
Blueprint for Change: Improving Education Outcomes for Children in Foster Care

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LEGAL CENTER FOR

FOSTER CARE & EDUCATION

- Collaboration between ABA, Casey Family Programs, Annie E. Casey Foundation -- in conjunction with the Juvenile Law Center and Education Law Center
 - A national technical assistance resource and information clearinghouse on legal and policy matters affecting the education of children and youth in out-of-home care
 - Website: **www.abanet.org/child/education**
 - Listserv, Conference Calls, Publications, Searchable Database
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Outline of Presentation

- *Endless Dreams: Video*
 - *Blueprint for Change Framework and Tips for Advocates*
 - *Links and Resources*
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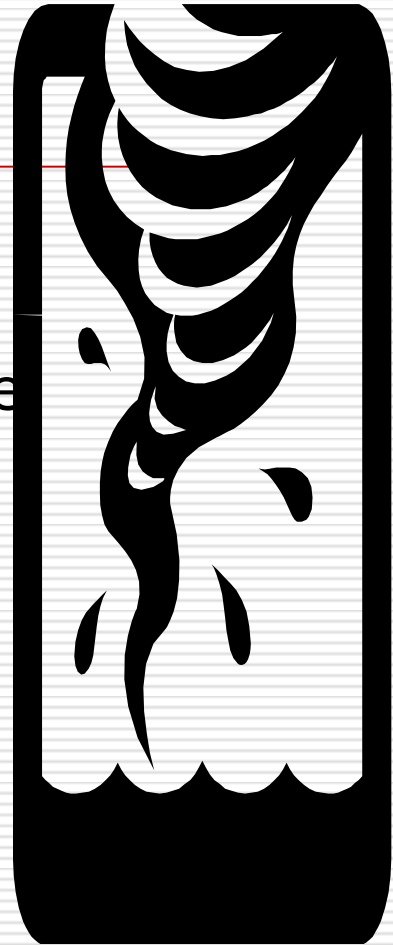
Video: Endless Dreams

Who are the children and youth in out-of-home care?

- ❑ Approx. 800,000 youth a year (1% of all US youth); over 500,000 on any day.
- ❑ 71% school age; 29% under age 5
- ❑ 60% will return home
- ❑ 50% stay in care for less than a year

The Whirlwind of Foster Care

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- ❑ Removed from home/parents/siblings
 - May not have had chance to say goodbye
 - Uncertain about where parents/siblings are
 - ❑ Living with strangers
 - In strange house/room/bed
 - Different customs/routine
 - Other children in home
 - ❑ Few or none of your possessions
 - ❑ Uncertainty about future
 - Where will I live?
 - Will I return home?
 - Where will I go to school?



What challenges do youth in
care face related to education?

Examples of the Barriers to Educational Achievement for Children in Care

- Lack of placement stability
 - Delayed enrollment
 - Children with special education needs do not access/receive services
 - Over-representation in alternative education
 - Confusion about legal rights
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“For years, we have focused only on protection of foster children. Protection must be priority number one, but we must do more. We must ensure access to education and provide equality in that education. We ask more of almost every other group in America. Today, we must begin to ask more of ourselves and our foster children when it comes to education.”

Positive Effects When Addressed

- **When *focus is on education*, the results are:**
 - improved academic performance
 - decreased behavior problems
 - lower drop-out rates
 - more successful transitions to employment or higher education

 - **Education can be a *positive counterweight* to abuse, neglect, separation, and impermanence and increases chances for personal fulfillment and economic self-sufficiency.**

 - **Education must be approached as *integral to permanency* rather than as a choice between permanency and education.**
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Important Role of the Advocate

- **Advocacy vs. decision making roles**
 - ANYONE who works and knows the child can be an advocate for their school needs (both in the school and in the child welfare case)
 - Only specific individuals have the legal authority to make education decisions for a child in foster care.
 - **School based interventions and advocacy vs. Courtroom/child welfare case based advocacy**
 - Example of school based: attending an IEP meeting
 - Example of courtroom based: including education issues in court report, argument before the judge, or in a court order
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Blueprint for Change: Education Success for Children in Foster Care



- **8 Goals** for Youth
 - **Benchmarks** for each goal indicating progress toward achieving education success
 - National, State, and Local **Examples**
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Stakeholders: Those who affect the lives of children in foster care and must be involved in any reform

- Foster parents
- Children, youth & alumni
- Birth parents
- Caregivers and other relatives

- Caseworkers
- Child Welfare Agencies
- Special advocates
- Tribal partners

- Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA volunteers)
 - Children's attorneys
 - Guardians *Ad Litem* (GAL)
 - Parent attorneys
 - Child welfare agency attorneys
 - Judges & Magistrates

 - Teachers & school staff
 - School systems & attorneys
 - Policymakers
 - Community partners
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Goals for Youth

- Goal 1: Remain in the Same School**
 - Goal 2: Seamless Transitions Between Schools**
 - Goal 3: Young Children Are Ready to Learn**
 - Goal 4: Equal Access to the School Experience**
 - Goal 5: School Dropout, Truancy, and Disciplinary Actions Addressed**
 - Goal 6: Involving and Empowering Youth**
 - Goal 7: Supportive Adults as Advocates and Decisionmakers**
 - Goal 8: Obtaining Postsecondary Education**
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What are the benefits of school stability and continuity?

- Students
 - Child Welfare Agencies
 - Resource Families
 - Education Agencies
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GOAL 1: YOUTH ARE ENTITLED TO REMAIN IN THEIR SAME SCHOOL WHEN FEASIBLE

- ❑ On average, a child in care may changes schools two to three times per year.**
 - ❑ With each move, a child falls three to six months academically behind their classmates.**
 - ❑ Academic difficulties are more likely to go unnoticed; records misplaced, credits lost and academic placements may be inappropriate.**
 - ❑ Almost half of foster youth nationally do not complete high school.**
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BENCHMARKS THAT SHOW PROGRESS TOWARD GOAL 1

- ❑ School stability and continuity considered in foster care placement decisions**
 - ❑ Youth have a right to stay in their school of origin when in their best interest to do so, and implementation of that right includes transportation**
 - ❑ Youth have necessary supports and information to make school placement decisions; those working with youth are training on legal entitlements and dispute procedures**
 - ❑ Youth with disabilities have a stable appropriate educational setting, receive necessary services, including transportation.**
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GOAL 2: YOUTH ARE GUARANTEED SEAMLESS TRANSITIONS BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS WHEN SCHOOL MOVES OCCUR

- Children in care fall behind due to enrollment delays
 - Failure of prior schools to locate records and to transfer all credits.
 - Missing enrollment documents or requirements (i.e. Immunization records, birth certificates, uniform)
 - Unclear who is responsible for enrolling the child and who has the authority to do so.

 - Youth in foster care do not have advocates/liaisons within child welfare or education agencies help them make a smooth transition by addressing enrollment, placement and access to school activities.
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BENCHMARKS THAT SHOW PROGRESS TOWARD GOAL 2

- ❑ Immediate, or expedited, enrollment, without typical document or record requirements that cause delays**
 - ❑ Clarity on who can enroll a student**
 - ❑ Timely and accurate record transfers, including protections for confidentiality**
 - ❑ Timely credit transfers, partial credit calculations and considerations for graduation requirements**
 - ❑ Ability to promptly participate in academic and extracurricular programs.**
 - ❑ Timely delivery of services for children with disabilities**
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Goals 1 – 2: What You Can Do?

- Help children to remain in the same school (transportation options?)
 - Ensure quick enrollment in a new school, with records
 - Go over classes and credit requirements
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GOAL 3: Young Children Enter School Ready to Learn



- A 2005 national study of 2,813 children in care found 40% of toddlers and 50% of preschoolers had significant behavioral and developmental needs.
 - Only 21% of the children identified in the study were receiving services.
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BENCHMARKS THAT SHOW PROGRESS TOWARD GOAL 3

- ❑ Appropriate health interventions, referrals and screening**
 - ❑ Prioritization for children in foster care for early childhood programs and services**
 - ❑ Developmentally appropriate supports**
 - ❑ Young children with disabilities or developmental delays (or high risk of delays) are referred, evaluated and receive early intervention and special education services as appropriate**
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Goal 3 – What You Can Do

- Make sure youth have appropriate screenings and interventions
 - Enroll in early education programs
 - Prepare for school including through reading at home
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GOAL 4: YOUTH HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY AND SUPPORT TO FULLY PARTICIPATE IN ALL ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE



- A 2001 Washington State study of 4,500 children and youth in care attending public school found they scored 16 to 20 percentile points below youth not in care in statewide standardized tests at grades three, six, and nine.
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BENCHMARKS THAT SHOW PROGRESS TOWARD GOAL 4

- ❑ Youth must be able to access all aspects of the school experience *and* receive additional supports
 - ❑ Individuals working with youth must be sensitive to the school and extracurricular needs of youth , including the scheduling of appointments and hearings.
 - ❑ Youth with disabilities have same access as all student and receive the additional supports they need
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Goal 4: What You Can Do

- ❑ Make sure children are able to participate in extracurriculars and activities
 - ❑ Support a “normal” experience, including friendships and activities
 - ❑ Talk with youth about interests, hobbies, and goals
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GOAL 5: YOUTH HAVE SUPPORTS TO PREVENT SCHOOL DROPOUT, TRUANCY, AND DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS



- A study by Chapin Hall found that 67% of children in out-of-home care studied had been suspended from school at least once, compared to 28% in a national sample of youth.
 - A 2006 report found that changing schools, repeating a grade, and behavior problems are signs that a student is likely to leave school without a regular diploma.
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BENCHMARKS THAT SHOW PROGRESS TOWARD GOAL 5

- ❑ Programs, trained advocates, and supports for youth**
 - ❑ Prevention of inappropriate disciplinary measures and expulsion**
 - ❑ Reintegration programs and supports for youth who have dropped out of school**
 - ❑ Youth with disabilities have behavior intervention plans in place to minimize inappropriate school behaviors**
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Goal 5: What You Can Do

- ❑ Advocate for children and seek outside support when necessary around school discipline
 - ❑ Understand procedures and stay in communication with teachers and administrators
 - ❑ Identify challenges early so that youth aren't frustrated
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GOAL 6: YOUTH ARE INVOLVED AND ENGAGED IN ALL ASPECTS OF THEIR EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ARE EMPOWERED TO BE ADVOCATES FOR THEIR EDUCATION NEEDS AND PURSUITS



- Nothing about us without us.”

BENCHMARKS THAT SHOW PROGRESS TOWARD GOAL 6

- ❑ Involve youth in education planning, including court hearings**
 - ❑ Support involvement in education planning and court hearings through training and transportation**
 - ❑ Youth with disabilities participate in the special education process, especially in transition planning**
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Goal 6: What You Can Do

- ❑ Take youth to court and prepare them to advocate for themselves
 - ❑ Involve youth in school meetings and plans
 - ❑ Talk with youth about education plans and goals
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GOAL 7: YOUTH HAVE AN ADULT WHO IS INVESTED IN HIS OR HER EDUCATION DURING AND AFTER HIS OR HER TIME IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE



- A 2001 Bay Area study found 68% of school-age children had special education needs, but only 36% were receiving services.
 - A 2006 Oregon study found that youth in foster care were less likely to have an advocate at their planning meeting (42% v. 69%).
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“A mentor at my school helped me get money for college. My mentor really helped – calling every day, giving me pencils and paper and a daily planner. She taught me study skills. She had a good life and showed me the way.”

BENCHMARKS THAT SHOW PROGRESS TOWARD GOAL 7

- Trained and supportive advocates**
 - Clearly identified education decision makers**
 - Youth with disabilities to have access to qualified and independent surrogates**
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Goal 7: What You Can Do

- ❑ Be a role model for youth around education and advocate for them
 - ❑ Talk about education goals and support interests
 - ❑ Advocate for the child in school, attend meetings, and seek outside support if necessary
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GOAL 8: YOUTH HAVE SUPPORTS TO ENTER INTO, AND COMPLETE, POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION



- In a Chapin Hall study, youth who stayed in foster care after age 18 and had a diploma or GED were more than 3 times as likely as those no longer in care to be enrolled in college.
 - A study of more than 1,000 Casey Family Programs foster care alumni reported college completion rates of 9% a compared with 24% of the general population.
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“Books, tuition, money, money, money. The cost of books overwhelmed me, even at City College. What about state college? Graduate school?”

BENCHMARKS THAT SHOW PROGRESS TOWARD GOAL 8

- ❑ Youth are exposed to and prepared for postsecondary education opportunities**
 - ❑ Youth receive help with financial aid and application materials**
 - ❑ Youth have access to additional supports throughout postsecondary education**
 - ❑ Youth with disabilities pursuing higher education receive supports entitled to under federal and state law**
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Goal 8: What You Can Do

- ❑ Let youth know about college and opportunities, and start planning early
 - ❑ Be aware of college preparation requirements, scholarships, and programs
 - ❑ Contact the independent living coordinator to ask about programs and support
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Legal Center for Foster Care and Education Resources

□ www.abanet.org/child/education/publications

- **Blueprint for Change**
 - **Monthly Questions & Answer Factsheets about critical issues**
 - **Fostering Connections Implementation Materials**
 - **McKinney-Vento Materials**
 - **Data and Information Sharing Materials**
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Contacts

- HI Parent Information Resource Center
 - (877) 99H-PIRC / info@hawaiipirc.org
 - State Independent Living Coordinator
Lee Dean
 - (808) 586-5704 / Idean@dhs.hawaii.gov
 - McKinney-Vento State Coordinator
Ms. Sharon Nakagawa
 - (808) 203-5520
sharon_nakagawa@notes.k12.hi.us
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Contact Information

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