
• Are more likely to perform below grade level (75% perform below grade level);
• Are about twice as likely to be held back in school (83% are held back by third grade);
• Drop out of school nearly twice as frequently (50% obtain a high school diploma/GED); and
• Attend a four-year college at a significantly lower rate (fewer than 3% do so).
Background: Educational Outcomes of Foster Youth

Barriers to educational stability and success that contribute to poor educational outcomes may include:

- Frequent changes in school placement, forcing transitions in classes, teachers, school environments, and peer groups;
- Frequent changes in homework and study routines;
- Frequent school absences; and
- For many youth, lack of a responsible adult (parent, foster parent, relative, etc.) who is consistently providing educational support and advocacy.
FosterEd Overview

- FosterEd is a project of the National Center for Youth Law (NCYL), an Oakland-based nonprofit organization that works to ensure that low-income children have the resources, support, and opportunities they need for healthy and productive lives.

- FosterEd improves the educational outcomes of children and youth in foster care by ensuring each is supported by an educational champion and strengthened by an education team.
Work With Educational Champions

Why does FosterEd identify and support educational champions, specifically educational champions who are likely to be the child’s long-term caregiver?

- Researchers have consistently found parental involvement to be strongly correlated to educational success.
Importance of Educational Champions

Students supported by educational champions with the following characteristics are most likely to be successful in school:

- Expectations and aspirations
- Discussion of school and education at home
- Facilitation of learning at home
- Communication with school staff
- Basic understanding of the education system
- Capacity and confidence to advocate on behalf of the child
Goal of FosterEd: Santa Cruz County

FosterEd’s objective with respect to educational champions:

• Ensure that Santa Cruz County foster children have at least one “educational champion” with the beliefs, capacities and behaviors proven to support educational success
FosterEd Model

Child Enters Care → Identification and support of ed. champion(s) → Development and monitoring of ed. team → Individualized ed. plan based on strengths and needs → Child’s educational needs met → Improved attendance, school discipline rates, GPA, test scores, etc.

Continuous Cycle of Data-Driven Interventions → Intermediate Outcomes → Long-Term Outcomes
Who are educational champions?

• The adult most likely to be the long-term caregiver for the child, as identified by the child’s social worker

• For youth in care past age 18, the youth is his or her own educational champion
Work With Educational Champions

How does FosterEd work with educational champions?

• By providing support and mentoring to the educational champion to build their capacity to promote the child’s educational success
  
  • FosterEd connects educational champions with a mentor, often a volunteer recruited and trained by FosterEd specifically for this purpose
What does the support and mentoring look like?

• The majority of mentoring takes place in one-on-one meetings with educational champions

• Mentors also provide phone support and can attend education-related meetings with educational champions
Mentoring Modules

What resources does FosterEd provide for mentoring?

- Supervision from the FosterEd Education Liaisons (case managers)
- Mentoring modules in each of the following topics:
  - Beliefs, expectations, aspirations about education; self-efficacy
  - Monitoring and facilitating learning
  - Communication with child and school
  - Education records and credits
  - Enrollment in appropriate schools and classes
  - School attendance
  - Obtaining academic support
  - Special education and accommodations
  - Behavioral and school discipline issues
  - Involvement in extracurricular activities
  - Transition to college/career
  - Mentoring non-minor dependents
Organization of Modules

How are the mentoring modules organized?

• For each topic, there are the following resources:
  • Tip sheets for educational champions
    • Separate tip sheets for caregivers and non-caregivers
    • An additional insert for education rights holders
  • Mentoring guide
  • Supporting materials
  • PowerPoint presentation
Putting it all together: A success story
Thank you!

Contact:
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cschuttte@youthlaw.org

Websites:
National Center for Youth Law  
www.youthlaw.org

Mentoring Modules for all of California  
http://foster-ed.org/resourcesca.html

FosterEd Initiative  
www.foster-ed.org

Mentoring Modules specific to Santa Cruz County,  
with tip sheets available in Spanish  
http://foster-ed.org/resourcesscc.html
Building the Capacity of Educational Advocates for Children in Foster Care

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Grant Specialist
Foster Youth & Homeless Education Services
Student Support Services

SAN DIEGO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION
Voices for Children
Agency responsible for Court Appointed Special Advocates in San Diego since 1980

Advocates are assigned educational rights at the request of:

History in San Diego

Court
Social Workers
Schools
Focus of our grant is to build capacity in San Diego by:

• Providing comprehensive education to a cohort of CASAs on state and federal legislation regarding students in foster care
• Provide training in Special Education

Expand training to all CASAs so advocacy is rooted in knowledge and use of educational laws.
Increased training has contributed to:

- Increased engagement and awareness
- Increased attendance at district meetings
- Increased calls regarding educational rights questions
- Increased advocacy for students in care regarding school of origin
Our Goal

To match 25 youth in need of educational advocacy with trained CASAs who will be the educational rights holders.
Process Cumbersome

- Delays in getting educational rights assigned
- Delays in training CASAs
- Difficulties in matching students with challenging needs
Foster Youth Services Advisory Council

- Presiding Juvenile Court Judge and Dependency Legal Group (minor’s counsel in San Diego) took interest.
- Discovered 50 children on DLG case load without Ed. Rights holder.
- Began collaborative work to develop new complimentary process to meet identified need, filling the gap between the existing service provided by CASAs through Voices for Children and the unmet need.
Lessons Learned

• Coordinate efforts between Voices for Children, CWS, Courts, DLG, SDCOE
• Have legal document for assigning educational rights easily available in each court room
• Increase pool of potential educational rights holders through work group engagement
• Plan to recruit volunteers from local law schools and local MSW Program
SDCOE FYHES Acting as HUB to facilitate:

- Training
- Referrals
- Notice to court of available, trained advocates through new collaboration
Focus to work with youth who:

- Need an immediate advocate, but may later transfer to CASA
- Do not want a mentor
- Cannot be easily matched with a CASA

Work with parents and caregivers who hold Ed. rights but need assistance understanding rights and laws.
THANK YOU!

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Project School Success

Gladys Carrión, Esq.
Commissioner
New York City Administration for Children’s Services
Project School Success

• **Data sharing initiative** with NYC Department of Education
  - Individual student look-up for foster care agencies in DOE Automate the Schools (ATS) database
  - Student-specific monthly reports and comprehensive quarterly data files
  - Aggregate performance and outcome data

• **School stability liaison** – support, troubleshooting and capacity-building on school stability issues

• **Planning to Achieve School Success (PASS) Academy** – comprehensive training to support foster care agencies in monitoring, planning and intervening to improve educational services
NYC Foster Care School-Age Population
(Feb. 2014)

- Approx. 5,900 in K-12
- 30% with IEP’s
- 18% repeating grade
- 84% average monthly attendance, compared to 93% for total school population
- Direct responsibility for educational planning, monitoring and intervention assigned to 29 voluntary foster care agencies
PASS Academy – Design Principles

• Baseline of knowledge, skills and best practices to support effective performance of foster care agencies around education issues.

• To ensure adequate attention/prioritization of education, Education Specialists should be a credentialed sources of expertise within foster care agency case planning staff.

• Training should be both customized to meet agencies’ needs, with agency-led identification of gaps in coverage/effectiveness and integrated with data-informed advocacy and planning.

• Key outcome of PASS Academy should be strengthening network of Education Specialists among agencies.
## PASS Academy – Confidential Agency Self-Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birth to 3</th>
<th>3 to 5</th>
<th>5 to 21 (or HS graduation)</th>
<th>Post-Secondary Readiness &amp; Application</th>
<th>Post-Secondary Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Intervention</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>Preschool Special Education</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Boarding Home</td>
<td>Therapeutic Foster Boarding Home</td>
<td>B2H</td>
<td>Group Home</td>
<td>Residential</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you've identified gaps or weaknesses, indicate priority below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority 1</th>
<th>Age Range/Program</th>
<th>Briefly describe the gap or weakness in coverage.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Priority 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Priority 3</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PASS Academy Curriculum Design

**Competencies** – e.g., An Education Specialist will...

...understand the “Turning 5” transition process for children receiving CPSE services.

...know how to access (directly or indirectly) all relevant student data from ATS and other sources.

**Content Area** – e.g.,

Enrollment provisions of Chancellor’s Regulation A-101

CPSE to CSE transition

Available ATS content; ACS-DOE MOU procedures

Education Law, Article 65, Part 1

**Learning Activities** – e.g.,

Presentation of content;

introduction to resource materials;

group response to hypotheticals applying information in foster care context;

simulation exercises
PASS Academy Curriculum Structure

• Agency will designate personnel for comprehensive or partial certification (by module).
• Modules will roughly align with age and/or program responsibilities within agencies.
• 20 hours of instruction delivered in 5 four-hour sessions.
  • 5 modules:
    • Early Childhood;
    • School-Age (2 sessions);
    • Advanced Planning (residential, non-public placement, juvenile justice) and
    • College Readiness and Higher Education.
• Participants will complete a take-home exercise for each module and feedback will be provided
Thank you.

For further information:
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