

Terms to Know

Educational and Training Voucher Program (ETV): The Chafee Education and Training Voucher Program provides resources specifically to meet the education and training needs of youth aging out of foster care. This program awards vouchers of up to \$5,000 per fiscal year available to eligible youth (including youth in refugee foster care) attending post secondary educational and vocational programs . For more information contact Lutheran Social Services of Michigan at 877-660-METV or <https://mietv.lssm.org>

Tuition Incentive Program (TIP): TIP is an incentive program that encourages eligible students to complete high school by providing tuition assistance for the first 2 years of college and beyond. To meet the financial eligibility requirement, a student must have (or have had) Medicaid coverage for 24 months within a 36-consecutive-month period as identified by the Michigan Department of Human Services. For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/osg or call 1-888-4-GRANTS.

Foster Youth in Transition Funds (FYIT): FYIT can be used to help with a variety of non-educational related expenses that are not covered by any other funding source. For information, contact: Jeremiah Garza at 517-373-9219 or via email GarzaJ4@michigan.gov, <http://www.michigan.gov/fyit>

Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative (MYOI): MYOI teaches young people independent living skills so that youth can achieve a meaningful postsecondary education and a bright future. Visit <http://www.michigan.gov/fyit/0,1607,7-240-44524-162619--,00.html>

Fostering Futures Scholarship: This scholarship provides funds for tuition, fees, room/board, books, supplies, and equipment required for college enrollment, and can be used in conjunction with ETV. Eligible students must have been in foster care 1 day after the 13th birthday. Students can receive funding at any age. There are 4 application deadlines during the year. Visit <http://fosteringuccessmichigan.com/library/fostering-futures-scholarship>

Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care: Young people in Michigan have the option of remaining in foster care until age 21 if they meet eligibility criteria. This allows students to continue to receive foster care payments, oversight by a caseworker, access to counseling, access to health care coverage. Learn more at www.michigan.gov/FosterCare1821

About Fostering Success Michigan

Through generous support from the Kresge Foundation, Western Michigan University, and others, Fostering Success Michigan is implementing a statewide Collective-Impact strategy that strives to prepare young people in foster care ages 12 through 25 across the state of Michigan for success in higher education and beyond. Fostering Success Michigan will increase awareness, access, and success in higher education and post-college careers for students from foster care.



We offer networking opportunities and valuable resources. Find out more at www.FosteringSuccessMichigan.com



Getting to know....

Child Welfare for K-12 Educators

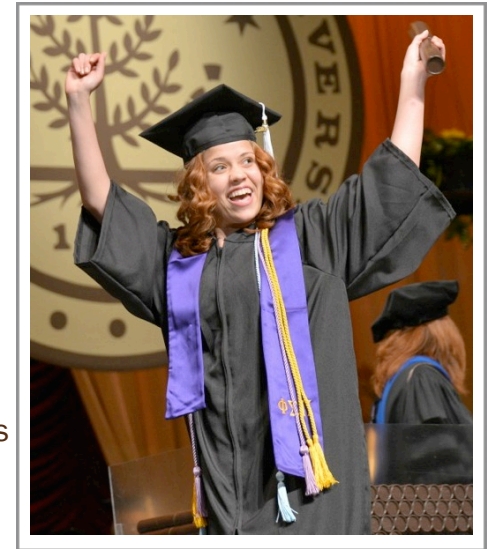


Who should use this guide:

This guide can be used by anyone involved in education who is interested in learning how to support students from foster care, in grades K-12. This includes educators, educational administrators and staff, school counselors, school social workers, para-educators, and school psychologists.

How to use this guide: This guide will provide you with a foundation of knowledge about the child welfare system. Use this guide to find out what professionals and organizations offer resources to students, and then create your own professional support network.

Learn about common terminology and draw upon these tools to meet each student's unique needs.



2014 Graduate and Alumni of Foster Care, Amanda S., Western Michigan University

More than one-third of foster children reported having five or more school changes during their time in foster care.
(Courtney, Terao, & Bost, 2004)

Why is it important that I know about Foster Care?

Adults who work in the educational environment see a student more hours in the week than just about anyone else in the young person's life. These supportive adults have the potential to develop an awareness of the unique challenges a student might face, know what resources are available, and build a supportive network where the young person can easily access available resources. When this supportive network exists for a student from foster care, they are more likely to be successful in accessing higher education. Having a close, supportive relationship with an adult has been identified as a protective factor for youth in foster care (Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, & Foster 1998)

Things we hear from educators about students from foster care...

- Increased health issues
- Truancy
- Willingness to give back
- Limited self-confidence
- High level of resilience
- Temper tantrums
- Highly determined
- Poor academics
- Behavioral issues
- Able to read people quickly
- Difficulty listening and following rules
- Adaptability
- Isolation from others

What Does this Mean at School?

Lack of Educational Stability - Students often experience multiple placements with new caregivers, which can result in switching schools.

Absences From School - Students can be required to attend counseling, court hearings, and other events which take away time they would otherwise spend at school or in extracurricular activities.

Poor Academic Performance - 52% of students who were ever in foster care read below grade level, compared to 38% of the overall population (Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, & Gwunne 2010)

Negative Behaviors - Many children in foster care have experienced trauma and/or neglect, which can result in behavioral problems.

The American Bar Association produces briefs on educational stability and discipline and can be found at http://www.americanbar.org/groups/child_law/what_we_do/projects/education.html

Did You Know?

Youth in foster care have higher rates of discipline problems than their peers, and 24% have been suspended or expelled at least once, compared with a national rate of 7% (Scherr, 2006)

I have to get a parent's permission to discuss school, right?

True or False....

False. In 2012, The Uninterrupted Scholar Act changed the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) to allow educators to communicate directly with child welfare professionals or tribal organizations who have the right to access a child's case plan, and are employed by an organization who is legally responsible for the care and safety of the child. Information will only be disclosed to an "individual or entity engaged in addressing the student's education needs." For students, this means:

- Enrollment in a school can be done quickly, resulting in less time out of school
- School records can be transferred quickly, so that educators and caseworks can understand challenges and implement educational supports at a new school (ex., Individual Education Plan).
- Consistency in tracking educational progress over time, which provides caseworkers and educators the ability to see students' long term success.

Students in foster care are homeless.

False.

Students in foster care are not homeless, but they may qualify for transportation assistance under the McKinney Vento act. This means that if a student in your class is placed in foster care, the state of Michigan is required to provide transportation so that the student can

remain in their school of origin, even if the school of origin is in a different district. Educators can contact the McKinney Liaison in your area, and they will help to coordinate transportation.

www.michigan.gov/homeless

Building Your Network: Creating a Supportive Web

Students benefit when the supportive adults in their lives have a collective understanding of how foster care works. This means having a basic idea of what resources are available, as well as knowing who the professionals are in your area who can provide support in their area of expertise.

The diagram below represents the variety of professionals you may work with in order to provide resources and support for a student. Use the worksheet below to discover what each partner can provide, then visit www.FosteringSuccessMichigan.com to find the expert in your local community!



My Network Contacts

Department of Education: _____

Higher Education Support Programs: _____

Local College Access Network: _____

Caregivers and Mentors: _____

Community Organizations: _____

Department of Human Services: _____

Other: _____

Common Questions

Q: What is Foster Care?

A: "Foster care is a temporary living arrangement for abused, neglected, and dependent children who need a safe place to live when their parents or another relative cannot take care of them. Often their families face issues such as mental illness, alcohol or drug addiction, or homelessness. Children are placed with licensed foster families, relatives, or in group care facilities while social workers and judges work with their families toward safe reunification or another permanent living situation." (treehouse.org).

Q: What happens after a kid goes into foster care?

A: After kids are removed from their parents, both kids and parents are assigned a social worker who makes a plan on what needs to happen in order for the kids to safely return home. Until those goals are met, the kids may stay with a relative, a foster family, or in a group residential facility. Sometimes siblings are separated into different homes, which is very stressful for kids.

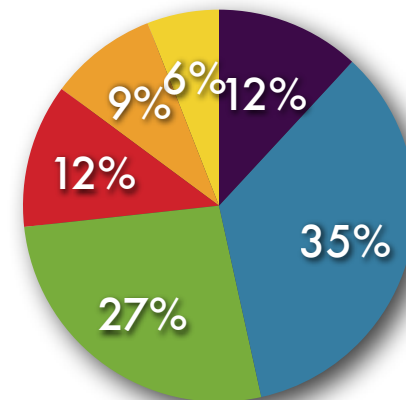
Q: Have kids done something wrong?

A: No. Children enter the foster care system because they have been abused and/or neglected by the caregivers in their home. In 2010 in Michigan, the average age of youth in care was 9 years old, and the average length of stay in foster care was 774 days (National Resource Center for Family and Permanency Connections, 2011).

Q: Who is involved with the kid's legal process?

A: There are a lot of people involved in a youth's foster care experience, and it can be overwhelming for a young person to suddenly figure out who does what. As a supportive adult, you can help a student understand who to work with to fulfill their needs. For instance, if the young person is looking to connect with other students who have been in foster care, you might connect them with their local Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative (MYOI) Coordinator.

Length of Stay in Foster Care



Source: Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012

- Less than 1 month
- 1-11 Months
- 12-23 Months
- 24-35 Months
- 3-4 Years
- 5 or More Years

How Educators Can Provide Support

- **Orient the new student to the classroom.** Take time to show the student the important parts of your classroom and introduce them to classmates. Be mindful that the student may feel left out when participating in activities that are family-centered (i.e. mother's day, father's day, or being asked to draw a picture of one's family)
- **Determine academic needs right away.** Be proactive in offering an IEP: work with school social workers, guidance counselors, and school psychologists to offer testing for special needs. Provide additional academic support or alternative learning approaches.
- **Be aware of physical contact sensitivity.** Students who have experienced abuse may show a strong sensitivity to touch, so be aware of your own interactions, but especially to the actions of classmates, particularly at free times, like recess or lunch.
- **Use person-centered language.** Don't use terms like "foster kid" or "foster child". When young people hear those phrases, they hear the word "foster" first, and such language minimizes the other parts of their identity. Instead use "student from foster care" or "young person with experience in foster care". Furthermore, NEVER disclose a young person's status to classmates or without professional need.
- **Be open to meeting with the young person's foster family, biological family, or caseworker.** Open communication between supportive adults in the young person's life will allow for free exchange of information and great problem solving.
- **Provide extracurricular activities.** Often in foster care, students are limited in the amount of out-of-school activities they can participate in. If possible, work with your school to provide peer-building exercises during school so that the young person can start to exercise healthy relationships.
- **Standardize how students are identified.** Encourage school administrators to create a process for proactively reaching out to students in foster care.



Armani G.
Student and participant
in Saginaw Valley State
University's F.A.S.T.
Campus Support
Program

Building Your Network: Creating a Supportive Web

Department of Education: Representatives can provide information on how to assist in keeping students in their home schools when a child changes residences. This can include providing funding for transportation under the McKinney-Vinto Act which ensures that students have a right to stay in their home schools regardless of placement. Pam Kies-Lowe, McKinney-Vinto Liaison can be reached at Kies-LoweP@michigan.gov



Higher Education Support Programs: Michigan currently has 12 campus support programs at higher education institutions. These programs offer a range of support for students with experience in foster care and may include scholarships, year-round housing, campus coaches, and life skills training. FSM's Getting to know...Higher Education Resources for Students from Foster Care is available for free download on the FSM website.

Youth and Alumni of Foster Care: These are the students you may work with! Also, there are programs where students who are currently in foster care have the opportunity to spend time with alumni of foster care at camps and conferences (financial assistance is available). Please check out www.FosteringSuccessMichigan.com for great opportunities!

Caregivers and Mentors: These adults can range from foster parents to biological parents, extended biological family, mentors, staff at a residential care facility, or even neighbors. Communication with these supportive adults can result in positive reinforcement outside of the class room.

Lutheran Social Services: LSSM administers the Educational and Training Voucher Program (ETV), which awards up to \$5,000 per fiscal year to eligible youth. <https://mietv.lssm.org>



Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative (MYOI): offers youth boards which provide leadership opportunities, life skills training, stipend earning opportunities, and advocacy. MYOI also offers Community Partner Boards where community members can come together to provide support and advocacy for older youth in foster care as well as youth who are aging out of foster care. <http://www.michigan.gov/fyit/0,1607,7-240-44524-162619-,00.html>

