

The Center for Fostering Success

Best Practice, Best Fit

Webinar Series



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**Discovery Driven Solutions Related to Educational
Attainment for Students from Foster Care**



Thank you to our funders!



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A special welcome to our guest today:



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Word Cloud Activity

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the person most supportive of you in college



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Today's Research Question

In what ways can supportive relationships be infused into postsecondary support programs for youth transitioning from foster care?



FOSTERING Higher EDUCATION

FHE =
Fostering
Higher
Education

- Funded by National Institute on Drug Abuse
- R21 2-year development project to design FHE and test its usability and feasibility
- Postsecondary access and retention intervention for youth transitioning from foster care to adulthood
- Currently no evidence-based practices for this

Research reported in this presentation was supported by the National Institute on Drug Abuse of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) under Award Number R21DA036652.



Fostering Higher Education Intervention Development Process

1. Review intervention element possibilities
2. Focus groups: community recommendations
3. Develop initial intervention approach
4. Youth usability testing
5. Practitioner feasibility testing
6. Finalize intervention design

Next step: test in randomized controlled trial

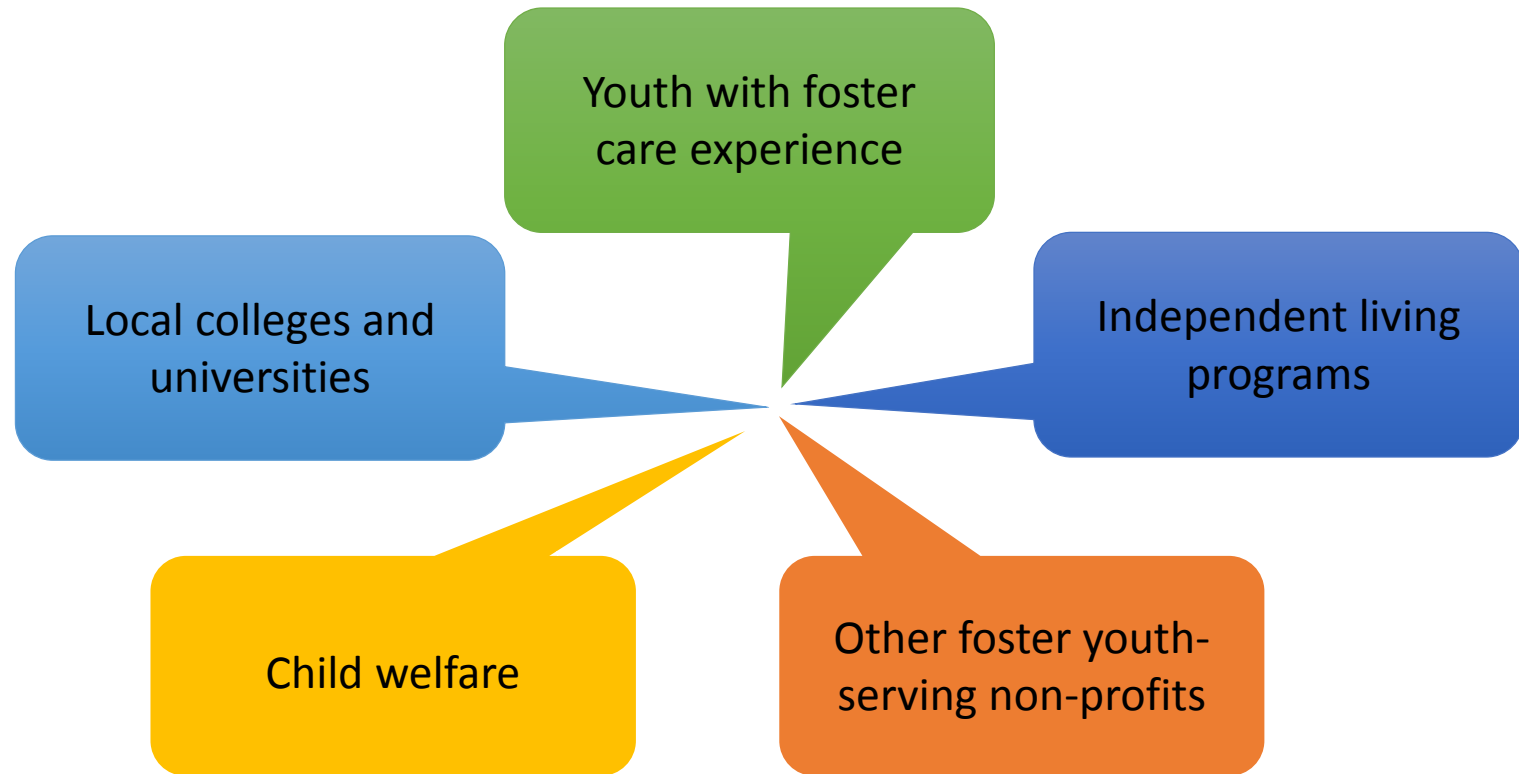


FHE Development Step 1: Review Intervention Elements

- Key intervention components:
 - Professional educational advocacy
 - Mentoring
 - Giving youth knowledge and support around avoiding common college pitfalls, e.g., alcohol and substance abuse
- Key features:
 - Intentional relationship building with all program staff and mentors
 - Bridging transition from high school/ GED to higher education



FHE Development Step 2: Focus Groups



Salazar, A. M., Roe, S. S., Ullrich, J. S., & Haggerty, K. P. (2016). Professional and youth perspectives on higher education-focused interventions for youth transitioning from foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 64, 23-34. (PMC4821474)

Focus Groups: Procedure

- 2 groups in Seattle, 2 groups in Portland
- 8-10 participants per group (37 total, 10 youth)
- 2 hours long; audio recorded and transcribed
- Coding procedure: conventional thematic content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005)
 - 3 coders per research question



Focus Groups: Demographics

- 37 total participants
 - 10 youth
 - 6 child welfare
 - 5 independent living
 - 10 higher education
 - 6 other youth-serving non-profits
- Gender
 - Youth: 90% female
 - Professionals: 81% female
- Race/ ethnicity
 - Youth: 2 mixed race/ethnicity, 1 Black, 1 White, 6 chose not to disclose
 - Professionals: 18 White, 2 mixed race/ethnicity, 7 chose not to disclose

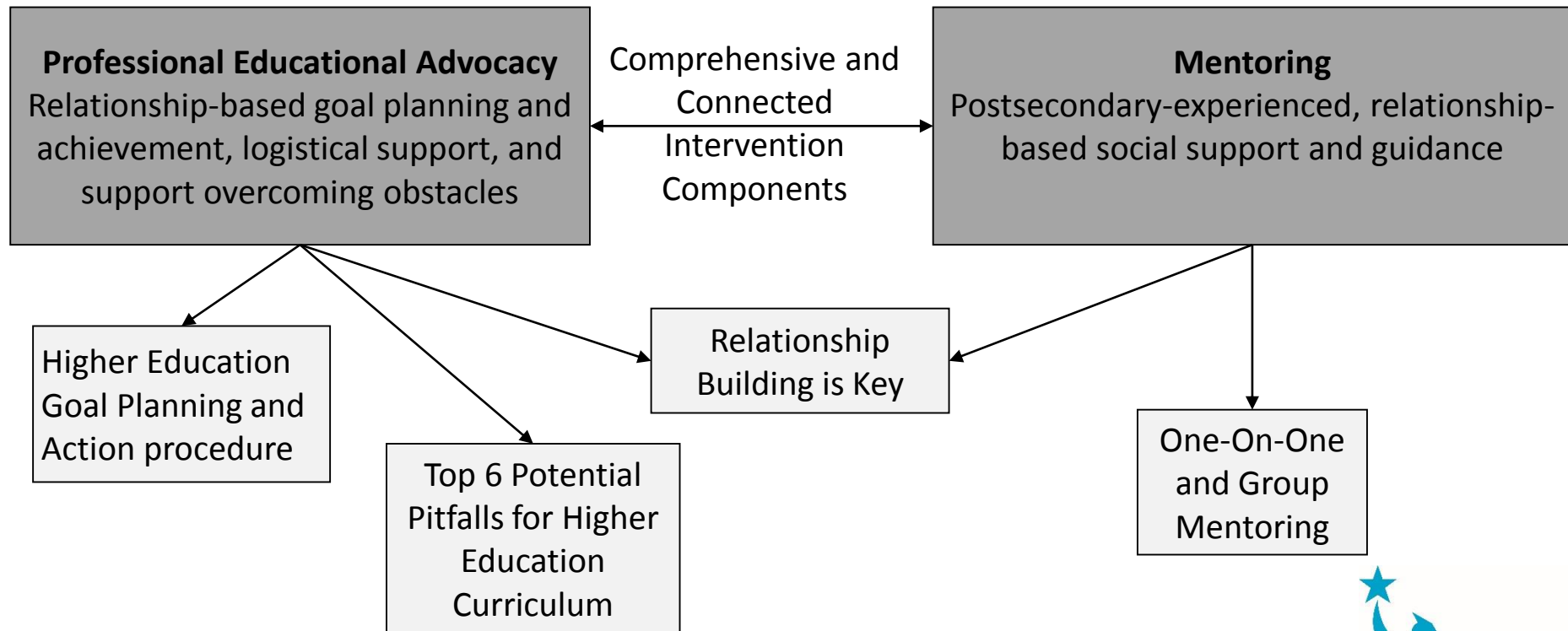


Focus Groups: Relationship Building-Related Recommendations and How We Used Them

Focus Group Finding	How this Finding Informed FHE
Incorporate cohort/ group elements	Include group mentoring in addition to one-on-one mentoring to give youth opportunity to connect with other higher education-interested youth with similar experiences
Help youth expand social network/ supports	Group mentoring will also allow youth to connect with several other postsecondary-experienced adults (mentors)
Building relationships with intervention staff and mentors is key	All program staff and mentors must receive initial and ongoing training in intentional relationship building techniques
Natural supports should be included when possible	Students will be given opportunity to identify natural mentor; if none available, community mentor will be chosen
Those interacting with youth should empower them	EA, mentor training will include youth-empowerment and strengths-based youth work modules
Sensitive material (like college alcohol/ substance abuse prevention info) should be delivered in skilled, strengths-based way by someone youth trusts	Present substance abuse as a risk for ALL youth; delivery must be intentional, well thought-out, and sensitive to the needs, experiences, and potential triggers of youth in care; only present sensitive material after relationship has been established.

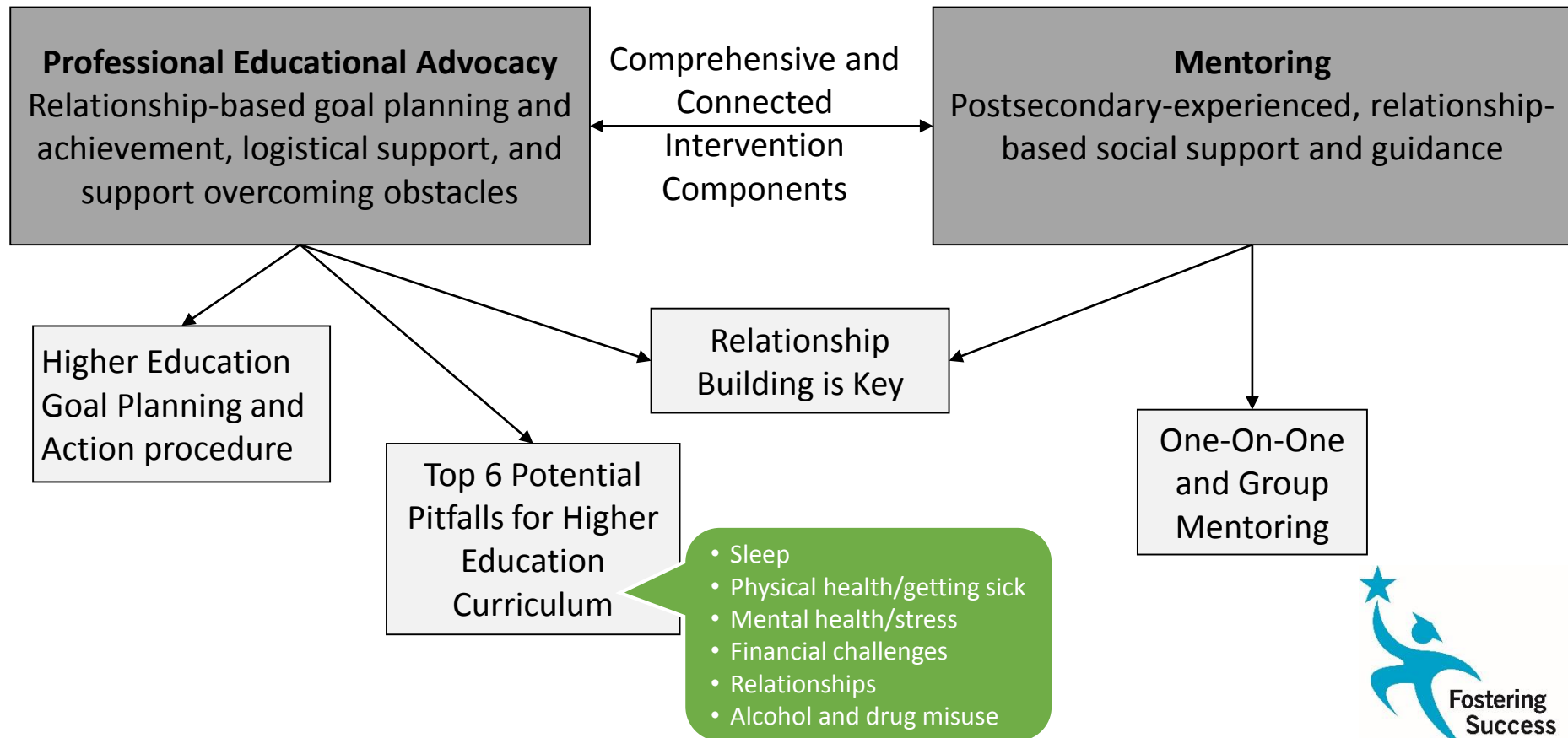
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Intervention Overview



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Intervention Overview



FHE Development Step 4: Youth Theater Testing

- Goal: to test youth usability of the intervention
 - Participant responsiveness to intervention
 - Suggestions for refinement
- Two tests (one in SEA, one in PDX)
- 13 youth with foster care experience
- 4 hours each
- Tested four elements of FHE
 - 1. Higher Education Goal Planning Activity
 - 2. Sleep Module of Top 6 Potential Pitfalls Curriculum
 - 3. Substance Abuse Module of Top 6 Potential Pitfalls Curriculum
 - 4. Mentee Intake Process



Theater Testing Procedure

- Had youth roleplay an activity for 20-30 minutes with a trained staff member
- Had youth fill out a brief survey to say what they liked, what they would do differently
- Convened group to discuss the activity and give recommendations
- Administered this process for all four activities



Relationship-Related Youth Feedback

Educational Goal Planning Activity



- What did you like about this activity?
 - “I enjoyed how helpful/insightful it’s really going to be for youth transitioning into higher ed. A lot of youth feel lost, and I feel like these questions/support can keep their brains flowing and encourage them to seek out more info about higher ed”
 - “Actually talking about going to college was a huge motivation for me. And knowing I have support to help me through the process”
 - “I like that the professional was willing to meet me where I was and help me with my struggles while still expecting me to reach my goals.”



Relationship-Related Youth Feedback

Substance Abuse Module of Top 6 Potential Pitfalls Curriculum

- What did you like about this activity?
 - “I liked that it was a discussion and offered an avenue of help if a problem was identified”
- Specific suggestions?
 - “Be as open and listening ears as possible to the youth because it’s a personal topic some youth may not feel comfortable with.”



Relationship-Related Youth Feedback



Mentee Intake Activity

- Explored options in youth's life for natural mentor
- Explored youth preferences for community mentor characteristics
- Clarified mentor and mentee roles, expectations
- What did you like about this activity?
 - "Mentor preferences will be really useful to make sure youth are completely comfortable or as comfortable as possible with their mentor."
- Specific suggestions?
 - "I think there needs to be a little more casual and permanent aspect. For example, you can call your mentor after hours if you need someone, and they'll stay with you for the whole year."
 - Have mentors do once a month texts/ emails/phone calls. Show the youth they are still cared for and are still a priority.



FHE Development Step 5: Practitioner Feasibility Testing

- Presented our intervention design to practice professionals from the sectors that would be most likely to house FHE: ILP, child welfare, local colleges
- Collected feedback on how feasible it would be to implement FHE
- Respondents rated all intervention elements as both important and feasible to implement
- Mentoring components were seen as slightly less feasible given the time and oversight commitments of successfully running a mentoring program



FHE Development Step 6: Finalized Intervention Approach

- Manualized intervention approach
- Developed comprehensive training materials



Implications

- There are many ways that a supportive relationship focus can be infused into postsecondary support programs
 - Group/ cohort elements
 - Training staff on intentional relationship building strategies
 - Consider the feasibility of integrating relationship-based components, have a good strategy for improving feasibility
 - Don't shy away from talking about sensitive material, just be skilled at how it is delivered
 - Include natural supports when possible



Next Steps

- Test efficacy in a randomized controlled trial



Final Word Cloud Activity

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made you feel?



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Discussion/ Questions



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- If you have a research study that you are interested in presenting via this series, please contact Karie Ward at karie.j.ward@wmich.edu



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