



Data 101: Developing Shared Measurement with Fostering Success Michigan Higher Education Consortium Partners

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The Michigan Department of Human Services is taking initiative to directly support institutions of higher education in supporting students who age out of foster care to succeed in college. In 2010, DHS enhanced WMU's efforts by allocating one full-time foster care worker to WMU's efforts of the Seita scholarship and campus coach model of support. In 2012, DHS offered two bids for institutions of higher education to hire independent living skills coaches in an effort to further stimulate campus-based support for campuses. These competitive bids resulted in Independent living skills coaches being added to seven schools in Michigan, which include:

- Eastern Michigan University
- Wayne State University
- Ferris State University
- Michigan State University
- University of Michigan-Flint
- Baker College of Flint
- Saginaw State University

Offering resources for direct student support on higher education campuses across Michigan, DHS adds to its "investment portfolio" of strategies for supporting alumni of foster care in the transition to young adulthood through the normative experience of postsecondary education. Other strategies in the portfolio include: the Educational Training Voucher and Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care.



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Although several Michigan Universities and Colleges—Michigan State University, Western Michigan University, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, Aquinas College, and Ferris State University—took initiative to support youth and alumni on their campuses prior to the DHS resource for Independent Living Skills coaches, this DHS initiative provides critical resources needed to hire personnel and develop sustainable programming to fuel the momentum sparked on Michigan campuses

Early in 2012, Fostering Success Michigan (FSM) emerged as a statewide initiative through the support of the Kresge Foundation and Western Michigan University. Using the framework of Collective Impact strategy, FSM was formed as the backbone organization with mission to increase postsecondary education access and success for Michigan’s youth and alumni of foster care ages 12 to 25 and create successful transitions to professional careers. The work of FSM provides the structure and support to effectively network institutions of higher and public education, state departments and community organizations. Specifically, FSM focuses on the unique needs of youth aging out of foster care as they navigate critical transition points along the college to career pipeline.

One of the priority projects of Fostering Success Michigan is to establish a system of shared measurement in an effort toward data-driven decision making in policies and programming for students in and from foster care. The first step toward this shared measurement system is to develop a set of common indicators among the Fostering Success Michigan Higher Education Consortium partners. As representatives from higher education campus-based support programs, FSM HEC partners are uniquely situated to gather data on an individual student and programmatic levels. This document gives a brief orientation to how FSM HEC partners can begin to gather data from their institutions.



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DATA SHARING METHOD

How to get started? A few simple steps:

1. Review Core Element #4: Data-driven decision making in the *Supporting Success* Guide: <http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/pdf/SupportingSuccess.pdf>
2. Take a look at table 2.1 on page 25 in the *Supporting Success* guide. Look at the variables listed and determine which office on your campus gathers this information. This may include financial aid, admissions, registrar or other departments depending on how your campus is organized. Ask those departments to help you understand how data are defined, collected, stored and reported in your institution so that you learn your institution's "data language."
3. Request a meeting with your office of "institutional research" or the unit on your campus that is responsible for generating numerical reports for the university. This meeting will be more fruitful if you have learned the "data language" of your university and created your institution's version of Table 2.1. Given the available data at your institution, ask your office of institutional research to create a report that disaggregates students from foster care from the rest of the population. Be aware that you will likely be introducing a data element to your institution; that is, identifying students from foster care. This is an important step that requires some work, but FSM can help guide the process and help troubleshoot.
4. As a result of steps 2 and 3, you might form a data advisory committee from the people you encounter. By getting knowledgeable people involved, you likely will uncover other student data that will offer greater understanding.
5. Example: below is an example of the final product at WMU. Note: this is a final product and not the first product.

