



LEGAL CENTER FOR
FOSTER CARE & EDUCATION

**The Untold Story of Education and Youth in
Foster Care:
Simple New Steps to Improve Outcomes**

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Legal Center FCE

- Collaboration between ABA and Casey Family Programs, in conjunction with the Juvenile Law Center and Education Law Center, created in January 2007.
- 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

**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**

Audiences for the Blueprint for Change

ALL Stakeholders: Anyone who affect the lives of children in foster care

- 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

Examples of the Barriers to Educational Achievement for Children in Care

- Lack of school stability
- Delayed enrollment
- Children with special education needs do not access/receive services
- Over-representation in special education, school discipline, and alternative education settings
- Disproportionality- in both child welfare and education systems
- Confusion about legal rights

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

General Information

- ❑ Goals written from a youth's perspective
 - ❑ Youth with disabilities are addressed in each Goal and are highlighted in **RED**
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GOAL 1: YOUTH ARE ENTITLED TO REMAIN IN THEIR SAME SCHOOL WHEN FEASIBLE

- ❑ On average, a child in care may change 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 of origin 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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Fostering Connections Act- Education provisions

- ❑ Case plans must ensure
 - Proximity to school, and appropriateness of that current school, is considered when living changes occur
 - Coordination with local education agencies to ensure children remain enrolled in school the child was enrolled prior to placement, unless a change is in the child's best interest
 - When in the child's best interest to move, immediate and appropriate enrollment in a new school, with all of the records following.
- ❑ Permissible use of IV-E maintenance dollars for transportation to remain in school
- ❑ State plans must ensure all IV-E eligible children are enrolled and attending school.



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.

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**

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 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 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 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

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%).

**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 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% compared with 24% of the general population.
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**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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STEPS IN COLLABORATION

- Increasing attention to education issues in courts and child welfare agencies
- Full engagement of education partners in efforts related to children in foster care
- Individual agency and court responsibilities clearly identified
- Coordination and collaboration across agencies and courts- ongoing and meaningful interactions
- Support from leadership in courts and child welfare agencies
- Track efforts and improvements- refine collaboration based on real impact on children and families

Role of Courts

- Critical need for judicial leadership to help focus child welfare and education agencies and facilitate collaboration
- Help ensure education leadership is sending message to local education agencies and districts about the unique needs of children in care
- Raising education questions, and including necessary elements in orders, in individual cases
- Ensuring Fostering Connections education requirements are being addressed in individual cases

Legal Center for Foster Care and Education Resources

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

- **Data and Information Sharing (Manual and Tools)**
- **Special Education Decisionmaking Series (includes Attorney Factsheet)**
- **Monthly Questions & Answer Factsheets about critical issues**
- **Fostering Connections Implementation Materials**

Endless Dreams

Endless Dreams Video & Curriculum—Casey Family Programs

- These practice-oriented tools were designed to support educational advocates, education specialists, education liaisons, CASA volunteers, child welfare professionals, and others that assist youth in care with their educational needs.
- This curriculum was developed to educate educators about the unique educational needs of youth in foster care.
- Access to the curriculum requires participation in a certified trainer of trainers program.

For free videos, and information about *Endless Dreams*, contact contactus@casey.org



The Judicial Checklist- Revised

Technical Assistance Brief: Asking the Right Questions II: Judicial Checklists to Meet the Educational Needs of Children and Youth in Foster Care-NCJFCJ

- Outlines questions that should be asked in a courtroom with respect to the educational needs of children and youth in foster care.
- This revised Brief includes two new checklists
- Adaptable to state and local rules and practice.

This publication is available at:
<http://www.ncjfcj.org/content/blogcategory/363/432/>





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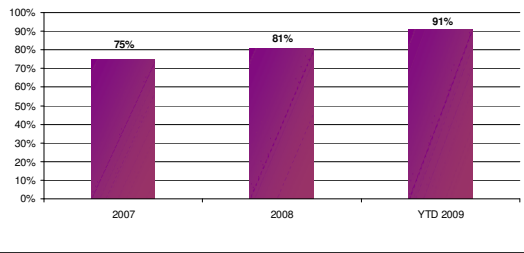
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Educational Stability in
Barre District Family Services



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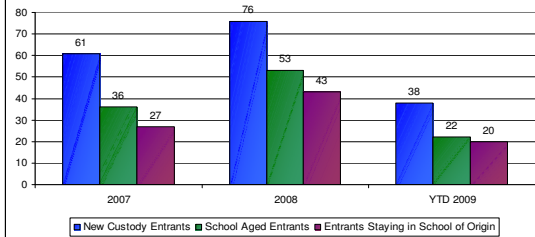
Educational Stability
Entrants Staying in School of Origin





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Educational Stability
New Custody Entrants & School Aged Entrants Staying in School of Origin





How did we achieve this level of success?

Horizontal lines for notes



Casey Family Foundation Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Recruitment and Retention in 2000 and Educational Stability in 2006.

Horizontal lines for notes



Our Team Members
Shaun Donahue, DCF/Family Services & BSC Sr. Leader
Deb Quackenbush, Dept. of Education & Senior Leader
Joan Rock, DCF/Family Services & Day-to-Day Manager
Kathy Blakey, Washington County Mental Health Services
Nancy Thomas, Washington Central Supervisory Union
Don Mandelkorn, Agency of Human Services
Helen Nienaltowski, DCF/Family Services
Cindy Miller, Agency of Human Services
Sara & Ashley
Jodi Leonard, Foster Parent
Diane Robie, Casey Consultant

Horizontal lines for notes



Recruitment and Retention BSC focused on:

Increasing the number of foster homes in every school community with special attention given to the towns with the highest number of new entries.

Improving the engagement process for families inquiring about becoming a foster family.

Increasing the number of kinship care families providing care to children in custody.



Enhancing the curriculum used for the Foundations for Foster Care.



Educational Stability BSC focused on:

Increasing the number of new custody entrants placed in their town of origin.



- Ask foster parents to transport the children to their school of origin when the children could not be placed in their town of origin.
- We consistently have 100% of foster parents willing to transport the foster child to school when it is necessary.



- Identifying respite homes to be used as back up foster homes that are in the town or origin or willing to transport.
- We are currently at 70% of the youth serviced by care and coordination through Washington County Mental Health have back up foster homes.



- Increasing the knowledge of both DCF staff and DOE staff in reference to the MOU and how to implement it's usage.



- 100% of principals (363); 100% of Special Educ. Coordinators (60); 100% Superintendents (60); 100% of Educ. Business Mngrs (60); 100% of Field Services (17); % of FS Central Office Mngrs (5); 100% of Barre FS staff statewide; 100% of BSC team (8) & 1 Judge (method - e-mail/mail)




2008 – 2009 Spread

- DCF supervisors
- Resource Coordinators
- Barre District Staff on multiple occasions
- Washington County Mental Health
- Family Services Division Leadership Team
- Policy Revision Team
- JDO and other districts as the need arises
- Monthly Court Improvement Project meetings
- Washington Central Supervisory Union Staff




The development of the tool
"Questions to Consider"



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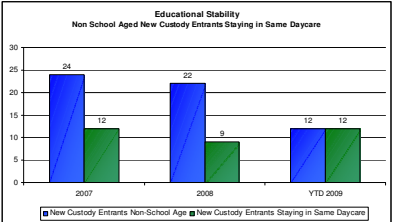
TIP OF THE WEEK




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Educational Stability
Non School Aged New Custody Entrants Staying in Same Daycare



Year	New Custody Entrants Non-School Age	New Custody Entrants Staying in Same Daycare
2007	24	12
2008	22	9
YTD 2009	12	12



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WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- You can ask about the educational stability for children entering custody.
- You can ask for the "Questions to Consider" document to be completed.
- You can ask their clients about the educational needs of the child.



For more information about Placement
and Educational Stability in the Barre
District, contact:

Joan Rock, Resource Coordinator,
479-4260

Kathy Johnson, Case Manager
476-1480
