Supporting Foster and Homeless Youth in Education

California School-Based Health Alliance
11/3/2021
Acknowledgements
Placer County Office of Education: Prevention, Supports, and Services Department

- Student Attendance Review Board (SARB)
- Transition Partnership Program and Workability
- Social Emotional Learning, Suicide Prevention, and Mental Wellness
- Foster Youth Services
- Independent Living Program (TAY Foster Youth)
- Tobacco Use Prevention and Education (TUPE)
- School-based Wellness Programs
- Homeless Education Services
- Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)
- CSEC Youth Services
MEET OUR TEAM
FOSTER/HOMELESS/CSEC

Alice Bonum, Coordinator, Foster/Homeless/CSEC Youth Services. ambonum@placecoro.org. 520-745-3503. Alice is the manager of the Foster Homeless/CSEC team at PCOE. Her role includes supporting school districts and county partners to understand the educational rights of Foster and Homeless students, consulting on complex cases, and conducting trauma-informed practice training and consultation for a variety of educational audiences.

Michelle Graf, Program Manager, Independent Living Program. mgraf@plpco.org. 520-686-3805. Michelle manages the Independent Living Program (ILP) for current and former foster youth in achieving self-sufficiency prior to and foster care system ages 14-21.

Amy Maggard, Student Support Practitioner, CSEC Program. ammaggard@plpco.org. 520-745-1337. Amy provides Tier 4 - 8 IL educational services to foster and at-risk or confirmed permanent special education, including education, requests, transportation support, AB 1407 support, facilitation of shelter, wraparound meetings. She also provides trainings and consultation to community partners, collaborates closely with child welfare, juvenile, and family law attorneys, and develops CSEC outreach materials for youth and families.

Evelyn Del Bosque, Multilingual Community Liaison. edelbosque@placecoro.org. 520-745-3456. Evelyn supports Spanish-speaking families and their student involvement with the Student Attendance Review Board, at-risk of serious or at-risk of homelessness. She also provides trainings to families on a variety of topics, including prevention and healthy relationships.

Amanda Condon, amcondon@placecoro.org. 520-745-3473. Ashley York, ashleyyork@placecoro.org. 520-696-0080. Student Support Practitioners, Foster Youth Services and Homeless Education. Amanda and Ashley prepare and distribute monthly Foster Youth reports districts, provide notification to district Foster Youth Liaisons about new Hand in Heart placements; and provide various Tier 4 and Tier 1 foster youth with comprehensive services that support their educational and health needs.

Kim Samuels, ksamuels@placecoro.org. 520-886-3076. Athena Zografou, azografou@placecoro.org. 914-669-3516. Student Support Practitioners, Foster Youth Services. Kim and Athena provide a “Dual Custody” support to local schools to foster the school-care coordination for the school staff to provide supports to foster youth and their families. These services include: informal care management, case management, and specialized support to homeless students. They also work closely with foster youth on developing their academic skills and career readiness in a variety of educational settings.

Javier Mercado-Aleman, jmercado-aleman@placecoro.org. 520-886-6478. Kelly Klinker, kklinker@placecoro.org. 520-886-6735. ILP Support Practitioners, Independent Living Program. Javier and Kelly assist current and former foster youth with access to one-on-one case management, life skills workshops, enrichment activities, and other services linked to supporting transition to adulthood. Areas of focus include career development, education, employment, and personal development.

Jessica Leohn, jleohn@placecoro.org. 520-745-3467. Jessica provides administrative support and coordination for the Foster/Homeless/CSEC Team.

Click here to visit our website.
I’m wondering....

• What are some education barriers you could imagine foster/homeless students encountering?
• How can educators can support students in foster care or homeless situations?
• Any questions to ensure we address?
What’s the Plan?

• Learn about the unique needs of foster and homeless students

• Review relevant laws, procedures, and trauma-informed practices
Foster Youth
Foster Youth in California, 2018-19

• Almost 60,000 youth in foster care throughout the state
• Highest rates are in rural counties (e.g. Humboldt, Trinity)
• Overrepresentation of black and brown youth, especially African-American and Native American
• Over ½ are in Kinship care or foster (resource) home placements
• Over 1/3 experience three or more placements during their time in care
• Only about ½ a percent of the total population attending public schools, approximately 33,000 students
### Educational outcomes for Foster Youth, 2018-19

<table>
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<th><strong>Low school stability:</strong> Students in foster care experienced higher rates of school moves and transfers compared to their non-foster peers. One third attend 2 or more schools during a single school year.</th>
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<td><strong>Low graduation rates:</strong> Only 64 percent of youth in foster care graduate within 4 years, compared to 85 percent of their non-foster peers. The single year drop out rate for Foster Youth is 8 percent.</td>
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<td><strong>High suspension rates:</strong> 14.6 percent of foster youth were suspended at least once, compared to 3.4 percent of their non-foster peers. This percentage is highest of all the subgroups reported on the Dashboard.</td>
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Who counts as “foster” in education?

Any child who is under:
- 300’s: Juvenile dependency court petition, regardless of if the child has been removed from their home.
- 602’s: Juvenile delinquency court petition, removed from their home by the court and placed into foster care. Could be in foster home, relative home, or group home.
- Aged 18-21 in extended foster care
- New for 2021! Youth under the jurisdiction of a tribal court
- New for 2021! Youth subject to voluntary placement agreements

A foster youth’s status for LCFF is not determined by where or with whom they live.
Homeless Youth
• California school districts have identified approximately 3.2 percent of their students as Homeless Youth, or 207,000 students
  • 85 percent are “doubled up”
  • 7 percent in shelters
  • 5 percent in hotels
  • 4 percent unsheltered
• A benchmark is 10 percent of a district’s Free and Reduced population at any given time are experiencing unstable housing or homelessness. This would amount to 370,000 students.
• In addition, there are at least 13,000 unaccompanied youth, 1500 of whom are under 18.

Source: KidsData.org; California Dashboard; California State Auditor’s Office; retrieved October 19, 2021
# Educational outcomes for Homeless students, 2018-19

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<th><strong>Low school stability:</strong> Students experiencing homelessness transfer schools at a much higher rate than their housed peers. 42 percent transferred at least once; 51 percent transferred two or more times.</th>
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<td><strong>High dropout rates:</strong> Only 77 percent of youth experiencing homelessness graduate within 4 years, compared to 85 percent of their non-foster peers. In 2018-19, 18 percent dropped out of school.</td>
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<td><strong>High suspension rates:</strong> 6.2 percent of homeless youth were suspended at least once, compared to 3.4 percent of their non-foster peers.</td>
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What counts as Homeless (McKinney-Vento) in education?

Any youth/family lacking adequate housing and living in:

• Unsheltered locations (cars, parks, abandoned buildings)
• Emergency shelters
• Transitional housing
• Motels and hotels (includes trailer parks or camp grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations)
• Doubling Up (sharing the housing of others due to economic hardship, loss of housing, etc.)

It is the school district’s responsibility to identify McKinney-Vento families and youth, and connect them to services and supports.
How do school districts learn that a student is experiencing homelessness?

- Attuned school staff
- McKinney-Vento posters
- Housing questionnaires
- Caregiver or student disclosure
- Community provider or county office notification
Additional McK-V Identification tips

• Families/students who spend even a short time doubled-up or in a hotel may qualify for McK-V.

• Families/students may be reluctant to identify as homeless, but still experiencing unstable housing that “counts”.

• Once a student(s) is identified, students should be coded as McKinney-Vento in your SIS.

• Keep that student coded as McK-V throughout the end of the school year, even if their housing status changes.

• Either in at the close or beginning of the school year, reassess families status and change SIS code accordingly.
What are some signs of homelessness?

• Enrollment at multiple schools, lack of records, gaps in learning
• Poor/inconsistent attendance
• Talking about frequent moves, sleeping on couches, floors, etc.
• Poor hygiene, unmet medical/dental needs, wearing the same clothes repeatedly, fatigue, hoarding food
• Social and behavioral challenges, such as extreme shyness, withdrawal, or aggression; clinginess; difficulty with peer and/or adult relationships; poor attention span; anxiety late in the school day
• Lack of participation in field trips and/or afterschool activities
• Lack of basic school supplies
McKinney-Vento Form

- Serves as an “formal” verification of their Homeless status
- Should be available in multiple-languages
- For Unaccompanied Youth, district Homeless Liaison signs under “Parent/Caregiver”
- If you are serving a student whose sibling attends another school/district, proactively notify the Homeless Liaison at that school/district
Important Rights to Help Foster and Homeless Youth Succeed in School
Sources for this section
Foster and Homeless Liaisons

• Every district in the state must designate a staff person as the educational liaison for foster students and homeless students.

• Liaisons are responsible to:
  • Ensure proper educational placement, enrollment, and checkout from school
  • Ensure immediate enrollment, the proper transfer credits, records, and grades
  • Facilitate the best interest determination process when considering school placement change
  • Notify ERH, social worker, and attorney of discipline actions
  • Serve as an advocate for students

In Placer County, we call the liaisons FHYDLs, or Foster/Homeless Youth District Liaisons
What educational rights and benefits do youth in foster care and experiencing homelessness have?

- Right to attend their school of origin
- Support with transportation to their school
- Access to tutoring and other academic supports
- Automatically qualify for free meals
- Special considerations for expulsion proceedings
- Right to immediate enrollment and records transfer if they change schools
- Right to partial credit if they change schools
- Right to be assessed for reduced graduation requirements
- Right to equal access for all school services and programs (e.g. sports, extracurricular activities)

In general, schools must remove barriers to full participation in school.
What does “school of origin” mean?

- The school that the student attended when permanently housed/before they were in foster care; OR

- The school in which the student was last enrolled; OR

- The school the student has a connection to AND attended within the immediately preceding 15 months AND the foster/homeless youth liaison, educational rights holder, and student agree is in their best interest to deem it the school of origin.
Increasing School Stability

Students in foster care and who are homeless are entitled to:

- Stay at their school of origin throughout the jurisdiction of the court or their experience of homelessness.
- Stay at their school of origin through the end of the school year (if in K-8) or graduation (if in high school) if the court jurisdiction is terminated or homelessness ends before the end of the academic year.
- Matriculate with their peers for the duration of the time that they are in foster care or experiencing homelessness.
- Must determine whether waiving right to remain in school of origin is in youth’s best interest through a best interest determination process.

School of Origin is the default! Foster and Homeless Youth should NOT be automatically transferred to a new school when they move.
Why is School Stability so important?

- Foster youth change schools 3 times as much as their non-foster peers.
- Foster youth who have more than 2 child welfare placements, or who are in care for more than 6 months, experience even more school instability.
- Every school change results in a loss of 4-6 months of academic skill attainment.
- School stability is associated with increased “social capital” and relationships (both peers and adults) that support overall student success.
- For high school students, school changes can mean loss of credits and difficulty transferring credits.
What if School of Origin is in question or unreasonable?

Hold a Best Interest Determination Process with at least the Ed Rights holder/Parent/Guardian, Foster/Homeless Youth District Liaison, and the youth, if developmentally appropriate. You can also include other school staff, and community supports!
Transportation to School: Foster Youth

• ESSA says...School districts and Child Welfare agencies MUST work together to develop and implement written transportation procedures.

• These written procedures include districts having Transportation Assurances and a MOU/contract for reimbursement.

• In Placer County, the Child Welfare agency reimburses school districts for transportation of foster youth to their schools of origin.
Transportation to School: Homeless Youth

- Transportation must be provided to and from the school of origin at the request of the parent or guardian, or, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, at the request of the local liaison [42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(1)(J)(iii)].

- Based on the best interest of the student and in consultation with the parent, the LEA ultimately determines the mode of transportation.

- If a homeless student moves outside of the district boundaries, the LEA of origin and the LEA of residence “must agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs...for transportation to SOO”. If an agreement can not be made, the costs will be shared.

- In Placer County, our LEAs frequently share costs; use Title I, Part A funds; use McKinney-Vento grant funds; and submit for end-of-year partial reimbursement from PCOE.
Enrollment and School Records

• **Immediate Enrollment**: If a foster or homeless student’s right to SOO is waived, the new school district must immediately enroll the student, even if they do not have all the required documentation, including immunization records within 2 days of receiving a request.

• **Records Transfer**: School districts must request records for incoming students within 2 business days of a foster/homeless youth’s enrollment; must forward records to a requesting school within 2 days of receiving a request.
A note about ERHs and resource parents

• Resource Parents, STRTP staff, and other caregivers can access educational information and make *some* educational decisions for youth in their care including:
  o Receive copies of transcripts, grades, attendance, behavior reports, IEPs
  o Sign field trip and other permission forms
  o Excuse a student from school or pick them up from school
  o Access online “home to school” communication platforms
  o Assist a student with scholarship and college applications
  o Enroll student in school and extracurricular activities

• If Resource Parents and STRTP staff DO NOT have education rights, they cannot:
  o Sign an assessment plan or IEP. Decisions about whether or not to attend an IEP should be made with the ERH and/or CSW
  o Make unilateral decisions about school placement (e.g. transferring a child from their school of origin)

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billCompareClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB233&showamends=false
Reduced Graduation Requirements: AB 167/216/1806

Exempts foster/homeless youth who transfer schools any time after completing their second year of high school from local graduation requirements if they would not be able to reasonably meet these additional local requirements.
What criteria must students satisfy to be eligible for AB 167/1806?

• The student is a “pupil in foster care” or McKinney-Vento

• The youth must have transferred schools after completing their second year of high school

• The district must find that the youth is **not able to complete** the additional graduation requirements by their fourth year of high school

• The district must offer a 5th year if the additional graduation requirements can be met by then

• The youth must complete all California graduation requirements, 130 credits + pass CAHSEE
Partial Credits

States and school districts must implement procedures to identify and remove barriers to McKinney-Vento students receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed at a prior school (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(F)(ii); EHCY Guidance, Question O-2).

Foster youth who transfer schools mid-semester have a right to receive full or partial credits, based on seat-time, for all work satisfactorily completed before transferring schools. Upon receiving notification that a foster youth is transferring schools, a sending school must issue check out grades and full or partial credits on an official transcript. The receiving school must accept all check out grades and credits, apply them to the same or equivalent courses, and immediately enroll foster youth in the same or equivalent classes as they were enrolled in at the sending school. In order to comply with the law, school districts must issue partial credits pursuant to their own calculation method or use the Partial Credit Model Policy. Cal. Educ. Code §§ 49069.5, 51225.2.
Enforcing Foster Youth Education Rights

**AB 379** allows foster youth to enforce the following education rights through the **Uniform Complaint Procedure**:

- Immediate enrollment
- School of origin
- Least restrictive setting
- Partial credits
- AB 167/216
- Access to same academic resources, services and extracurricular activities available to all students

*EC §§ 48853, 48853.5, 49069.5, 51225.1, & 51225.2.*
Being Trauma-Informed with Foster/Homeless Students
Tips for Working with Foster Youth...

**DO:**
- Handle newly separated youth with care
- Know who holds Educational Rights
- Keep court documents in a confidential file (not CUME)
- Send and request educational records within 2 days
- Identify core professionals and natural supports to consult with regarding academic and behavioral needs
- Include these core professional and natural supports in school-based meetings, including celebratory events
- Ensure youth have equal access to extracurricular activities, including sports, arts, clubs, etc.
- Advocate for youth in foster care and ask them what they need.

**DO NOT:**
- Ask about a student’s biological parents unless prompted by them
- Assume student wants Foster (Resource) Family to be referred to as “parents”
- Offer opinions about a student’s biological parents, resource parents, or group home
- Assume student should be "grateful" for being out of an abusive or neglectful home situation
- Threaten to call attorney, social worker, or probation officer for problem behavior
- Speak FOR youth in meetings; include them in decision-making as much as possible
With McKinney-Vento families

**DO:**
- Notice signs of unstable housing and homelessness, and refer appropriately
- Use the term “families in transition” or "in between homes"
- Ask students/families about living situation in a sensitive way
- Post McKV rights poster in your area
- Code students as McKV in SIS
- Make school and hygiene supplies and snacks available
- Automatically enroll identified students in the free/ reduced lunch program, no application necessary
- Assist the family in calling 211

**DO NOT:**
- Use the term “homeless” (unless student/family uses it first)
- Assume families are unemployed or not working
- Delay enrollment, even if they don’t have all the paperwork
- Require interdistrict transfers, residency affidavits, or proof of residency as a condition of enrollment
- Contact landlords or housing agencies to conduct investigations about a student or family
- Use police officers for home visits. If their McKinney-Vento status is in question, consult with your County Office of Education
- Automatically file a CPS (SCAR) report—homeless alone is not a reason for child welfare intervention
Tier 1 Strategies for Foster and Homeless Youth

- Know your district’s Foster and Homeless Liaison(s); know your County Office of Education’s Foster and Homeless Liaison(s).
- Assign site-based liaisons to serve as the main point of contact for youth in foster care or students experiencing homelessness.
- Keep up to date on student’s social workers/POs/community case managers, Ed Rights Holders, and current living circumstances.
- Train school staff in general trauma-informed strategies for the classroom.
- Notify teachers and other educators when a student enters foster care or becomes homeless.
- Ensure school counseling staff are aware of graduation exemption protocols; FAFSA and CalGrant options; and other post-secondary supports.
- Visit your local shelters, group homes, and transitional housing programs to better understand what it’s like for students living there.
Tier 2 & 3 Strategies for Foster and Homeless Youth

- Anticipate difficult times and transitions e.g. home visits, placement changes, weekends, before court dates, when moving to a new hotel or shelter.
- Implement Check In Check Out or other daily mentoring interventions.
- **For Homeless Youth**: Facilitate referrals to community-based homeless services providers, including referrals for the family/parents (with their permission). Assist the families in navigating these referrals.
- **For Foster Youth**: Connect with the student’s social worker and other community providers, and ask to collaborate in support of student by attending meetings, sharing information, etc.
- Offer small groups for trauma-impacted students on managing stress, triggers, and trauma responses (e.g. CBITS). If you have multiple foster or homeless youth, consider inviting them to participate in a group together to share experiences.
- Offer small group or individual parent/caregiver education on positive child/adolescent development and stress responses.
PCOE Family Outreach Referral Form

- This form is intended for school districts, county, and community-based partners to refer students and families to the PCOE Prevention, Supports and Services team.

- Referrals will be considered after site and district interventions have been attempted (e.g. home visits, SSTs, calling 211, mental health referrals).

- The team will reach out to the referring party first before attempting to reach out to families and/or students to further assess needs and provide coaching/guidance.

- Si necesita enviar una referencia en español, por favor comuníquese con Evelyn al 530-745-1486.
Some of the most therapeutic experiences do not take place in ‘therapy’ but in naturally occurring healthy relationships (Bruce Perry, 2011)