An assessment of cross-system communication in the provision of educational services to children in foster care

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Cross-system communication in the provision of K-16 educational services to children in foster care: A review of the literature

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Statement of Problem

- More than 26,000 youth aged out of foster care in 2011

- In 2000, the percentage of exits due to aging out was 7 percent. In 2011, **11 percent** of the children who exited foster care aged out.

- Only 50% of foster care youth graduate from high school within 5 years

- Foster youth are less likely to perform at grade level, twice as likely to repeat a grade as their non-foster peers, and

- 2-3 times more likely to be enrolled in special education classes
Statement of Problem

- FCY are absent from school at 2 times the rate of non-FCY

- FCY are far more likely to be suspended or expelled than their non-foster counterparts

- These youth are at high risk for unemployment, homelessness, incarceration, and dependence on public assistance - in part, because of their low level of educational attainment
The Invisible Achievement Gap
An Overview
Key findings...

Demographic and school characteristics of students in foster care

Finding 1: Students in foster care are an at-risk subgroup distinct from students living in poverty.

Finding 2: Students in foster care are more likely to change schools during the school year.

Finding 3: Students in foster care are more likely than the general population to be enrolled in the lowest-performing schools.
Percentage of students by program eligibility

- Special education
  - Foster care: 8%
  - Low SES: 7%
  - All: 18%

- Migrant
  - Foster care: 0%
  - Low SES: 2%
  - All: 0%

- English learner
  - Foster care: 13%
  - Low SES: 37%
  - All: 24%

- GATE
  - Foster care: 2%
  - Low SES: 6%
  - All: 9%
Percentage of students with disability by IDEA disability category

- Specific learning disability: 52% (Foster care: 52%, Low SES: 45%, All: 39%)
- Speech or language impairment: 23% (Foster care: 23%, Low SES: 22%, All: 10%)
- Other health impairment: 9% (Foster care: 8%, Low SES: 9%, All: 11%)
- Autism: 8% (Foster care: 7%, Low SES: 6%, All: 11%)
- Mental retardation/intellectual disability: 6% (Foster care: 5%, Low SES: 6%, All: 11%)
- Emotional disturbance: 4% (Foster care: 3%, Low SES: 5%, All: 22%)
- Orthopedic impairment: 1% (Foster care: 1%, Low SES: 2%, All: 2%)
- Several disabilities indicated: 3% (Foster care: 3%, Low SES: 3%, All: 3%)

Percent of students: 0 to 100
Foster Students Change Schools at Greater Rates

- Foster care:
  - 1 School: 68%
  - 2 Schools: 23%
  - 3 Schools: 7%
  - 4+ Schools: 2%

- Low SES:
  - 1 School: 93%
  - 2 Schools: 7%
  - 3 Schools: 1%
  - 4+ Schools: <1%

- All:
  - 1 School: 93%
  - 2 Schools: 6%
  - 3 Schools: 1%
  - 4+ Schools: <1%
Foster Youth Attend Poorest Performing Schools
Key findings...

Academic achievement and education outcomes

Finding 4: Students in foster care had the lowest participation rate in California’s statewide testing program.

Finding 5: Statewide testing showed an achievement gap for students in foster care and other at-risk student groups.

Finding 6: High school students in foster care had the highest dropout rate and lowest graduation rate.
Poor Attendance by Foster Youth on Test Day

![Graph showing attendance rates by grade level and group]

- Foster care
- Low SES
- English learners
- Students with disabilities
- All
Percentage proficient or above for CST ELA results

- Foster care: 29%
- Low SES: 40%
- English learners: 22%
- Students with disabilities: 24%
- All: 53%
Percentage proficient or above for CST mathematics results grades 2-7

- Foster care: 37%
- Low SES: 50%
- English learners: 43%
- Students with disabilities: 40%
- All: 60%
Grade-12 graduation rate

- Foster care: 58%
- Low SES: 79%
- English learners: 60%
- Students with disabilities: 65%
- All: 84%
# Review of Research on Postsecondary Educational Attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Foster Care</th>
<th>Non-Foster Care</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19-year olds pursuing a 4 year degree</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>62%</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-year olds with a bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>College students who have earned a degree within 6 years</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>56%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

25-34 year olds who had a least a bachelor’s degree earned, on average, 61% more than those with only a high school diploma or GED
Significance of the Proposed Efforts

- Gaps in both k-12 & higher education achievement between former foster youth and their non-foster care peers
- Student service personnel at many post-secondary institutions are not prepared to address the unique needs of this population
- Inherent conflicts between societal values and child welfare policy and practice with respect to foster youth who have reached the age of majority
Recommendations to Improve K-16 Education Outcomes for FCY

- School stability and seamless transitions
- Exposure to post-secondary opportunities
- Assistance in obtaining financial aid, tutoring, and exam preparation
- Financial support for tuition fee waivers until age 26
- Access to housing during school year and vacations
- Permit youth to remain in care or re-enter care with court emphasis on post-secondary support
- Access to targeted services (academic, financial, mental health, social and emotional).
- Post-secondary support for students with disabilities
- Work Collaboratively to ensure achievement of these goals
FosterEd

Improving the educational outcomes of children and youth in foster care.
National Center for Youth Law

A non-profit, public interest law firm established in 1970 that works to ensure that low-income children have the resources, support, and opportunities they need for healthy and productive lives.

Substantive focuses include:

- Child Welfare
- Economic Security
- Education
- Health/Mental Health
- Juvenile Justice

FosterEd: An initiative of the National Center for Youth Law that works to improve the educational outcomes of children and youth in foster care.
Policy Area #1: Federal Law

Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008

Case plans must include assurances that:

• The placement of the child takes into account the proximity to the “school of origin”.
• The child welfare agency has coordinated with appropriate local educational agencies to ensure that the child remains in the “school of origin” if in their best interest.
• The child will be immediately enrolled in a new school if necessary.
• All educational records will be transferred to the new school.

Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

• Mandates that a child “who experiences a substantiated case of trauma due to exposure to family violence” be referred for an evaluation for early intervention services.
• Includes foster parents in the definition of “parent,” expanding the pool of people who can advocate for children in IEP meetings.
Federal Law Continued

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act
• Applies to children and youth living in a wide variety of unstable or inadequate situations, including those foster children “awaiting foster care placement”.
• McKinney-Vento provides homeless youth many rights, including the right to remain in one school, the right to receive transportation to and from their school of origin, the right to immediate enrollment, and the right to supplemental services such as tutoring.

Head Start and Early Head Start Legislation
• All children in foster care are categorically eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start programs.
• McKinney-eligible children receive priority placement since they are so at-risk.

College Cost Reduction Act of 2007
• Allows students who were in foster care at age 13 or older to claim independent status when applying for federal financial aid

Uninterrupted Scholars Act of 2013
• Makes key amendments to FERPA that will improve the ability of information sharing between education and child welfare agencies
Policy Area #2: State and Local Data Sharing

Academic Research

State Efforts
- One-time state data matching
- Ongoing state data matching
- Sharing limited data with local agencies
- Sharing additional data with local agencies

Local Efforts
- Importing data into school information systems
- Importing data into child welfare case management systems
- Third party systems
The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the California Department of Education (CDE) must share information such that CDE knows which students are in foster care.

Every even numbered-year CDE must produce a report detailing the educational outcomes of students in foster care for the Legislature and Governor.

CDE must inform school districts which of their students are in foster care on a weekly basis.

CDSS must share with CDE disaggregated data helpful to ensuring pupils in foster care receive appropriate educational supports and services.

CDE must share this information with school districts on a weekly basis.
Policy Area #3: Statutes Targeting Common Challenges

School stability: Allow foster youth to attend their school of origin even if he or she doesn’t reside in the district.

Immediate enrollment: Allow foster youth to immediately enroll in school even if he or she does not possess medical or academic records.

Transfer of records: Require agencies to transfer academic records in a timely manner.

Partial Credits: Require school districts to calculate and accept partial credit for coursework completed.

Graduation requirements: Allow foster youth to graduate if their school mobility has prevented them from meeting local graduation requirements.
Policy Area #4: Programmatic Supports

Foster Youth Education Liaisons: Professionals who assist individual foster children overcome educational obstacles through increased inter-agency communication and individualized support

- Distinction #1: School level, district level, or regional?
- Distinction #2: Funded or unfunded?
- Distinction #3: child welfare employee, school system employee, or non-profit employee?

States with Foster Youth Education Liaisons: Arkansas, California, Indiana, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Washington
Policy Area #5: Incentive Local Agencies

Centralized State Programs: A statewide program with employees who usually report to one state-level agency. Examples: Indiana, Washington.

Decentralized State Programs: Some requirements about programmatic requirements but a significant amount of local flexibility. Example: California’s foster youth services program.

Local Control with Accountability: California recently became the first state to include foster youth in their state accountability framework, the Academic Performance Index (API).

- California school districts are developing local control and accountability plans that include goals for foster youth, the actions needed to accomplish these goals, and the associated budget.

- School districts are receiving supplemental and concentration funds to implement such programs.
Example: LAUSD’s Proposed LCAP Provisions for Foster Youth

**Overview:** LAUSD serves over 11,604* foster youth, which is 12% of the total foster youth in California.

**Expected Outcomes:**
- 100% of elementary foster youth will receive a comprehensive academic assessment
- 100% of secondary foster youth will have an individualized culmination or graduation plan

**Examples of Supports:**
- 1:100 PSA Counselor/Psychiatric Social Worker to student ratio
- Increase in tutoring services
- Partnership with city of Los Angeles to expand Family Source center
- Portion of funding allocated directly to schools

*Foster youth number is from March CALPADS—does not include affiliated charters

**Budget (LCFF Total is Supplemental and Concentration amount for each year)**

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<th>2013-14</th>
<th>2014-15</th>
<th>2015-16</th>
<th>2016-17</th>
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Programmatic Element #1: Ensure every student in foster care is supported by an educational champion.
Programmatic Element #2: Proactive identification of educational strengths and needs and creation of Ed. Plan

Gather critical education related information

Use information to identify ed strengths and needs (Ed Screen)

Use identified strengths and needs to develop education intervention plan (Ed Plan)

Distribute Ed Plan to critical stakeholders

Ensure Ed Plan is implemented as intended

(See FosterEd Ed Plan Process)
Programmatic Element #3: Ensure every student in foster care is strengthened by an education team

Goal: Ensure every student in foster care has an education team supporting their success in school.

• Identification of wide-range of stakeholders willing and able to help support educational success
• Increased communication
• Collaborative education case planning and monitoring

Team members include:

• Social worker
• Caregiver
• Ed rights holder
• CASA
• School site staff
• Dependency attorney
• Mentors and coaches
• Special education case manager / coordinator
• Youth if age appropriate

(See Goalbook demonstration)
Federal Discretionary Grants: Child Welfare & Education System Collaboration Grants

HHS 2011 ACF Grant Recipients
• Alleghany Co, PA  
• Kids Central Inc, Florida  
• Legal Aid Society of Greater Cinncinatti, OH  
• North Carolina State University  
• Souixland Human Investment Partnership, Iowa  
• Solano Co. Office of Ed, CA  
• State of Connecticut Dept. Children & Families  
• State of Utah Department of Human Services  
• Texas Education Agency  
• University of Kansas Center for Research Inc.

HHS 2012 ACF Grant Recipients
• University of Vermont & State Agriculture College  
• Wisconsin Department of Children and Families  
• Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe Inc.  
• National Center for Youth Law, Santa Cruz, CA  
• San Diego County Superintendent of Schools, CA  
• University of Louisville Research Foundation  
• New York City Administration for Children & Families  
• Colorado Department of Human Services  
• Oregon Department of Human Services  
• County of Luca (Toledo) Ohio
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grantee Name</th>
<th>Project Components</th>
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<tr>
<td>Allegheny County, PA</td>
<td>DataSharing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kids Central, Inc., Ocala, FL</td>
<td>Data Sharing, Educational Liaisons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati, OH</td>
<td>Data Sharing, Educational Liaisons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of Utah Department of Human Services</td>
<td>Recruit Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers to be Educational Liaisons</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Carolina State University (NCSU) Focusing on schools in Cumberland County, NC.</td>
<td>Curriculum Development</td>
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<td>Collaboration between Education and Child Welfare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Siouxland Human Investment Partnership (SHIP) Focusing on youth ages 13 and older who are from either Pottawattamie or Woodbury County, Iowa</td>
<td>Data Sharing,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solano County Office of Education (SCOE)</td>
<td>Project H.O.P.E (Help, Opportunity, Preparation for Education)</td>
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<td>Data Sharing, Educational Liaisons</td>
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<tr>
<td>State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) Focus on youth ages 10- in Waterbury Public Schools, 10 – 17</td>
<td>Data Sharing, Cross collaborative training to Child Welfare and Education Staff,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas Education Agency (TEA)</td>
<td>Data Sharing, Collaboration between Courts, Education and Child Welfare</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Kansas Center for Research, Inc.</td>
<td>Develop a Kansas Blueprint for Change</td>
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<td>Perform a data capacity needs assessment on cross-system collaboration;</td>
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# Child Welfare - Education System Collaborations to Increase Educational Stability Grants

funded from 2012-2014  HHS-2011-ACF-ACYF-CO-0183

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<td>Wisconsin Department of Children and Families</td>
<td>Collaboration between Education and Child Welfare</td>
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<td>Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Inc.</td>
<td>Focus on Education career planning, dropout prevention, data sharing/data implementation</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Center for Youth Law</td>
<td>Data-driven education coaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Diego County Superintendent of Schools</td>
<td>Focus on information systems, transportation to school of origin, school-based mental health, and educational advocacy through Student Success Navigators.</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Louisville Research Foundation, Inc.</td>
<td>Data Sharing, Focus assessing and developing interagency infrastructure to address youth’s educational needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>New York City Administration for Children's Services</td>
<td>Data Sharing to all 32 contracted agencies, Training of Child welfare staff</td>
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<td>Colorado Department of Human Services</td>
<td>Cross collaboration between Child Welfare and Education Staff, and Promote development of policies and procedures relating to trauma-informed practice.</td>
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<td>Oregon Department of Human Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>County of Lucas, (Toledo) Ohio</td>
<td>Focus on providing supportive services to cross over youth</td>
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<td>Collaboration with schools, juvenile courts and child welfare</td>
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<td>State</td>
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<td>Alabama</td>
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<td>Washington*</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
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Notes:
- California has a rolling implementation. Youth who are no more than 21 years of age are eligible 1/1/2014.
- Nebraska has a plan amendment submitted to extend foster care from 19 to 21.
- Washington: Post-Secondary education condition is effective 4/1/2012.
- Conditions: Completing secondary education or a program leading to an equivalent credential. Enrolled in an institution which provides post-secondary or vocational education. Participating in a program or activity designed to promote or remove barriers to employment. Employed for at least 80 hours per month. Incapable of doing any of the above described activities due to a medical condition, which incapability is supported by regularly updated information in the case plan of the child.

Reference: [http://nrcyd.ou.edu/](http://nrcyd.ou.edu/)
### 22 State Tuition Waiver Programs for Youth in Foster Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Tuition Waiver for Foster Youth Information</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alaska (AK)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.alaska.edu/benefits/tuition-waivers/">http://www.alaska.edu/benefits/tuition-waivers/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona (AZ)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.azleg.gov/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/legtext/51leg/1r/bills/sb1208h.htm&amp;Session_ID=110">http://www.azleg.gov/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/legtext/51leg/1r/bills/sb1208h.htm&amp;Session_ID=110</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida (FL)</td>
<td><a href="http://guardianadlitem.org/Practice_Manual_files/PDFs/Ch11_Road_to_Independence_Program_Independent_Living.pdf">http://guardianadlitem.org/Practice_Manual_files/PDFs/Ch11_Road_to_Independence_Program_Independent_Living.pdf</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kansas (KS)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kansasregents.org/resources/PDF/641-2010FosterCareWaiverApp8AFCedassistanceapplication.pdf">http://www.kansasregents.org/resources/PDF/641-2010FosterCareWaiverApp8AFCedassistanceapplication.pdf</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kentucky (KY)</td>
<td><a href="http://chfs.ky.gov/dcb/dpp/IndLivingEducationAssistance.htm">http://chfs.ky.gov/dcb/dpp/IndLivingEducationAssistance.htm</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maine (ME)</td>
<td><a href="https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/cw/post.htm">https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/cw/post.htm</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maryland (MD)</td>
<td><a href="https://www.mhec.state.md.us/financialaid/ProgramDescriptions/prog_fostercare.asp">https://www.mhec.state.md.us/financialaid/ProgramDescriptions/prog_fostercare.asp</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts (MA)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.osfa.mass.edu/default.asp?page=fosterChildWaiver">http://www.osfa.mass.edu/default.asp?page=fosterChildWaiver</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Minnesota (MN)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missouri (MO)</td>
<td><a href="http://dss.mo.gov/cd/chafee/misouri-reach.htm">http://dss.mo.gov/cd/chafee/misouri-reach.htm</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>New Jersey (NJ)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fafsonline.org/njfc-scholars-program.html">http://www.fafsonline.org/njfc-scholars-program.html</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>North Carolina (NC)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ncreach.org/apply/">http://www.ncreach.org/apply/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Oregon (OR)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/children/fostercare/docs/FosterYouthTuitionWaiverInfoupdate.pdf">http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/children/fostercare/docs/FosterYouthTuitionWaiverInfoupdate.pdf</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rhode Island (RI)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Carolina (SC)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dcfy.ri.gov/docs/postsecondary_tuition_assistance_program_faq20140114.pdf">http://www.dcfy.ri.gov/docs/postsecondary_tuition_assistance_program_faq20140114.pdf</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas (TX)</td>
<td><a href="https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/education/financial.asp">https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/education/financial.asp</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Utah (UT)</td>
<td><a href="http://youthmentorproject.org/blog/scholarship-aged-out-youth">http://youthmentorproject.org/blog/scholarship-aged-out-youth</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Virginia (VA)</td>
<td><a href="http://old.vccs.edu/Students/TuitionGrant/tabid/413/Default.aspx">http://old.vccs.edu/Students/TuitionGrant/tabid/413/Default.aspx</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia (WV)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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What has MI Done? State Level Policy Reactions

- Public Act 225 of 2011 - YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTARY FOSTER CARE ACT/ Extends foster care eligibility to age 21
- The Michigan Department of Human Services has hired 17 regional Education Planners (work focuses on youth 14+)
What has MI Done? State Level Policy Reactions

- In July of 2011, the state's consent decree was revised to prioritize the educational needs of children in foster care.
- September 2012 1st annual Fostering Futures fundraiser sponsored by MI Depts. Human Services & Treasury. Raised $187,000 for private scholarships for foster youth. Administered through MET program (not age specific)
- Chafee resources were appropriated in the state FY 2012 budget to provide contracts for 7 Michigan colleges and universities to adopt college access and retention programs. (These programs have been in operation since Oct. 2012)
- $750,000 appropriation TANF $ to support post-secondary scholarships for FCY in FY 2014 budget under current debate (those in care on or after age 13)
What has MI Done? State Level Policy Reactions

- 2012 DHS State Appropriation ($1.8 million)
- Funded Schools
  - Baker College Flint
  - Eastern Michigan University
  - Ferris State University
  - Michigan State University
  - Saginaw Valley State University
  - University of Michigan- Flint
  - Wayne State University
- Schools privately funded that provide comprehensive services
  - Western Michigan University – Sieta Scholars
  - University of Michigan-Blavins Scholars
Transition to Independent Program (TIP) at Wayne State University

http://tipwaynestate.org
WSU’s TIP Program: What do we offer?

• 24 hour crisis support
• Peer to peer mentoring
• Career based mentoring
• Tutoring services
• Academic Advising
• Financial Aid assistance
• Counseling (group/individual)
• Housing assistance

• Employment assistance
• Student Disability Services
• Health care services
• Community activities
• Financial literacy
• Life Skills course
• Leadership opportunities

• Assistance with navigating community supports from agencies like the Michigan Department of Human Services programs
Contact Information

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Assets for Independence College Matching Savings Accounts
http://idaresources.acf.hhs.gov/Home

Supporting Success Guide for Colleges
http://www.casey.org/resources/publications/SupportingSuccess.htm

Improving Higher Education Outcomes Bibliography

National Resource for Youth Development, Lists every State’s independent living specialist
http://www.nrcyd.ou.edu

Foster Care to Success- How you can help- Internship Program, Care Package Campaign
http://www.fc2success.org/

WestEd's Invisible Achievement Gap report can be found at:

Providing Effective Financial Aid Assistance to Students in Foster Care
http://www.californiacasa.org/Downloads/Providing_Effective_Financial_Aid.pdf