

Increasing Educational & Workforce Attainment for San Antonio's Foster Youth



HUMAN SERVICES
CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

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Thank you!

OUR CALL TO ACTION: INCREASING FOSTER YOUTH POST-SECONDARY ATTAINMENT

Recent news stories referring to the “broken foster care system” in the San Antonio community prompted the City of San Antonio Department of Human Services (DHS) to embark on a fact-finding report. With almost 18% of young adults participating in services at the NXT Level Youth Opportunity Center and 4% in Head Start connected to the foster care system, the children and youth success division in DHS felt compelled to identify ways DHS can better support the educational and workforce attainment of those in the foster care system was imperative. Perspectives of youth aged out of the foster care system, foster parents, and the staff in agencies who work to support them helped guide this report from a series of focus groups hosted throughout the community.

These voices guided the recommendations made in this report to identify priorities in current DHS programs and in parental engagement activities offered through the City’s early childhood programs. Additionally, as housing and mental health emerged as critical needs for foster youth, this also serves as a guide for DHS to better coordinate with the City of San Antonio’s Metropolitan Health District and Neighborhood and Housing Services Department to build out comprehensive supports to ensure they reach their full potential. Potential partnerships with Bexar County and the Bexar County Child Welfare Board should also be explored. Above all, as champions of foster youth, DHS must create spaces for youth to connect with each other and amplify their voices when creating policy and funding decisions.

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Background

In Texas, there are approximately 30,000 children and youth in the foster care system and they make up 0.3% (17,090) of Texas’s public school population. In 2020, Bxar County had almost 5,000 children ages 0-17 in foster care system in substitute care with 56% in the 0-5 age group (sources: Annie E. Casey Kids Count Database and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, January 2022 statistics report). Foster youth compose 0.3% (1,567) of the total public-school population in Texas’ Education Service Center, Region 20, which encompasses Bexar County.

Students in the foster care system are one of the newest “special populations” tracked in the statewide educational database hosted by The Texas Education Agency (TEA). TEA directs schools to identify and implement academic interventions and support services to ensure that students in foster care achieve grade-level standards on state-mandated assessments and graduate on time. Long-term post-secondary outcomes of youth in foster care are less favorable than when compared to similar outcome of other at-risk populations. Specifically, only 3.6% of foster youth attend higher education, and only 1.5% complete a bachelor’s degree (Faulkner, 1-2).

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The number compares to the 62.7% of all high school graduates attending college and close to 40% completing a degree (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). For economically disadvantaged students, approximately 20% attend college, and slightly less than half of those students end up getting a bachelor's degree (Pew, 2019). Despite the needs for additional supports for economically disadvantaged youth, this subpopulation of at-risk youth has a marked increase in postsecondary outcomes. According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the number of credentials awarded to economically disadvantaged students at Texas public institutions has nearly doubled in the last ten years. The same trend cannot be said for foster youth, as the post-secondary enrollment and attainment rates have not improved during the same period.

Texas was at the forefront of post-secondary attainment for foster youth by being one of the first states to adopt a lifetime education waiver, the tuition and fee waiver, in 1993 (see *appendix iii* for a detailed explanation). This waiver provides lifetime free state tuition and covers all fees associated with post-secondary schooling for foster youth. A 2017 study completed by The University of Texas Austin School of Social Work concluded that while creating the education voucher was essential, 67% of foster youth did not utilize the waiver, and of those who did, a staggering 96.4% of foster youth had not obtained a degree.

Texas Blueprint for Transforming Education Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster Care

The Supreme Court of Texas issued an Order Establishing the Education Committee of the Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families (Children's Commission) in 2010. The order resulted from a Texas Action Plan drafted by a team of child welfare experts and designed to study the educational outcomes of Texas children and youth in foster care. The Education Committee—a high-level group of court, education, and child welfare decision-makers—created a collaborative initiative designed to improve the educational outcomes of children and youth in the Texas foster care system. The order resulted in over 100 court, education, and child welfare stakeholders coming together over an 18-month period to listen and learn from each other, discuss and debate the issues, and ultimately develop recommendations to improve the educational outcomes of children and youth in foster care. The recommendations centered on judicial practices, data and information sharing, multi-disciplinary training, school readiness, school stability and transitions, school experience, support and advocacy, post-secondary education, and future collaboration (Children's Commission, Executive Summary, 16).

Recently, the state's foster system has been under legal scrutiny. In an ongoing lawsuit filed more than ten years ago, the court found "the state failed to protect foster children from an unreasonable risk of harm." Although the San Antonio-area has also been impacted by reports of unsafe conditions for children and youth in the foster care system, the purpose of this report is to examine ways to improve post-secondary and workforce attainment for foster youth; therefore, this report will not concentrate on ongoing challenges of the foster care system identified by the courts. Although DHS staff recognizes this unduly harms and negatively impacts the outcomes for these children and youth in the system, it is outside the scope and purpose of this report on better improving educational outcomes within DHS programs and funding.

METHODOLOGY

Approach

The DHS team drafted questions with assistance from staff of foster youth support agencies. The questions focused on support for foster youth after they leave foster care, their experiences transitioning out of foster care, and where would funds be best allocated, if available. The questions asked were as follows:

1. Why did you want to take part in this focus group?
2. What is your affiliation with the foster care system?
3. What are the most important needs for foster youth in San Antonio/ Bexar County?
4. What supports are needed to ensure foster youth are successful in school?
5. What have been the biggest barriers to reaching your educational goals?
6. Once foster youth age out of the system, where do they go if they need help with housing, education, or meeting basic needs?
7. How can we [City of San Antonio] better serve our foster youth?

In total, DHS staff interviewed 44 individuals comprising of former foster youth, foster parents, and staff from foster youth-serving agencies to obtain a landscape of foster youth concerns in San Antonio. The discussions occurred over two months in a series of six focus groups. Virtual and in-person options were offered to all participants.

Equity Considerations

To ensure equity within the focus groups, DHS staff targeted participants by recruiting from various foster youth supporting organizations. The initial recruitment response received over 75 former foster youth and staff from youth-serving agencies interested in participating, with 61% (44 participants) participating in the focus group discussion. One area to note was a lack of male turnout within participation in the focus groups. Program staff also made efforts to receive participants from each council district, but there was a lack of a representative sample from City of San Antonio council districts 7 and 8. Due to the Omicron COVID-19 variant surge within San Antonio, the focus groups scheduled for January 2022 had a lower turnout than those in December 2021. In addition, most of the youth interviewed had already aged out of the system and were no longer eligible for Education and Training Voucher benefits. These factors contributed to fewer voices heard from those still in the foster care system and receiving benefits.

If other studies are conducted, current foster youth and their guardians must be part of the research, especially those currently receiving services from the programs in *appendix i*.

Demographics

Of the 44 participants interviewed in the focus groups, 22 were former foster youth sharing their experience seeking post-secondary support. A breakdown of their demographics is included in *appendix iv*. Not all participants released their demographic data, and some represented more than one category (i.e., former foster youth AND parenting foster youth), resulting in the data presented.

FOSTER YOUTH POST-SECONDARY ATTAINMENT

Summary of Youth and Foster Agency Perspective: What Supports Enable and Hinder Post-Secondary Attainment?

Foster Perspective on What Works	Foster Perspective on What Hinders
Financial incentives to complete goals	Inadequate funding to foster serving agencies to provide quality support
Trusted relationships with one-stop support	Experiences and systems that break trust and ability to build relationships
“Aging out” transitional services	Knowledge of benefits offered and how to access them
Regular case management while in school	Lack of coordinated support after exiting foster care (especially if not seeking college/university)
Trauma informed care for support systems	Quality of support to meet youth where they are at educationally and socially; increased need for tutoring for educational gaps.
Life and job skills educational classes	Access to supports for foster youth that parenting
Readily available foster care advocates at places of learning.	Housing instability
Scheduled and unannounced wellness checks	Lack of continuing education for foster parents and school system supporters
Check-Ins after aging out or in reunification	Lack of peer support networks
Foster youth serving interagency communication, collaboration, and referrals	Lack of centralization of resources and supports
Warm hand-offs to agencies that have been vetted for quality of services & responsiveness	School disruptions: Movement of between cities and schools
Academic Supports: tutoring, academic accommodations	Access to legal documents (e.g., birth certificate) and not knowing how to get them

How do we support our foster youth for educational success?

Interview transcripts culminated in several different educational supports that helped and hindered educational attainment from early childhood to post-secondary. The themes aligned under two significant trends: institutional and personal support.

While this report focuses on improving the educational success of children and youth involved in the foster care system, all focus groups discussed the need for higher quality case management (i.e., decreasing the caseloads and improving the quality of staff), comprehensive training for foster parents (see *appendix ii* for areas in training), and regular check-ins after adoption and reunification efforts. Although members of foster serving agencies were interviewed, the recommendations outlined in this report only focus on

the role the City of San Antonio can play to better support the educational and workforce attainment of those in the foster care system. This report does not focus on state funding amounts, operational, or policy changes for the foster-serving agencies or system. The lessons learned from these conversations can serve as a guide future programs and funding priorities supported by the City of San Antonio.

The following sections detail the experiences shared by former foster youth, foster parents, and foster serving entities towards educational attainment.

Institutional Support: Come as You Are

Foster youth reported that services available were most valuable when offered with no questions asked or, as one participant stated, “come as you are” attitudes. These programs support champions and empower youth to understand the system, process personal trauma, and set attainable goals. Foster youth directly named college advocates who built relationships and had the “my door is always open” approach. Even though these advocates are critical, youth expressed a need for quality, consistency, and decreasing staff caseloads. Specifically, foster youth stressed the need for more support on navigating the system to secure independence by accessing benefits.

Trauma-Informed Care

Consistently in our interviews with former foster youth, an imperative need that emerged was not only mentorship but relationships with adults that integrated educational and mental health. Foster youth need a balance of receiving services and knowing how to navigate forward with academic and professional responsibilities while considering their past trauma and the challenges it creates for learning and educational attainment.

One participant summarized this as being “in a place where I could not process what was going on. You can’t learn if your brain is not ready.” This statement resounded with participants of the critical integration of providing resources while also assessing youths’ ability to synthesize information due to external factors. The participants expressed a crucial need for care that integrated principles of trauma-informed care and providing long-term mental health supports to process the foster care experience.

Institutional Supports Depending on Custody Status

The reality of the foster care experience varies greatly depending on the living situation while in custody of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). Foster youth can live in shelters, with foster parents, with foster parents that are relatives (kinship) and more. Foster care agencies reported that over a 1,000 of the foster youth in Bexar County are in Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC) with the state of Texas— meaning the permanent conservator of the child is DFPS and not a family member. It is not uncommon for these children and youth to be moved to other cities in Texas and even out of state placements to secure stable housing. Unfortunately, due to the transient nature of these children and youth, the needed supports for them extend beyond the San Antonio community.

Foster youth access to institutional supports is hinged on their providers’ and guardians’ awareness of foster care supports. Youth that aged out of the system and participated in transitional life programs knew how to navigate into the post-secondary system or, at minimum, had some support to re-engage. However, statewide data shows that only 50% of youth complete the state-funded, Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) transitional living program. Combined, 70% of foster youth leave the system through adoption or reunification with parents or primary caretakers. Our focus group included some youth who did not age

out of the system, and of knowledge of their rights and benefits only existed if their guardians provided them, which often did not occur.

One-Stop-Shop for Resources, Referrals, and Training

One-stop-shops with holistic wrap around services currently exist in all regions of Texas for foster youth up to age 25 in the form of transitional services. In the focus groups, youth ranged from deeply connected to disconnected in knowing where to go for support at any time during their foster care experience. Almost all youth in the focus groups who aged out of the foster care system received services from federally-funded transitional living programs. However, adopted or reunified youth lacked connection with support services. The majority shared that internet searches and failing were the only options that worked.

One youth stated that going back to prior services was the only way to access support. They stated, “The only way I knew what to do was to check back into the psych ward.”

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The student explained that the comprehensive services offered in the mental health facility, such as housing, food, and one-stop for medical needs, were essential to her survival as she waited to receive Medicare assistance. Over half of the participants agreed that the internet was a significant resource for information as one participant stated, “Google. I googled everything.”

Foster guardians and foster youth that are now parenting discussed not knowing what was developmentally appropriate and where to access services such as academic support, college access, and childcare. Parents and guardians asked for regular training and networks to learn from each other on effective parenting for foster youth.

Foster youth-serving agencies shared the same sentiments stating that access to resources and the time spent finding accurate, quality referrals slowed down the support process and created even more barriers. The majority asked for more training in foster care support, understanding the daily reality of the foster care experience, and resources for teachers, counselors, and school administration. Additionally, most noted the large caseloads of current social workers and the “many hats” worn by school counselors. The agencies recommended creating policy and systems that would allow for dedicated foster care liaisons within schools instead of the current model where most—if not all—foster care liaisons serve in this role in addition to overseeing other duties.

Access to “normal”

While engaged in early childhood to 12th grade education, youth expressed a unified view on wanting a “normal teenage [adolescent] experience”—ranging from participating in extracurricular and after-school academic support services to the need for comprehensive mental health services. As one participant stated, “I had to get a court order to only go to one high school...I was not able to have a normal teenage experience and felt isolated from society.”

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While this quote captures one example, every youth in congregate or youth home settings shared the exact sentiment of not participating in extracurricular activities such as sports, music, and art because of a lack of transportation and staffing to support engagement during non-school hours.

Funding

Youth expressed gratitude for current support for basic educational needs such as textbooks, university housing, food security, and training for financial literacy, sexual health, and developmental relationships. Many shared that “earn while you learn” opportunities that allow attainment of high school equivalency or classes to learn about life skills with stipends provided exceptional levels of support that allowed reaching goals. Youth shared gratitude for the non-profits and college-based programming that provided incentives such as gift cards or funding, but also warned that these funds were unpredictable, sometimes not used wisely by themselves, and that, as one participant remarked, “a gift card does not pay rent.” Foster serving agencies discussed the need for more city-wide funding explicitly earmarked for foster youth, and although outside the scope of this report, for a re-evaluation of state and federal dollars to meet actual operating costs of services.

Personal Support: How do I “adult?”

“I didn’t get my act together until my late 20’s. I messed up a lot before then and then felt punished for starting later in life. What am I supposed to do?”

The interviews from participants gave insight into the perspective of foster youth institutional experience and revealed the personal effects of intent vs. impact of the current systems. During the interviews, foster youth not only reported on resources that worked and did not work on an institutional level, but they also communicated personal experiences. The significant obstacles foster youth reported were “wrap around” needs for more mental health services, support after aging out, networking opportunities, housing stability, transportation, and childcare services. Additionally, a reoccurring theme with the demographics of the youth interviewed was how to get services after age 24, especially if former foster youth did access services while eligible due to lack of knowledge, maturity or belief in themselves.

Mental Health Services

Vice Admiral Vivek H. Murthy, the current U.S. surgeon general, issued a public health advisory to guardians of our nation’s youth on how the pandemic has disrupted the lives of youth and resulted in a mental health crisis. Foster youth are no exception and experience higher levels of risk. The number one personal issue in every focus group was mental health support for the significant trauma and instability of the foster care system. Youth from the focus group agreed 100% on the need for extensive

mental health care in all levels of the foster care experience and especially when aging out. Foster youth were aware of the benefits of enrolling in Medicaid but discussed the extensive paperwork and difficulties accessing essential medications. Several discussed finding ways to “self-medicate” through illegal substances in place of proper mental health medications.

Housing Stability

The second most common barrier to independent living discussed by participants was housing instability. One agency shared that immediately upon exiting the foster care system that 20% of their youth experienced immediate homelessness.

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The foster youth shared that access to city-wide low-income housing was available but that the extensive paperwork and year-long (plus) wait times lead to cycles of couch-surfing, homelessness, or going back to traumatic households. Foster youth shared that not having a home to go back to was the most challenging barrier and insecurity that negatively impacted every life goal. Youth shared gratitude for housing programs that existed exclusively for foster youth and noted that almost all served youth-only up to 24 years of age.

After Aging Out

Many students who had aged out of the foster care system shared access to transitional living non-profit programming that gave basic life skills lessons is imperative to their success after leaving foster care. The participants resoundingly asked for more life skills lessons before and after aging out. One student summarized the general experience of aging out by stating, “I was not excited to leave the system. I had nowhere to go. I did not know where to go or even how to like get a bank account.” In contrast, another shared, “I thought I knew everything to be independent. I aged out [and moved in with] my boyfriend and was excited to be out. He abused me. I had nowhere to go, so I stayed and made really bad money decisions since I didn’t know payday loans were a scam. Now I am too old for so many services.”

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Youth shared gratitude for re-engagement services that provided life coaching and educational coaching saying more of these services needed to be offered with increased awareness of the programs to youth.

Foster youth shared that learning from peers that were further along in the system was their only resource to navigate educational goals.

Networking Opportunities

Each focus group started with the question, “Why did you want to be part of this group?” Most of the former foster youth shared that they wanted to learn where to go for more support and have a chance to talk with others with similar experiences. Many only knew of existing supports once reaching college or entering transitional living programs and shared the worry of all the foster youth that do not make it to post-secondary education. As one youth stated, “I mean, where do they even go? It is not like my foster mom would have known this stuff.” During the focus group, youth shared each other’s contact information and directly asked if more sessions could happen in the future. Additionally, foster youth-serving agencies shared the same sentiments asking for more opportunities to collaborate in San Antonio to discuss best practices.

Transportation

Foster youth shared the logistical and financial barriers of securing reliable transportation. Many offered gratitude to local non-profits and foster serving agencies that included transportation within their programming and shared that programming in which there was no transportation support was not a real option for them to consider. Foster youth shared that even when getting financially stable, buying a car could be hindered by lack of personal identification, a regular bank account, and established credit. Additionally, those that depended on San Antonio’s VIA bus line shared thanks for free buses from employers or non-profit support, but that time spent traveling affected long-term success. Agencies noted significant transportation issues that results with affordable, subsidized housing impacting the ability to attend school due to locations being too far from local colleges and universities.

Childcare Services

Finally, reliable, affordable childcare options is a significant barrier to foster youth who had become parents. Foster youth shared that the lack of traditional family structures minimized viable options for safe or reliable family-based childcare, so if they were to work or go to school, they had to find (and often pay) for childcare. Many educational benefits for foster youth who enter college or university do not provide adequate housing to support family life (i.e., limited to no on-campus housing options for students with children). The need for affordable, quality childcare was essential to meeting academic goals. “I did receive free childcare so I could go to school, but it was scary and not safe for my kid. I dropped out so I could take care of him.” Parenting students concluded sharing the desire to provide a better life for their children and to keep them from the system forced difficult financial decisions and delays in meeting educational goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES

Based on interviews with foster youth, DHS staff correlated their data with the recommendations from the Supreme Court of Texas Education Committee, Children’s Commission: Texas Blueprint for Transforming Education Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster Care, which is a “guiding star” to improving educational outcomes for foster youth in Texas. The paragraph below is an excerpt explaining the eight guiding principles that foster youth need for success. The Texas Children’s Commission meets quarterly to give updates

Texas Blueprint for Transforming Education Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster Care: Eight Guiding Principles

At its inaugural meeting in September 2010, the Committee established its Guiding Principles, modeled after the Blueprint for Change – Education Success for Children in Foster Care (2008), a guide produced by Casey Family Programs and the American Bar Association’s Legal Center for Foster Care and Education. While recognizing each of the three system’s strengths and limitations and the challenge of improving outcomes in a state as diverse and large as Texas, committee members agreed on eight principles that clearly reflect what Texas children and youth in foster care need if they are to be successful educationally. (Children’s Commission, 21).

Guiding Principles (Children’s Commission, 21):

1. Children and youth in care are entitled to remain in the same school when feasible.
2. Children and youth in care experience seamless transitions between schools.
3. Young children in care (age 0-5) receive services and interventions to be ready to learn
4. Children and youth in care have the opportunity and support to fully participate in all developmentally appropriate activities and all aspects of the education experience.
5. Children and youth in care have supports to prevent school dropout, truancy, and disciplinary actions and re-engage in the education experience.
6. Children and youth in care are involved and empowered and prepared to self-advocate in all aspects of their education.
7. Children and youth in care have consistent adult support to advocate for and make education decisions.
8. Children and youth in care have support to enter into and complete post-secondary education.

Looking at 2020-2021 Texas Education Agency data, 227,120 economically disadvantaged students are attending school within Region 20, which encompasses Bexar County. Compared to the 1,567 students in the foster care system in the same region, foster children and youth are a relatively small part of the student population. Furthermore, since they can intersect with the economically disadvantaged population and other special populations, including at-risk, English language learners, etc., they are often double-counted in multiple categories that are priorities for DHS’ funding and programs.

According to the Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools report published by the Texas Education Agency, economically disadvantaged youth are the highest at risk for school dropout rates at over 50%. Given the fact that foster youth are a much smaller subset of students and many are economically disadvantaged, DHS’ current focus on serving economically disadvantaged students in its funding of programs is on target to have the most impact on students needing additional support. This also correlates with the data in the focus group findings.

More research on youth that exit foster care system before aging out to adoption, kinship, and reunification is required to understand their unique needs. However, from data gleaned from the

focus groups, there are some key areas where the City of San Antonio is uniquely positioned to better align with the guiding principles of the Children’s Commission.

Early Childhood: Ages 0 to 5

According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Data, approximately 56% of Texas foster youth are in the system from ages 0 to 5. Foster children are eligible to attend DHS’s Early Head Start, Head Start programs in San Antonio and Edgewood Independent School Districts, and the four Pre-K 4 SA centers. To ensure all foster youth are in a high-quality early childhood program, targeted recruiting of foster youth should be implemented by these programs and should expand to include children of former foster youth who have exited the system. Furthermore, since these programs have a “cluster” of foster parents/guardians, specialized parental engagement and support addressing their needs should be offered (e.g., overview of educational benefits for foster children and youth, how to find birth certificates, etc.). Additionally, many focus group participants shared how lack of access to childcare has prevented attainment of their own goals and the City of San Antonio can strategically market childcares services for former foster youth who are parenting.

Recruitment recommendations fit the model set out by the Children’s Commission Educational Blueprint for Foster Youth. See *appendix ii* for the guiding principles recommended by the Children’s Commission and *appendix i* for current San Antonio foster serving agencies.

Strategic Alignment of City Services

Remarkably, the findings of this report do not advocate for new programming aimed solely for foster youth. Why? Given the number of children and youth in the foster care system relative to the number of students—particularly those that are economically disadvantaged—most schools/programs would have one or two foster children attending at any given time. Policy-wise, a more impactful change is to ensure future DHS funding decisions for children and youth success should have intentional alignment with the Texas Blueprint and better support programs that currently work for foster youth. Specifically, agencies supported in kindergarten readiness, college and career readiness, and youth success funding administered by DHS should:

- Require agencies to identify foster youth in intake demographics;
- Target enrollment and recruitment for early childhood programs;
- Incorporate foster support in parent/guardian engagement modules in early childhood programs;
- Ensure all youth projects include specific support embedded in their programming for foster youth, including recruitment, resources specific to foster youth to promote educational attainment and transportation assistance;
- Develop strategies for the After School Challenge program and any out-of-school programming funded by the City to encourage foster student participation; and
- Educate staff at agencies supporting foster youth on city services to support foster youth who may experience homelessness, mental health needs, ID recovery, domestic violence, and quality early childhood options that are affordable.

Second, identify what schools and programs foster youth have a higher rate of participation through better identification. For example, two DHS divisions – homelessness and children and youth success – foster youth tend to be over-represented relative to their population size. Specifically, 20% of foster youth

experience homelessness and 18% of the DHS' NXT Level Youth Opportunity Center participants are or have been in the foster care system. Therefore, the divisions should continue to coordinate services and mutually develop strategies aligned with the Children's Commission Educational Blueprint for Foster Youth. As DHS continues to build out an intentional pathway for "opportunity youth" –defined as 16- to 24-year-olds who are not working nor in school--to obtain post-secondary educations, specific strategies to support and recruit those who were in the foster care system should be incorporated into the plan. Third, given that the majority of those in the foster system are 0-5 years of age, Pre-K 4 SA and the two Head Start programs in DHS should continue to identify and implement specialized support for foster children with an emphasis on empowering foster parents/guardians with knowledge of educational and mental health resources.

As stated earlier in the report, foster youth raised housing and mental health as critical supports needed. DHS should coordinate with the City of San Antonio Metropolitan Health District and Neighborhood and Housing Services Department if any comprehensive supports for foster youth are built out. Also, since Bexar County provides funding to the Bexar County Child Welfare Board that provides support to foster children and families, alignment conversations should occur between the two entities to ensure funding complements and/or addresses specific needs of foster youth.

ARPA Funding

The City of San Antonio will invest \$10 million in youth success and \$26 million for mental health services as part of its America Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in the fall of 2022. The timing is critical to align city funding with the Children's Commission Educational Blueprint for Foster Youth. Funding proposals will receive additional consideration if their services align to support foster youth. San Antonio agencies receiving funding will be asked to identify their foster youth population, amplify wrap around services for foster youth and correlate their services with the recommendations for the Texas Blueprint in *appendix ii*.

San Antonio Opportunity Youth Collaborative

In 2019, the City of San Antonio created its first re-engagement center, NXT Level, in response to growing numbers of opportunity youth (16-to-24-year olds not working nor in school) in the community. As stated prior, a significant population served by NXT Level are former foster youth. Additionally, to create a coordinated ecosystem impact with opportunity youth, the City of San Antonio, Department of Human Services applied and received grant funding from the Aspen Institute. The funding is currently in the nascent stages of building out a city-wide collaborative to support opportunity youth in obtaining high school equivalency to post-secondary credentialing or degrees within a seamless pathway of support from area nonprofits. The efforts by NXT Level and the Opportunity Youth Collaborative must continue to identify and amplify services for foster youth. A coordinated effort to intentionally serve foster youth in our opportunity youth work will ensure San Antonio's foster youth receive the cross-collaborative support essential to them reaching their full potential.

CONCLUSION

The Texas Children’s Education Commission concluded their 2012 study by stating, “together, courts, child welfare, and education will continue the efforts until the recommendations become seamless within each system and institution” (Children’s Commission, 62). The braided call to action is a critical process that must continue in San Antonio. The charge is not only to provide safety and well-being to foster youth “but also...disrupt the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage, dependency, and despair” (Watt, 8). With the unprecedented opportunity created with ARPA funding for youth and mental health services, the City of San Antonio can incorporate the commission's recommendations in its request for proposals to maximize impact. This combined with more coordinated work in all of City's children and youth programs to specifically address foster youth, San Antonio's foster youth will have a better support system so they can attain their educational and workforce goals and live up to the potential they all have.

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APPENDIX

- i. **City of San Antonio Foster Youth Support Agencies**
- ii. **Texas Education Blueprint Recommendations**
- iii. **Understanding the Education and Training Voucher DFPS Chart**
- iv. **Intergovernmental Approach to Foster Care Educational Attainment**
- v. **Recruiting Flyer**
- vi. **Foster Youth Focus Groups Demographic Overview**

i. City of San Antonio Foster Youth Agencies

1) **Belong** (Division of SJCR)-Started April 2021

- Belong, a division of SJRC Texas, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, serves as the lead provider for Community-Based Care in Region 8b that covers 27 Texas counties. Our vision is for abused and neglected children to be empowered to grow up to be happy, productive and caring adults.
 - **Become a Foster Parent**
 - We help connect you with quality child placing agencies in our network to provide children a sense of belonging as well as a safe place to heal and thrive.
 - **Parenting Support: Parents as Teachers (PAT)**
 - Through individualized home visits, learn how to capture the teachable moments in everyday life. We believe all children deserve support so they can learn, grow and develop to realize their full potential.
 - **C.A.R.E**
 - Our free C.A.R.E. program connects families with a certified parent educator that provides the support they need to move from surviving to thriving. C.A.R.E. is designed to assist parents through mentoring, support and education. C.A.R.E. will help provide a positive support system, teach problem solving skills, connect you with resources and much more!
 - **Support Groups**
 - Belong offers monthly support groups to assist mothers and fathers such as: Made for Motherhood, La Leche League and Fatherhood Forum
 - **Fatherhood Initiative**
 - Belong leads a community-wide Fatherhood Initiative with the goal of strengthening the father-child relationship by creating opportunities for education and engagement in their children's lives.

2) **Boysville**

- Boysville Children's Home and Shelter, the Home with a Heart, was founded in 1943 as a result of Rev. Don Holiman's observation of orphaned, homeless and abandoned boys sleeping in San Antonio's Travis Park. Today, we provide a continuum of trauma-informed services and care for children and caregivers affected by abuse, neglect, and family crisis. Through holistic wrap-around services, we provide each child the opportunity to heal from past trauma while focusing on their future.
- **Emergency Shelter**
 - Children who have experienced trauma receive a new chance at life as they begin their healing in our Emergency Shelter. Our Emergency Shelter Program provides temporary care for boys and girls, birth to 17, who cannot remain in their home. Over 80% of these children are under the protection of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.
- **Therapeutic Residential Foster Care**
 - Our residential program has been nationally accredited by the Council on Accreditation since 2000. Our campus is immersed in trauma-informed care and services. All of our

directors are TBRI® certified practitioners who train all staff to see the “whole child” in their care and help that child reach their highest potential.

- **Supervised Independent Living**
 - Each year, over 600 youth in Bexar County will age out of the foster care system without a support system to help them transition into adulthood. This age group is at-risk for homelessness, drug abuse and incarceration. Our Supervised Independent Living Program is one of only eight programs in Texas to support young adults as they attend college or vocational school, work in the community or enlist in the military.
- **Foster Care and Adoption**
 - Children outnumber available foster homes 40 to 1. The need for foster homes in Bexar County to help children heal from abuse and neglect is a critical level. If you have thought about being a foster care parent, now is the time to do it.
- **Family/ Parent Education Program**
 - Parents, grandparents, guardians or anyone caring for children, 0-17 are invited to join us for a free eight-week parenting workshop. Based on the Nurturing Parenting Program, this evidence-based model teaches behavioral management tips, creates more confident family leaders and helps caregivers recognize the power they possess in their own family's development.
- **Teen Parent and Child Program**
 - Boysville is answering the call for help and is expanding its residential foster care to include Teen Mothers and their child who are currently in foster care. The teen moms and child will live on our campus.

3) Bexar County Fostering Educational Success (BCFES)

- The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), Texas A&M-San Antonio (A&M-SA), the Alamo Colleges District (ACD), Bexar County Children's Court and Child Advocates San Antonio is a collaborative pilot program that aims to improve college graduation rates for foster care alumni.
- **College Campus Based Support**
 - **Dedicated Advocates:**
 - The campus-based support programs are housed in dedicated spaces or centers. Within these centers, students have the opportunity to build a sense of community. Students have access to a campus coach who provides coaching (assessment, direct service, and referrals), a strategy based on the Western Michigan University Coaching model. Our trained coaches administer a biopsychosocial assessment centered on the Casey Family program's seven life domains to evaluate strengths, identify barriers, and measure progress in reaching the student-centered goals. Also, the campus-based programs provide additional supports such as emergency funds, food pantries, school supplies, self-care products, transportation support, and other resources that if left unmet, would be a barrier to their educational success. The campus coach provides direct services within the dedicated space or referrals to campus or community champions to meet the needs of each student.
 - Located at: UTSA-San Antonio, Texas A&M San Antonio Campus, Alamo Colleges District

- **Housing First Program**
 - Up to 24- months of Housing support for homeless or precariously housed young adults, ages 18-24 young adults who qualify.
- **College Bound Docket**
 - The college-bound docket, an innovative and new approach to traditional neglect and abuse review hearings, primarily focuses on youth participants' educational interests and career goals. It increases youth's support to remove barriers to overall success. This specialized docket also makes available specific financial assistance to program participants to meet academic needs such as start-up goods for dorms or apartments, money for books and SAT or ACT prep and testing, or other transportation and housing needs.
- **Child Advocates San Antonio (CASA-SATX)**
 - College-bound youth are matched with a court-appointed special advocate (CASA). These educational advocates are trained and assist in obtaining and accessing legal and educational documentation for college enrollment. In addition, these educational advocates offer advocacy and support during hearings, in the transition from high school to college, and after youth have transitioned to higher education institutions throughout the state of Texas.
- **Youth Action Council**
 - YAC is a student committee that empowers current or past foster youth to succeed in college and adult life. These young leaders help inform the processes and procedures of the BCFES program, strategic action groups, and special initiatives. This student-led action council aim is to empower youth and young adults with lived experience in foster care to: (1) find and use their voice, (2) engage in advocacy and action, (3) collaborate with other youth leaders and catalyst for lasting change.
- **CLIMB (Cultivating Learning Middle School and Beyond)**
 - CLIMB, or Cultivating Learning in Middle school and Beyond, is the Bexar County Fostering Educational Success Program's 8-12th grade pipeline that provides targeted outreach and recruitment at various Bexar County ISD's, Charter schools, and residential treatment centers while focusing on creating barrier-free access to higher education. The purpose of this pipeline is to provide a pathway for youth in foster care from secondary education systems to our post-secondary institutions.
- **Fostering Career Readiness**
 - The Fostering Career Readiness Program provides students the opportunity to explore various career paths and increase the likelihood of workforce stability once they achieve a Baccalaureate degree. The three core elements provided to participants of the FCR program are (1) Employability skills & training, (2) strategic job placement, & (3) Career mentoring and shadowing.
- **YAC-Leadership Academy (starting Spring 2022)**
 - The YAC Leadership Academy will train future leaders to become engaged in policy advocacy and civic engagement and active contributors to the decision-making processes that affect their lives and communities at all organizational levels. The advocacy program seeks to mobilize its members in the policy and practice community and in key legislative districts. The program also works to educate its participants & community members on important issues, track pending legislation, and advocate the views and positions of youth directly impacted by the child welfare system.

4) Bexar County Health and Human Services, BCFS Foster Youth Transitional Center

- BCFS contracts with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) for the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program for all of South Texas (regions 8 and 11), and contracts the PAL transitional-living program in East Texas (regions 4 and 5). Our program provides services to help youth get an education, receive vocational services, find employment, access medical services, obtain housing, and establish relationships that improve outcomes in the transition to adult life.
- **Youth Transition Center**
 - A true trailblazer in social services, BCFS Health and Human Services developed the transition center model. Transition Centers are “one-stop shops” that offer case management, counseling, sheltering, and life skills training to at-risk young adults. Each transition center houses and partners with government and community organizations to ensure comprehensive, yet non-duplicated, services that help youth become independent and law-abiding adults. These centers are a resource to thousands of youth aging out of the foster care system or returning home from juvenile justice institutions.
- **Preparation for Adult Living (PAL)**
 - PAL provides services to youth aging out of the foster care system to expand their skills and knowledge, strengthen their self-confidence, create healthy community relationships, and learn self-guidance. PAL provides transition services to foster youth and alumni from ages 15 1/2 to 21 in order to better prepare young adults for their freedom.
- **Resiliency through Healing**
 - Resiliency Through Healing (RTH) helps young adults 18 to 25 transition towards stable and independent lifestyle through free counseling and case management services.
- **Family and Youth Success (FAYS) Program**
 - The FAYS program addresses family conflict and everyday struggles while promoting strong families and youth resilience. FAYS providers offer one-on-one coaching or counseling with a trained professional and group-based learning for youth and parents. FAYS also operates a 24-hour hotline for families with more urgent needs.
- **Texas Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV)**
 - The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program allows Texas to help current and former foster youth and young adults, youth adopted at age 16, and youth that enter Permanency Care Assistance at age 16 to make a smoother transition to a successful adulthood by providing funding and supports to help youth and young adults achieve their educational goals. The voice provides lifetime tuition and fee free college, university or workforce credentialing.
- **Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)**
 - TWC assists former and current foster youth ages 16 to 25 who are seeking assistance with completing their GED or searching for employment. All youth are assigned a Workforce Advocate and Case Manager to help youth polish resumes, apply for jobs and obtain proper work attire to be successful in the working field. Our mission is to provide services for at-risk youth to expand their skills and knowledge, strengthen their self-confidence, create healthy community relationships and help youth learn positive self-guidance

- **Human Trafficking Interdiction (HTI)**
 - BCFS Health and Human Services provides services for youth who have been victims of human trafficking and sex trafficking through its Common Thread program. The Common Thread advocacy team is comprised of social workers and survivors who are based throughout Texas. The program is evidence-based and survivor-informed, operating with the understanding that long-term, dependable, and positive adult relationships are the key to recovery.

5) **Casey Family Programs San Antonio Field Office**

- The San Antonio Field Office, which opened in 1986, provides clinical case management for youth and families who need help attaining or maintaining permanency, and for young adults transitioning from foster care. We are part of Casey Family Programs' Child and Family Services team, which also operates field offices in Arizona, California, Idaho and Washington, all focused on the urgent and relentless pursuit of securing lifelong, permanent family connections for every child. The San Antonio Field Office team establishes enduring connections for youth and young adults while working alongside Bexar County and six surrounding counties to achieve safe, legal permanency and optimal well-being for all youth we serve. We engage extended family to support the youth and families who are involved with the foster care system.

6) **Region 20 Education Service Center**

- **Local Education Agency (LEA) Foster Care Coordinator**
 - Region 20 has a Foster Care Liaison that brings together counselors, teachers and administrators to share data, update on laws, offer resources and connect with local agencies for support.
 - Hosts 2 meetings each year to connect entire Region 20.
 - Provides regular foster youth specific information to school counselors.
 - Is the expert on the foster youth landscape in Region 20.
 - Ensures that each school appoints at least one employee to act as foster care liaison officer.

7) **Pearls and Eagles Court**

- Our mission is to design, offer and maintain comprehensive integrated curriculum of PEARLS (Preparation, Esteem, Achievement, Resiliency, Learning, Strength & Stamina) and EAGLES (Esteem, Achievement, Grit, Learning & Leadership, Empowerment, and Strength) is to establish a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated systems approach to help young youth in the foster care system between the ages of 12 and 18. This includes developing, supporting, and facilitating evidence-based curriculum twice a month with a multi-team approach. Each youth is provided a mentor within the community as a role model. In addition to the court participation, the youth participate by giving back to the community in a day-of-service and by enhancing their own self-esteem and goal in a day-of-opportunity.

8) **Texas Department of Family and Protective Services**

- **Region 8 Educational Specialist**
 - i. CPS regional education specialists help students in substitute care, and are a resource to CPS staff, caregivers, and community stakeholders.
 - ii. For Region 8, Makada Ward is the Point of Contact at 210-213-3524

- **Community Based Care**
 - i. Community-Based Care (CBC) is a new way to provide services than traditional foster care because it gives local communities the flexibility to draw on local strengths and resources and find innovative ways to meet the unique and individual needs of children and their families. CBC includes many of the services that Child Protective Services (CPS) normally provides. This includes foster care, case management, kinship, and reunification services.
 - ii. See information for Belong which serves 27 counties, including Bexar and is in stage one of development starting April 1, 2021.
 - iii. See [Stage 1 Operations Manual](#) for more information.

9) Thru Project

- We are a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization supporting San Antonio & surrounding area foster youth as they age out of the foster care system. We recruit and train adult volunteers to serve as Mentors and then match adults with youth for one-on-one mentorship. We offer the life skills training that many have never received; we help them get a job, apply for college, set up their first apartment and navigate their finances.
 - **Thru Works**
 - Newly forming initiative to link foster youth with job opportunities in San Antonio
 - **Mentorship**
 - According to your likes/dislikes, THRU Project can match & pair you with a volunteer mentor. They will provide a listening ear and a support system for you.
 - **Transportation**
 - We can help a bus pass to help with transportation
 - **Cell Phone**
 - We can provide a cell phone and service plan to connect you to your mentor, your employer, your teachers/professors, and help you keep yourself informed!
 - **Next Step Housing**
 - We can connect you with safe & affordable housing with our housing programs.
 - **Life Skills Classes**
 - Learning life lessons can be a drag, but we make it FUN in THRU Project! Come to our Life Skills events and bring your mentor and make it a date, meet other youth who are going through after care, and come away with questions answered!

Current City of San Antonio Services

1) Early Head Start and Head Start

- The City of San Antonio Head Start and Early Head Start Child Care Partnership programs provide specialized quality education and comprehensive social services to eligible children and their families. The City's Head Start and Early Head Start services are available to children from 6 weeks to five years of age in the San Antonio and Edgewood Independent School Districts. The City is funded to serve 3,236 children

2) Pre-K4SA

- Pre-K 4 SA educates 2,000 students pre-kindergarten every year through its four education centers and provides critical family education, empowerment and support. Its Professional Learning Program hosts resourceful workshops, seminars, training and certification opportunities for ECE professionals. And its Competitive Grants Program aids the success of other pre-K 3 centers throughout San Antonio.

3) Ambassador Youth Internship

- The Ambassador Summer Internship Program is an internship program for currently enrolled college students launched by the City of San Antonio in 2004. The program exposes students to professional opportunities and innovative career paths through paid internships, Peer-to-Peer networking sessions, and community service projects. Program participants are placed with government entities, non-profit agencies, and private organizations to gain experience in high-demand occupations in an effort to attract San Antonio's graduating professionals to career opportunities within the local community.
- An average of 120 Ambassador Interns are enrolled and placed in internship positions each year.
- For the first time in 2021, the Ambassador Internship is funding an additional 50 internships for former foster youth utilizing the Education and Training Voucher in a partnership with BCFES.

4) NXT Level Opportunity Youth Center: Frank Garrett Location and Northside ISD Blessing Location

- The NXT Level Youth Opportunity Center connects 16-to-24-year old's to resources by providing personal educational and career goal coaches in partnership with Goodwill and Communities in Schools.

5) San Antonio Opportunity Youth Collaborative (started in May 2021)

- The SAOYC started as a cross city collaborative with agencies supporting 16 to 24 years not working and not in school with the goal to increase the number of youths engaged in the GED, High School Equivalency or Non-traditional high school attainment to AlamoPROMISE (tuition and fee free degree or credential in three years through the San Antonio Community Colleges District).

ii. The Texas Blueprint Recommendations

The pages that follow are directly from the Children's Commission, The Texas Blueprint: Transforming education outcomes for children & youth in foster care. The final report of the education committee.

Retrieved from <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/1119/thetexasblueprint.pdf>

EDUCATION COMMITTEE
JUDICIAL PRACTICES RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES

#	RECOMMENDATION	STAKEHOLDERS	FISCAL IMPLICATION	GUIDING PRINCIPLE	TIMEFRAME TO IMPLEMENT
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1. Enhance Judicial Decision-Making on Education Issues at All Statutorily Required Hearings under Texas Family Code Chapters 262 and 263, Excluding Ex Parte Hearings

1.1	Amend Family Code §262.201 to require courts to include identity of the education decision maker in relevant court orders. Develop standard language to be included in court orders regarding education decision maker and decision-making rights, including emergency orders.	DFPS, Children's Commission	Yes	1-8	Intermediate
1.2	Develop a stand-alone court order outlining educational rights and duties of parents, conservators, DFPS, guardians and attorneys ad litem, and others. Require DFPS to provide a stand-alone order to schools, as soon as possible, within 15 business days of written receipt.	DFPS, Children's Commission	Yes	1-8	Intermediate
1.3	Address school placements during all statutorily required hearings and require court reports to include the following information about the child's educational needs: whether the child's school changed, and if so, reasons for the school change; whether the child is currently enrolled in school; whether there are any issues related to record and credit transfer; and whether an education portfolio has been created for the child and is both up to date and located at the child's current placement.	DFPS, Children's Commission	No	1-2, 4-8	Short-term
1.4	When appropriate, appoint the guardian ad litem or CASA as the surrogate parent under the <i>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act</i> . Consider such appointments for all children in residential treatment center (RTC) placements.	Courts	No	5	Intermediate

2. Enhance Judicial Decision-Making on Education Issues at Ex Parte or Emergency Hearings and 14-Day Adversary Hearings

2.1	During an ex parte hearing in which a court orders removal of a child, consider appropriateness of the child's school selection determination by DFPS, including whether the child should remain in the school of origin, and make orders as appropriate.	Courts	No	1-2	Short-term
2.2	Inquire whether the caseworker verified that the caretaker or foster parent immediately enrolled the child in a new school and, if applicable, whether all relevant school records have been transferred.	Courts	No	2	Short-term
2.3	Require DFPS court reports to include why it was not possible to keep a child in his school of origin when removed from the home.	Courts, DFPS	No	1	Short-term
2.4	Inquire whether appropriate efforts were made to allow the child to remain in the child's school of origin.	Courts	No	1	Short-term

3. Enhance Judicial Decision-Making on Education Issues at Status, Permanency, and Placement Hearings

3.1	Add consideration of education issues to findings made pursuant to Texas Family Code §§263.306 [Permanency Hearings] and 263.503 [Placement Review Hearings].	Courts	No	3	Short-term
3.2	Amend Texas Family Code Chapter 107 to add the following to the duties and responsibilities of attorneys and guardians ad litem appointed in DFPS cases – Inquire into the scheduling of a child’s physiological, psychological, and educational assessments and treatment, prior to statutorily required hearings under Texas Family Code Chapter 263, beginning at the Status Hearing.	Courts, DFPS	No	3	Intermediate
3.3	If applicable, use court order to allow access by DFPS to Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) records.	Courts, DFPS	No	1-8	Long-term
3.4	If feasible, schedule court hearings for school-aged children outside of school hours.	Courts, DFPS	No	1-8	Intermediate
3.5	Encourage DFPS and their contractors, whenever possible, to schedule therapy sessions and parental/sibling visits outside of school hours.	Courts	Yes	4, 5, 7	Intermediate
3.6	Amend Texas Family Code Chapter 107 to add the following duty and responsibility of attorneys and guardians ad litem appointed in DFPS cases – To be knowledgeable about the child’s educational needs and goals, including special education, whether child is at grade level, school behavioral interventions, ARDs/IEPs, extracurricular activities, and whether the child has a post-secondary education goal.	Courts	Yes	1-8	Intermediate
3.7	Authorize guardians ad litem to request hearings regarding educational needs between statutorily required hearings.	All	No	1-8	Long-term
3.8	Encourage youth participation in permanency and placement review hearings to enable discussion of post-secondary education goals.	Courts	No	1-8	Intermediate
3.9	During hearings, as age appropriate, emphasize to youth and caregivers that post-secondary education, including a vocational track, is a viable option for youth in care.	Courts, DFPS	No	8	Intermediate
3.10	Require DFPS to include in court reports information that has been made available to DFPS regarding school discipline actions which resulted in juvenile or municipal court action, including Class C ticketing, or any modifications to IEPs.	Courts, DFPS	Yes	4, 5	Intermediate
3.11	Continue the appointment of the attorney and guardian ad litem, especially CASA, on the case to address education issues until the youth permanently leaves care. If the attorney ad litem is dismissed before the youth leaves care, identify an education advocate by court order.	Courts	Yes	4-8	Intermediate
3.12	Require youth’s attorney or guardian ad litem to participate in an exit interview with youth to ensure awareness of post-secondary education options.	Court	Yes	8	Intermediate
3.13	When a child reaches the age of 14, require post-secondary education planning to be included in court reports, such as post-secondary education goals, availability and completion of the American College Testing Assessment (ACT) and/or the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), and whether the youth has submitted college or technical school applications.	Court, DFPS	No	8	Short-term
3.14	Require that a letter from DFPS with information about the education/training voucher and tuition fee waiver be attached to any final order appointing a person as Permanent Managing Conservator of a youth age 16 or older.	Courts, DFPS	Yes	8	Intermediate

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EDUCATION COMMITTEE
DATA AND INFORMATION SHARING RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES

#	RECOMMENDATION	STAKEHOLDERS	FISCAL IMPLICATION	GUIDING PRINCIPLE	TIMEFRAME TO IMPLEMENT
<p>1. <u>Perfect and Expand the Routine Exchange of Aggregate Data between Agencies to Determine How Children in Foster Care Fare Educationally and to Evaluate Improvement in those Education Outcomes over Time</u></p>					
1.1	Include Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) enrollment data in the data shared between TEA and DFPS under the existing MOU.	DFPS, TEA	No	3	Short-term
1.2	Develop a method of determining the number of children and youth who remain in their schools of origin after entering substitute care, possibly through use of DFPS' IMPACT system.	DFPS, TEA	Yes	1, 2	Long-term
1.3	Determine a method to begin tracking school mobility (change of school placements) of children and youth in foster care in aggregate form and to share this data between DFPS and TEA under the existing MOU.	DFPS, TEA	Yes	1, 2, 4-7	Intermediate
1.4	Annually identify school districts with significant foster youth populations as determined by TEA and DFPS. Work with the identified districts and their House Bill 826 foster care school district liaisons to identify best practices and areas in need of improvement.	TEA, DFPS	No	2-7	Short-term
1.5	Determine feasibility of DFPS providing data to the Public Policy Research Institute (PPRI) at Texas A&M University to compare data on foster youth to data collected regarding students who were part of the Justice Center study on school discipline and its relation to student success and juvenile justice involvement.	DFPS	Yes	5	Intermediate
1.6	Include in the aggregate data, as tracked by PEIMS and shared between TEA and DFPS under the existing MOU, each restraint by school personnel of a child in the temporary or permanent managing conservatorship of DFPS.	DFPS, JJD, TEA	Yes	5	Long-term
1.7	Develop a method to track and exchange information between juvenile justice, TEA, Independent School Districts, and DFPS about school-related offenses and school disciplinary action of children and youth in care on an aggregate level. TEA to continue to provide aggregate data about student disciplinary actions as currently provided pursuant to the TEA/DFPS MOU.	JJD, TEA, DFPS	Yes	5	Long-term
1.8	Determine what data needs to be collected by DFPS, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and post-secondary education campuses. Define the purpose of the data, identify data collection methods, and determine which entity has the capability to collect, disseminate and report the data.	DFPS, THECB, Post-Secondary Education Institutions	Yes	8	Long-term

1.9	Develop methods to promote exchange of data and other information between DFPS, THECB, and post-secondary education campuses, which may include entering into MOUs or other formal or informal agreements.	DFPS, THECB, Post-Secondary Education Institutions	No	8	Long-term
1.10	Develop a consistent, statewide process or procedure for post-secondary education campuses to utilize for identifying foster or former foster youth who enroll.	DFPS, THECB, Post-Secondary Education Institutions	Yes	8	Intermediate
1.11	Develop a method to determine the number of youth enrolled in post-secondary education at risk of loss of financial aid due to poor academic standing or dropping out for a semester.	DFPS, THECB	Yes	8	Long-term

2. Improve Child-Specific Information Sharing to Ensure that All Agencies and Stakeholders Have the Necessary Information to Serve the Education Needs of Children in Foster Care

2.1	Include Pre-K enrollment and/or Preschool Programs for Children with Disabilities (PPCD) records in Education Portfolio.	DFPS, placement	No	3	Short-term
2.2	Establish policies regarding the identification of students in foster care upon enrollment in a school, with appropriate safeguards to ensure confidentiality and privacy, but aimed at expediting the delivery of services and interventions.	DFPS, TEA, TASB	Yes	2, 4-8	Intermediate
2.3	Develop a handbook or protocols for DFPS and schools to give guidance/ requirements for use of sensitive information regarding children or youth in care.	DFPS, TEA, TASB, TASA	Yes	1, 2, 4	Intermediate
2.4	Create a new or utilize an existing method, such as a child information sheet, to alert schools about who may have contact with a child or pick up the child from school, and develop a procedure to keep the information current.	DFPS and Child Placing Agencies	No	1, 2	Intermediate
2.5	Determine a method of alerting the school of origin or former school of the child's enrollment in a new school.	DFPS, TEA	No	1, 2	Intermediate
2.6	Find funding for new or use existing technology to produce an electronic education portfolio.	DFPS, TEA	Yes	1, 2, 4-7, 8	Long-term
2.7	Develop a method to track and exchange child-specific information between juvenile justice, TEA, ISDs, and DFPS about school-related offenses and school disciplinary action of children and youth in care.	JJD, TEA, DFPS	Yes	5	Long-term

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EDUCATION COMMITTEE GENERAL TRAINING RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES

#	RECOMMENDATION	STAKEHOLDERS	FISCAL IMPLICATION	GUIDING PRINCIPLE	TIMEFRAME TO IMPLEMENT
1. <u>Use Existing Stakeholder Resources to Promote Training and Raise Awareness</u>					
1.1	Utilize existing stakeholder websites for hosting training, resources, and links and encourage the sharing of training across systems.	All	Yes	1-8	Intermediate
2. <u>Improve Judicial Training and Resources</u>					
2.1	Improve or develop Judicial Checklists on education issues.	Children's Commission	No	1-8	intermediate
2.2	Add education-related content to the CPS Judges Bench Book.	Children's Commission	No	1-8	Intermediate
3. <u>Expand Training and Resources for Child Caregivers and Child Welfare Stakeholders</u>					
3.1	Create educational videos or online learning opportunities and resource lists for kinship and other caregivers about school readiness and early education needs, including child development information, enrichment resources and strategies, and literacy activities.	DFPS, TEA	Yes	3	Long-term
3.2	To promote standardized statewide training across child placing agencies, develop additional or supplemental foster parent training regarding education issues, for applicable age group of children in home.	DFPS, TFFA, TACPA, CASA	Yes	1-8	Long-term
3.3	Develop education/foster care fact sheets and/or checklists for foster parents/caregivers, DFPS caseworkers, CASA, and attorneys and guardians ad litem.	Children's Commission, DFPS, TEA, Texas CASA, Texas Foster Family Association, THECB	Yes	1-8	Intermediate
3.4	Create a chart/checklist of school-related decisions and activities and identify who should participate in those decisions and activities – parent, foster parent or caretaker, CASA, DFPS caseworker, or youth.	DFPS, TEA, Children's Commission	Yes	1-8	Intermediate

4. Enhance Training Available to Schools

4.1	Utilize Education Service Center resources, such as distance learning rooms, to organize local school district foster care liaison gatherings and trainings and professional development programs for school staff.	TEA	Yes	1-8	Intermediate
4.2	Develop training for use by Education Service Centers, including use of webinars and the Endless Dreams video and consider use of complete Endless Dreams train the trainer curriculum.	TEA, DFPS, Children's Commission, Casey	Yes	1-8	Intermediate
4.3	Identify training needs regarding categorical eligibility and process for documentation of foster children in Early Head Start and Head Start.	DFPS, Texas Head Start Collaborative Office	No	3	Intermediate
4.4	Make presentations or engage in awareness activities at annual or regular meetings and conferences of TASB and TASA and other education organizations and education service centers about education issues, including post-secondary education, and unique challenges of youth in and formerly in care.	TEA, THECB, DFPS, TASB	No	8	Intermediate
4.5	Make presentations at education service center core group monthly meetings and use education service center representatives as focus groups to learn the best ways to disseminate information to high school, middle school, and elementary school counselors, school psychologists, and other school personnel.	TEA, DFPS, Children's Commission	No	8	Short-term

TRAINING CHART – JUDGES AND CHILD WELFARE STAKEHOLDERS

TOPIC	YOUTH IN CARE	PARENT	COURT	CPS	GAL/ CASA	AAL	PARENT'S ATTORNEY	FOSTER PARENT	CHILD PLACING AGENCY/ RTC	CARE TAKER
Education Decision-Making										
General education decision-making, including extent of education rights		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Education Advocacy										
How to advocate in school setting, including how to interact with school district, key things to know about education, importance of balancing educational well-being with permanency and safety considerations	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Importance of education and need for involvement in education setting		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Importance of considering education when making decisions about placement		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Disproportionality/Cultural Competency										
			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
School Readiness										
Child Development		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Age-appropriate assessments, including Texas Healthy Steps, who conducts, what supposed to diagnose, when to conduct		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Early education needs, enrichment strategies, literacy activities		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Eligibility and requirements for enrollment in ECI, Early Head Start and Head Start, and Pre-K programs		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
School Stability and Transitions										
Upon transfer to new school, new routines/set-up for learning environment	X							X		

Fostering Connections Act and education provisions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Enrollment procedures, including required records for enrollment	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
How to identify self to school staff for visits and records		X		X	X	X	X	X		X
Definition of an "education" record		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Importance of school attendance	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

School Services and Supports

Importance of education and stability of educational placement	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
IDEA, special education, surrogate parent, including when child placed in RTC, IEPs, ARDs, including transportation as part of IEP, best methods of including measurements, etc., in IEPs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Section 504 accommodations	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Discipline issues, including use of Class C ticketing and restraints in school setting and implication for youth in care, behavior management, opt out of corporal punishment pursuant to HB 359	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Existing education resources, including Texas Virtual School Network, mentoring, tutoring	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Post-Secondary Education

Housing (availability; application process, extended foster care, temporary housing between semesters)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
How to pursue and prepare for post-secondary education (college, vocational), advanced studies, dual credit courses, high school graduation requirements, employment pathways	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X
Post-secondary options for foster youth (education/tuition voucher, tuition fee waiver, how to lock-in benefits)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
How to find resources such as career planning, Texas Workforce Board	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X
How to communicate post-secondary education goals with schools										
Information about extended care, return to care, extended jurisdiction, and temporary housing	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

TRAINING CHART – EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS

TOPIC	SCHOOL PRINCIPAL OR SUPERINTENDENT	SCHOOL BOARD	HB862 LIAISON	TEACHER	COUNSELOR, PSYCHOLOGIST OR NURSE	CAMPUS FRONT OFFICE	BUS DRIVERS	EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER	CHARTER SCHOOL	SCHOOL LAW ATTORNEY	ECI, EARLY HEAD START AND HEAD START
Overview of foster care, including timeframe, rules, and regulations and roles of attorneys and guardians ad litem, caseworkers, courts	X		X		X			X	X	X	
Endless Dreams curriculum	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
Stereotypes about children in foster care	X		X	X	X	X		X	X		X
Trauma informed care, socio-emotional needs and issues of children in care, behaviors often exhibited in school setting, effective disciplinary methods, need for positive behavioral supports and interventions, including functional behavioral assessments, and related services including counseling, psychological services and social work	X		X	X	X		X	X	X		X
Disproportionality and cultural competency	X		X	X	X			X	X		X
Enrollment/records requirements and transfer issues for foster youth	X		X		X	X		X		X	
Categorical eligibility for Pre-K and Early Head Start and Head Start	X					X		X		X	X
Legal and educational rights specific to foster youth/students	X		X		X			X	X	X	
Credit accrual issues	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
How and why children enter foster care	X		X	X	X			X	X	X	
Foster care policies and impact on school placement	X	X	X		X			X	X	X	

SCHOOL READINESS SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES

Guiding Principle #3: Young children in care (age 0-5) receive services and interventions to be ready to learn

#	RECOMMENDATION	STAKEHOLDERS	FISCAL IMPLICATION	GUIDING PRINCIPLE	TIMEFRAME TO IMPLEMENT
1. <u>Improve Access to Early Head Start and Head Start</u>					
1.1	Develop a model statewide MOU between DFPS, TEA and Head Start and Early Head Start that can be used by local communities to support providing early childhood services to children in foster care.	DFPS, TEA, and Texas Head Start Collaboration Office	Yes	3	Intermediate
2. <u>Increase Access of Child Care Slots to Additional Populations of Children Involved with Foster Care System</u>					
2.1	Expand access to Rising Star Day Care programs.	DFPS and Texas Workforce Commission	Yes	3	Long-term
3. <u>Enhance Knowledge of the Child Assessment Process for Young Children</u>					
3.1	Promote, through existing or newly developed forms, more in-depth caseworker interview of birth parents about the child's developmental progress.	DFPS	No	3	Intermediate
3.2	Determine method to more efficiently relay information to CASA and attorneys ad litem (AAL) about the child's developmental status. Determine whether the child's plans of service are routinely provided to CASAs and AALs.	DFPS, Texas CASA, Children's Commission	No	3	Long-term
3.3	Include information in DFPS court reports about evaluations and assessments, including Texas Healthy Steps appointments, which comply with the Early Periodical Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) program required in every state.	DFPS	No	3	Short-term
3.4	Ensure placement summary forms and developmental history forms already in use by DFPS staff are sufficiently provided to new caretakers.	DFPS	No	3	Short-term

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SCHOOL STABILITY AND TRANSITIONS SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES

Guiding Principle #1: Children and youth in care are entitled to remain in the same school when feasible

Guiding Principle #2: Children and youth in care experience seamless transitions between schools

#	RECOMMENDATION	STAKEHOLDERS	FISCAL IMPLICATION	GUIDING PRINCIPLE	TIMEFRAME TO IMPLEMENT
<p>1. <u>Create Alternatives and Expand Use of Transportation to Keep Children in Their School of Origin, When in Their Best Interest</u></p>					
1.1	Form a workgroup to develop best practice guidelines regarding transportation to the school of origin, including factors to consider in determining whether transportation should occur, such as the distance, time, and most reasonable mode of transportation to the school of origin.	DFPS, TASB, TEA	Yes	1-2	Long-term
1.2	Create a sample MOU for child placing agencies, children’s shelters and local independent school districts regarding transportation and enrollment.	TEA, TASB, DFPS, shelters	No	1-2	Intermediate
<p>2. <u>Improve Decisions regarding Keeping Children in Their School of Origin</u></p>					
2.1	Continue the process at TEA for DFPS to confirm schools in which children are enrolled, as necessary.	TEA, DFPS	No	1-2	Short-term
2.2	Create a way of identifying school districts in which foster homes are located through geomapping or other technology.	DFPS, TEA	Yes	1-8	Long-term
<p>3. <u>Increase Foster Care Capacity across School Districts</u></p>					
3.1	Focus on recruitment of foster parents and kinship caregiver placements in the areas, determined by zip code and school district, where children and youth are removed from home.	DFPS	Yes	1-2	Long-term
3.2	Focus on recruitment of potential foster parents and kinship caregiver placements from the school setting when the child is removed.	DFPS	Yes	1-2	Long-term
3.3	Amend DFPS policy to add teachers and other education community members to expedited preliminary assessment process currently used for home studies of kinship placements.	DFPS	Yes	1-2	Long-term

4. Implement and Support House Bill (HB) 826 ISD Liaisons in School Districts

4.1	Track ISD appointments of HB 826 school district foster care liaisons. Promote awareness of the legislative requirement among school district superintendents.	TEA	No	1-2	Short-term
4.2	Create a listserv or other electronic communication tool for HB 826 school district foster care liaisons.	TEA	Yes	1-2	Short-term
4.3	Develop a toolkit, handbook and/or training for new HB 826 school district foster care liaisons and make available on-line and electronically. Work with HB 826 liaisons to identify best practices and areas where improvement needed.	TEA, TASB and DFPS	Yes	1-2	Short-term
4.4	Develop a list of responsibilities and duties of HB 826 school district foster care liaisons, including minimum training requirements and use of a communications network. Clarify the definition of children in the conservatorship of the state.	All	No	1-8	Intermediate
4.5	Determine a method to establish connections between the new HB 826 school district foster care liaisons and the DFPS Education Specialists.	DFPS and TEA	No	1-8	Short-term

5. Support Timely Enrollment When Children Initially Enroll or Change School Placements

5.1	Develop a letter from the child placing agencies about a foster parent's ability to enroll a child in school to attach to DFPS Form 2085 when the authority to enroll is given to a child placing agency rather than a specific foster parent.	DFPS, child placing agencies	No	1-8	Short-term
5.2	Consult with the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) regarding whether to include foster children in the exception to the rule requiring immunization records to enroll a child who is in care in a new school, similar to that given to students who are homeless.	DFPS	No	1-8	Intermediate
5.3	Develop a model enrollment information chart for the front desks of school campuses to use.	TASB, DFPS, TEA	No	1-8	Short-term
5.4	Hold focus groups of principals and representatives of school administrator organizations to determine the type of information school administrators need, such as behavioral manifestations and academic histories, to appropriately place a child in an educational setting.	TASB, DFPS, Children's Commission	No	1-8	Short-term

#	RECOMMENDATION	STAKEHOLDERS	FISCAL IMPLICATION	GUIDING PRINCIPLE	TIMEFRAME TO IMPLEMENT
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6. Improve Timeliness and Efficiency of Transfer of Accurate School Records to New School Placements

6.1	Provide a letter to school administrators on steps that need to be taken to increase timeliness of records transfers. Include information about the importance of records transfer and the HB 826 school district foster care liaison requirement in a To the Administrator letter to all school district administrators.	DFPS and TEA	No	1-8	Short-term
6.2	Review and assess school districts that have a high population of children with parents enlisted in the military, such as Killeen ISD, to determine the procedures used to address record transfer issues.	TEA, DFPS, Children's Commission	No	1-8	Intermediate
6.3	Determine whether the Texas Student Records Exchange (TREx) can be enhanced to serve as repository for school records in addition to being used to transfer records.	TEA	Yes	2	Long-term

7. Address Issue of Lost Credits and Improve Credit Transfer and Recovery

7.1	Compile strategies to address credit transfer, loss, and recovery.	TASB, DFPS, TEA	No	1-8	Long-term
7.2	Create school work recognition plans for students who experience educational disruption or who are placed temporarily in an educational program or school, which outlines how the student will complete coursework and earn credit.	TASB, TEA, DFPS, Children's Commission	Yes	1-8	Long-term
7.3	Encourage school districts to accept non-traditional coursework, such as correspondence or dual credit courses, as credit for students in foster care.	TASB, TEA, DFPS	No	1, 2, 4-8	Intermediate
7.4	Support use of dual credit courses by students in foster care to activate tuition and fee waivers.	TASB, TEA, DFPS	No	4-8	Intermediate

8. Support and Maintain Increases in School Attendance

8.1	Consider implications of and alternatives to taking youth out of school for therapy and other appointments, court, and family visits.	DFPS, Courts, Children's Commission	No	1-8	Short-term
8.2	Consider amending the Education Code to include court-ordered visitation and services in the category of excused absences from school to allow schools to count the child in attendance and give the child the opportunity to do make-up work.	All	No	1, 2, 4-8	Intermediate

SCHOOL EXPERIENCE, SUPPORTS, AND ADVOCACY SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES

Guiding Principle #4: Children and youth in care have the opportunity and support to fully participate in all developmentally appropriate activities and all aspects of the education experience

Guiding Principle #5: Children and youth in care have supports to prevent school dropout, truancy, and disciplinary actions and re-engage in the education experience

Guiding Principle #6: Children and youth in care are involved and empowered and prepared to self-advocate in all aspects of their education

Guiding Principle #7: Children and youth in care have consistent adult support to advocate for and make education decisions

#	RECOMMENDATION	STAKEHOLDERS	FISCAL IMPLICATION	GUIDING PRINCIPLE	TIMEFRAME TO IMPLEMENT
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1. Improve Education Decision-Making

1.1	Amend the Family Code to authorize the education decision maker access to education records and notice of and attendance at specified school meetings, including parent/teacher conferences, ARDs, and disciplinary hearings, to the same extent as parents and amend the Education Code to require provision of notice of school meetings to the education decision maker, caretaker and DFPS caseworker, if the school is made aware of the identities of these persons.	All	Yes	5, 7	Long-term
1.2	Clarify in DFPS policy the list of different types of education decisions that may be made about a child in care and who should make that decision.	DFPS	No	7	Intermediate

2. Promote and Improve the Quality of Education Advocacy

2.1	As a best practice, conduct a conference for foster children upon/after enrollment in a new school, to be attended by all relevant school personnel as determined by the school district, the foster parent, youth, caseworker (in person or by conference call), the education decision maker, CASA, and the attorney and/or guardian ad litem.	All	Yes	1-8	Long-term
2.2	Require the education decision maker to complete a periodic Educational Advocacy Report, to correspond with the school's grading period, and to provide it to DFPS, CASA, and the attorney and guardian ad litem during monthly child/family visit to ensure education-related activities are being sufficiently conducted. Additionally, the education decision maker should provide the report to the court at periodic hearings.	DFPS, caretaker	Yes	1-8	Long-term
2.3	Require the DFPS caseworker to go over the contents of the Education Portfolio with parents and youth, as age appropriate, on a quarterly basis.	DFPS	No	1-8	Short-term
2.4	Request additional full-time equivalent (FTE) units for additional DFPS Education Specialist positions to support and advocate for foster children and youth in education settings.	All	Yes	1-8	Long-term

#	RECOMMENDATION	STAKEHOLDERS	FISCAL IMPLICATION	GUIDING PRINCIPLE	TIMEFRAME TO IMPLEMENT
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3. Better Coordinate Child Welfare and School Evaluations and Assessments

3.1	Engage DFPS, TEA, and other stakeholders, as applicable, in mapping of assessment process and coordinate on development of assessment process (early childhood, psychological, speech, special education) that may be used jointly by education and child welfare, with relevant sections paid for by the requesting entity. Encourage reciprocity of assessments, if completed within a specified timeframe. Develop best practices to ensure early assessment and to avoid repeat testing and assessment for similar purposes.	DFPS, TEA, School Districts	Yes	1-8	Long-term
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4. Connect More Regular Education Youth in Care with School Services and Supports

4.1	Determine feasibility of obtaining lap top computers with internet access for children and youth in care who need access to the Texas Virtual School Network or who are enrolled in middle and high schools where other students have computer and internet access.	All	Yes	4, 7	Long-term
4.2	Encourage schools to identify existing tutoring and mentoring programs within schools and communities and provide information to caretakers at the enrollment conference and regular progress checks.	TEA, DFPS	Yes	6-7	Short-term
4.3	Address issue of fee waivers for supports and services.	TEA, DFPS, School Districts, Community based organizations	Yes	4-7	Long-term
4.4	Encourage schools to consider students in care for campus-based programs or teams designed to help students with risk factors, such as the Intervention Assistance Team, Communities in Schools, or district 21st Century Community Learning Centers, when services are available on campus.	TEA, CASA	No	4-5	Intermediate
4.5	Establish peer or honor student mentoring programs in schools for students who are in the legal custody of DFPS similar to those used for children of persons in the military.	Schools	Yes	4-5	Long-term
4.6	Explore funding options to establish programs to provide tutoring from qualified teachers for children and youth placed in group homes, DFPS-paid placements, and relative placements.	Schools, Community based organizations	Yes	4-5	Long-term
4.7	Explore the feasibility of developing an MOU with the University Interscholastic League (UIL) to ensure students in foster care will not be denied involvement in UIL activities because of DFPS-initiated school moves.	DFPS, TEA	No	4-5	Intermediate

5. Address Over and Underrepresentation in Special Education and Improve Special Education Experience

5.1	Create special education and foster youth task force of school law attorneys, TEA, Texas Educational Diagnosticians' Association (TEDA), Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education (TCASE), and other organizations, including disability advocacy groups, to look into issues related to special education and children and youth in foster care, including the possible over and under representation of students in care in special education classes.	All	Yes	5	Intermediate
5.2	For ARD meetings of children in DFPS conservatorship, develop IDEA compliant methods for providing notice to parents, conservators, guardians and attorneys ad litem, and CASA programs. Include IDEA compliant language in notice about surrogate parent authority to invite or exclude participants and to advocate on behalf of that child.	All	Yes	1-8	Long-term

6. Improve School Experience of Children and Youth Enrolled in Charter Schools

6.1	Coordinate with the Texas Charter School Association (TCSA) to encourage all charter school board members that admit children and youth in foster care to receive training about their educational and other needs. Discuss with TCSA whether charter school administrators and faculty may also be encouraged to receive this type of training.	All	Yes	2, 4-8	Long-term
6.2	Clarify the DFPS Residential Child Care contract to say that a child placed in a Residential Treatment Center (RTC) may not automatically be enrolled in a RTC-associated charter school. If a child is eligible for special education services, an appropriate ARD committee should determine that the charter school would be the least restrictive environment for the child and DFPS and the surrogate parent should approve the child's attendance at the charter school. If the child is not eligible for special education services, DFPS should, in conjunction with the child's education decision maker, approve the child's attendance at the charter school and apprise the court as soon as practicable but by no later than the next scheduled court hearing pursuant to Chapter 263 of the Texas Family Code.	DFPS	No	2, 4-8	Intermediate

7. Lessen Frequency and Severity of School Discipline Actions

7.1	Establish best practice protocols for discipline of general education students in foster care who do not qualify for special education services, including convening a care team when a student in foster care is removed from the regular educational setting for a violation of the student code of conduct, in order to determine the best disciplinary action for the student.	All	Yes	5	Intermediate
7.2	Clarify for school districts and charter schools that the foster parent or caregiver is the person to notify of use of restraints.	Schools, DFPS	No	4, 5	Intermediate
7.3	Require the foster parent to notify the DFPS caseworker before every court reporting period about use of a restraint on the youth in the school setting. This information should be included in the caseworker's court report.	DFPS	No	4, 5	Intermediate
7.4	Encourage schools to establish a mentor within the school for students in care, such as the school counselor or a representative of a school-based community organization such as Communities in Schools, to help prevent behavioral and other issues before disciplinary action is required.	All, Schools	Yes	4, 5	Long-term
7.5	If a foster child's behavior interferes with his learning or the learning of others, urge schools to implement school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), including functional behavioral assessments, and referrals to campus support services, counseling, psychological services and social work.	DFPS, TEA, Community based organizations	No	4, 5	Intermediate

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES

Guiding Principle # 8: Children and youth in care have support to enter into and complete post-secondary education

#	RECOMMENDATION	STAKEHOLDERS	FISCAL IMPLICATION	GUIDING PRINCIPLE	TIMEFRAME TO IMPLEMENT
1. <u>Increase Readiness for and Access to Post-Secondary Education</u>					
1.1	Develop an online tool capable of compiling secondary school course credits, work and volunteer experience, as well as providing a means to help youth determine career paths, which includes informational videos for the youth and caretakers. The online tool should have graduated accessibility for the youth, the youth's caretakers and advocates, and child welfare and school representatives.	DFPS, Children's Commission, TEA, THECB	Yes	8	Long-term
1.2	Promote and target post-secondary education opportunities to youth in care beginning in middle school years.	DFPS, Texas CASA, Texas Foster Family Association (TFFA)	No	8	Long-term
1.3	Promote attorney ad litem communication about post-secondary education opportunities with their child clients as part of permanency planning.	Children's Commission, Courts	No	8	Short-term
1.4	Create new tools and better utilize existing tools to assess college readiness for youth before and during the transition planning process.	TEA, DFPS, THECB	Yes	8	Intermediate
1.5	Raise awareness of Texas Reach conference/website (www.texasreach.org) among high schools and post-secondary education institutions.	Children's Commission, DFPS, TEA, Texas REACH	No	8	Short-term
1.6	Coordinate with TEA, DFPS, and Post-Secondary Education Institutions to provide information about vocational, technical, and Texas Workforce Commission and local workforce board resources and update links on Texas Youth Connection and Texas REACH websites as a resource for school counselors, DFPS caseworkers, caretakers, and youth.	DFPS, TEA, Texas REACH, PSEI, THECB, Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)	Yes	8	Intermediate
1.7	Coordinate outreach efforts to high school counselors to provide them with information on programs and benefits available to current and former foster youth at annual Texas Counselors Association conference and education service center workshops and through coordinated efforts of DFPS and TEA.	TEA, DFPS, THECB, PSEI	Yes	8	Intermediate

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1.8	Customize existing pamphlet/checklists to reflect unique needs and opportunities for youth and their advocates and caretakers, DFPS caseworkers, and high school counselors for use in youths' freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years to make sure students are ready for post-secondary education.	TEA, DFPS, Children's Commission	No	8	Short-term
1.9	Provide regional P-16 council contact information to DFPS Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) staff to facilitate exchange of information regarding college and employment recruiting events.	THECB	No	8	Short-term
1.10	Raise awareness of the benefits of Personal Graduation Plans (PGP) for students in foster care who did not perform satisfactorily on the state-required assessment instrument or are not expected to receive diplomas within five years following enrollment in high school.	TEA, TASB, TASA, TASSP, and other education stakeholders	Yes	8	Intermediate
1.11	Encourage students to seek fee waivers for costs of standardized tests such as the SAT, ACT, or Preliminary SAT (PSAT) by working with local school counselors, and for post-secondary application fees by contacting post-secondary education institutions.	DFPS, TEA, PSEI	No	8	Short-term
1.12	Provide link to Casey's It's My Life: Post-Secondary Education and Training Guide to all foster placements with middle and high school youth placed in their care and to CASA programs. Include link to the online guide in a letter to residential contractors and to middle and high school counselors.	DFPS, TEA	No	8	Intermediate
1.13	Work with Texas Reach and stakeholders to develop a website similar to California College Pathways Programs: www.cacollegepathways.org .	DFPS, TEA, THECB, Children's Commission, PSEI	Yes	8	Long-term

2. Increase Retention in and Completion of Post-Secondary Education

2.1	Reduce PAL caseworker caseload to facilitate monitoring youth in post-secondary education or increase funding for after-care case management services.	DFPS	Yes	8	Long-term
2.2	Raise awareness of the need for staff dedicated to assisting former foster youth at post-secondary campuses, identify that staff, and provide networking and other support for campus programs.	Texas REACH, THECB, PSEI	Yes	8	Long-term
2.3	Coordinate with Texas Reach to continue to identify existing statewide campus programs and initiatives for foster youth by surveying campuses to determine which have programs for youth formerly in care.	DFPS, PSEI	Yes	8	Long-term
2.4	Develop college alumni mentoring groups of former foster youth and other college students to promote communication and to create ways to disseminate information to incoming foster youth.	DFPS, Texas REACH, THECB, PSEI	Yes	8	Long-term

#	RECOMMENDATION	STAKEHOLDERS	FISCAL IMPLICATION	GUIDING PRINCIPLE	TIMEFRAME TO IMPLEMENT
2.5	Assist post-secondary education campuses in creating and maintaining a list of available housing resources and contact information or determine whether such lists already exist and place list(s) on a website accessible to youth. Assist post-secondary education institutions in implementation of House Bill 452 temporary housing between semesters.	DFPS, Texas REACH, THECB, PSEI	Yes	8	Intermediate
2.6	Help youth who transitioned from foster care at age 18 and currently are eligible for services through DFPS, including extended foster care, determine individuals who may be willing and available to assist youth formerly in care in locating a co-signer for apartment leases, if the youth is a minor or otherwise needs a co-signer.	DFPS, CASA, Attorney ad litem	No	8	Short-term
2.7	Encourage every campus to designate a single point of contact or campus office for youth formerly in care to contact regarding financial assistance, temporary housing assistance, and other questions and issues related to navigating the higher education system of each campus and to serve as a support network.	DFPS, Texas REACH, THECB, PSEI	No	8	Intermediate

3. Support Post-Secondary Education Success and Employment

3.1	Identify and recruit stable and trusted education advocates, college students, school professionals, college graduates who were formerly in foster care or others from post-secondary education institutions, business community, and workforce boards to volunteer as mentors to former foster youth and to encourage mentoring programs on campuses.	PSEI, local workforce boards, TWC	Yes	8	Long-term
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iii. Understanding the Education and Training Voucher DFPS Chart

The chart that follows is directly from the Department For Protective Services and the Children's Commission, The Texas Blueprint: Transforming education outcomes for children & youth in foster care. The final report of the education committee.

Retrieved from <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/1119/thetexasblueprint.pdf>

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY & PROTECTIVE SERVICES
HIGHER EDUCATION SERVICES/INFORMATION FOR CURRENT AND FORMER FOSTER YOUTH,
ADOPTED YOUTH AND YOUTH IN PERMANENCY CARE ASSISTANCE / PERMANENT MANAGING CONSERVATORSHIP**

EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHER (ETV) PROGRAM	STATE TUITION AND FEE WAIVER	OTHER DFPS EDUCATION SOURCE
<p><u>Brief Description</u>- Based on need, the ETV program provides up to \$5,000 a year to eligible youth to be used for education related expenses including rent, utilities, childcare, computers, books, transportation, and personal expenses for youth enrolled in college or specialized postsecondary vocational programs.</p>	<p><u>Brief Description</u>-The state tuition and fee waiver provides exemptions at Texas state supported institutions of higher education to certain youth who were formerly in foster care, adopted youth, and youth in Permanent Managing Conservatorship.</p>	<p><u>Brief Description</u>- Preparation For Adult Living (PAL) Services prepare youth for adult life when they leave foster care.</p>
<p>Eligibility: FOSTER YOUTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Youth in foster care who are at least 16 and likely to remain in care until 18; or ➤ Youth who aged out foster care but have not turned 21. 	<p>Eligibility: FOSTER YOUTH-MUST BE IN DFPS CONSERVATORSHIP ON OR AFTER:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The day preceding the student's 18th birthday; ➤ The day of the student's 14th birthday, if also eligible for adoption on or after that day; ➤ The date the student graduates from high school or receives the equivalent of a high school diploma. 	<p>Eligibility: The targeted priority population are youth in DFPS-paid substitute care who are at least age 16 or older and likely to remain in foster care until at least age 18. Youth may qualify for PAL services up to their 21st birthday.</p>
<p>ADOPTED YOUTH OR YOUTH WHO ENTER PERMANENCY CARE ASSISTANCE (PCA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Youth not yet age 21 and are adopted after turning after age 16; or ➤ Youth not yet age 21 and entered PCA after age 16. 	<p>ADOPTED YOUTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Adoption occurred on or after September 1, 2009; OR ➤ Adopted and the subject of an adoption assistance agreement for monthly financial assistance and Medicaid. <p>PERMANENT MANAGING CONSERVATORSHIP (PMC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ PMC of the student was granted to an individual other than the student's parent on or after September 1, 2009. 	<p>Benefits: <u>Transitional Living Allowance</u>-Up to \$1,000 and must meet the qualification requirements to include completion of PAL Life Skills Training. <u>Aftercare Room and Board Assistance</u>-Based on need and emergency, up to \$500 a month (not to exceed \$3,000 of accumulated payments) and have been in DFPS paid care at age 18 and meet qualification requirements.</p>
<p>Age 21-23 participation: Youth who are participating in ETV on their 21st birthday may remain eligible until age 23 as long as they are enrolled and making satisfactory progress toward completion of postsecondary education or a vocational training program.</p>	<p>DUAL CREDIT COURSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Students who enroll in a dual credit course or other course in which they may earn joint high school and college credit. Must be in DFPS conservatorship on the day of enrollment. <p>NOTE: ETV funds may be used for some college attendance cost not covered by the tuition fee waiver.</p>	<p>Program Enrollment (meet eligibility criteria) and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Be between 16 and 21 years of age; and ➤ Meet qualification requirements as they apply to each PAL Service.
<p>Program Enrollment (meet eligibility criteria) and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Have a high school diploma or GED or be exempt from required school attendance; and ➤ Be enrolled in an institution of higher education before age 21; and ➤ Complete and file an ETV application with required supporting documentation. <p>For more information go to this website: www.bcfs.net/etv.</p>	<p>Higher Education Enrollment/Age Criteria: FOSTER YOUTH, YOUTH IN PMC, AND YOUTH ADOPTED ON OR AFTER SEPTEMBER 1, 2009—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Must enroll in an institution of higher education as an undergraduate not later than the student's 25th birthday. <p>ADOPTED YOUTH SUBJECT TO AN ADOPTION ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There is no age limit to enroll in an institution of higher education. 	<p>For more information about PAL services go to this website: www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Preparation_For_Adult_Living/default.asp</p>

iv. Intergovernmental Approach to Foster Care Educational Attainment

Federal: U.S.A.

- Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008
 - Child welfare agencies must collaborate with their state and local education agencies to promote school stability for those entering foster care
 - Emphasis on maintaining school connection during transition
 - Ensure immediate enrollment and proper placement of students
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act - Uninterrupted Scholars Act- 2013
 - Allows for schools to disclose a child's educational record with child welfare agencies and court-appointed advocates and attorneys
- Nutrition Assistance
 - Foster youth are eligible for all USDA nutritional programs in and out of school

State: Texas

- The Texas Education Code allows for the following:
 - Student Demographic and Academic Data Sharing in Public Information Management System (PEIMS)
 - Immediate school enrollment without records
 - Right to attend the same school after entering foster care
 - Excused court-absences
 - Transfer foster care students in 11th or 12th grade can request a diploma from the district they attended prior if they do not meet the requirements if they were on track at the previous district to graduate
 - Free eligible Pre-K in Texas school districts
 - Foster parents may act as a parent of a child with disability for Special Education Decision Making when meeting special requirements including a training program. (TX. Ed. Code Sec. 29.015)
 - Right to accelerated instruction if testing data supports accommodation
 - Free lifetime college tuition and fees waiver to in state institutions (**Education and Training Voucher ETV**) (TX. Ed. Code Sec. 54.366 and Sec. 54.367)***
 - School districts and charters must have a foster care liaison
 - Must offer transition assistance to foster care students if moving between schools or districts.
 - Includes but not limited to transferring of records, awarding credit, systems for transitional ease in the first two weeks of transfer, supporting prior school's academic placement recommendations, promoting practices for access to extracurricular and after school programming at nominal or no cost, supporting MOU with DFPS for exchange of information. (TX. Ed. Code Sec 25.007 for all transitional services)

*** In 2017, the state of Texas rescinded GPA and college hour requirements set in 2014 for access to lifetime college and tuition waiver.

REGIONAL: Region 8, 27 Counties in Texas, Belong

DFPS awarded the Single Source Continuum Contract (SSCC) to BELONG, a division of [SJRC Texas External Link](#).

- SJRC Texas has been operating as a local key community provider in Region 8b for 37 years. SJRC Texas is accredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA) and is known for quality services with a high standard for integrity, accountability, and innovation. BELONG is SJRC Texas' solution to the Community-Based Care service delivery model to abused and neglected children and youth by enacting systemic changes that improve safety, expedite permanency and focus on child and family well-being, normalcy, and stability, while simultaneously growing capacity for the Texas foster care system.
- **September 2020:** DFPS announces the Region 8b would be the next catchment area for Community Based Care (see Appendix I for information on the CBC approach)

- **September 1, 2020:** DFPS released Request for Application (RFA) for Community Based Care in Region 8b
- **April 1, 2021:** DFPS Awarded a Community Based Care Contract in Region 8b to BELONG, a division of St. Jude's Ranch for Children-Texas Region, Inc. dba SJRC Texas
 - [CBC Signed Contract DFPS and SJRC TexasPDF Document](#)
 - [Exhibit A: SOW for Region 8b Single Source Continuum ContractorPDF Document](#)
 - [Exhibit B: DFPS SSCC Uniform Terms and ConditionsPDF Document](#)
 - [Exhibit C: Region 8b Funding MatrixPDF Document](#)
 - [Exhibit E: Performance MeasuresPDF Document](#)
- **October 27, 2021:** Started Stage I.

COUNTY: Bexar**Bexar County Fostering for Educational Success Program**

- Established campus-based support programs through Alamo Colleges District and supervised independent living at University of Texas at San Antonio and Texas A&M University San Antonio
- Created a college-bound docket and educational-focused review hearings with family court system
- Matching youth with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
- Expanding outreach efforts through strategic partnerships with foster youth agencies
- Served over 600 students since its founding in 2019
- Created a pre-college pipeline program that provides a clear pathway using a specialized college-readiness, career-preparedness, and socioemotional curriculum for 8th through 12th graders ([CLIMB](#)).
 - Provide participants with specialized pre-college and career readiness curriculum in hybrid modalities
 - Offer the support of a dedicated pre-college coach and near-peer support for youth 14-18 to further assist with the transition out of foster care and into higher education
 - Match both youth and college participants with a professional mentor that provides shadowing, career mentoring, and other educational and professional support.
 - Incentivize youth participants with stipends, transportation support and promote other career-readiness and financial wellbeing practices.
 - Encourage the exploration of vocational programs, trades, college majors, and professional opportunities in a multitude of educational programs and work sectors.
 - Coordinate with independent school districts and residential treatment centers for opportunities that extend beyond the pre-college readiness and offer holistic support for participants who exhibit academic or other socioemotional barriers.

City of San Antonio

- No direct ordinances or programs specifically for foster youth, but allow the following:
 - Priority enrollment in Early Head Start, Head Start, and NXT Level Youth Opportunity Centers in DHS
 - Free Services at Pre-K 4 SA
 - Targeted funding in one-time transitional housing support in FY20 in Neighborhood and Housing Department
 - Targeted funding in FY22 for DHS' Ambassador program, which provides summer internships for residents of San Antonio who are college students

v. RECRUITING FLYER

City of San Antonio
Department of Human Services

SEEKING: FOSTER YOUTH FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Calling Former & Current Foster Youth,
Parents/Guardians of Foster Youth &
Foster Youth Supporting Agencies

**\$50 H-E-B
gift card
provided!**

WANT TO CREATE CHANGE & HAVE YOUR VOICE HEARD?
How can our community better serve foster youth in
school, workforce & higher education readiness?
What do foster youth need to succeed?

CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP!
VIRTUAL & IN PERSON OPTIONS AVAILABLE

DECEMBER 16TH-17TH
JANUARY 5TH, 6TH AND 10TH

Questions? Email or call Abigail Salazar,
abigail.salazar@sanantonio.gov or 210-207-6519

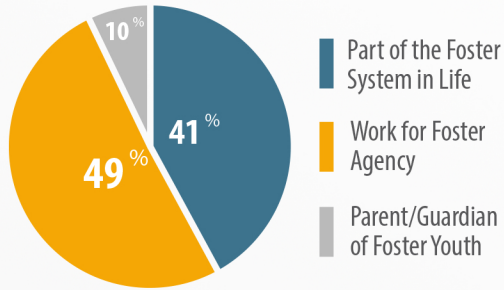
HUMAN SERVICES
CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

UP
PARTNERSHIP

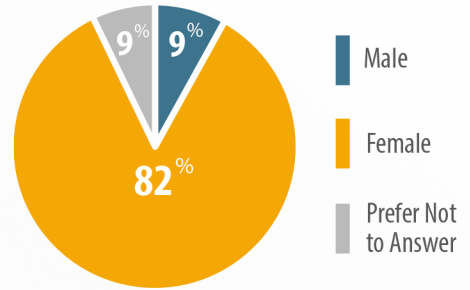
NXT
LEVEL
Youth Opportunity Center

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

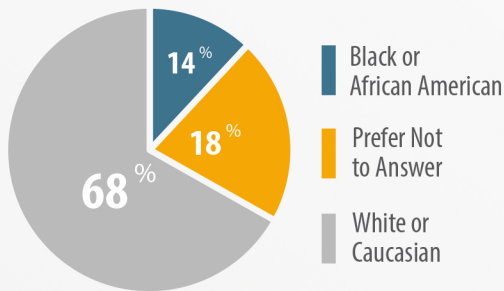
Foster Youth Affiliation of All Focus Group Participants



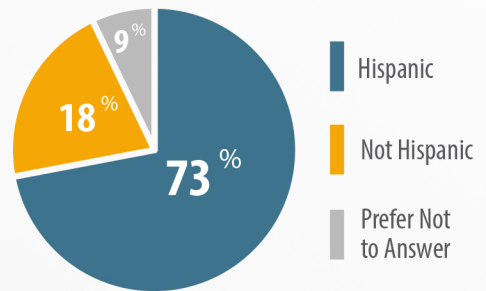
Foster Youth Participants by Gender



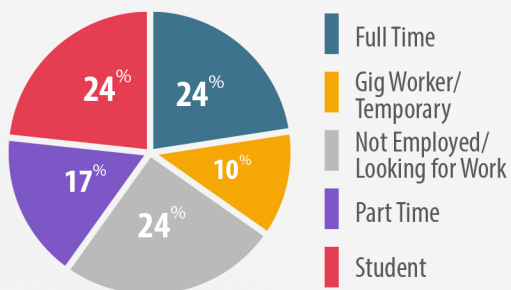
Foster Youth Participants by Race



Foster Youth Participants by Ethnicity



Foster Youth Participants Employment



Foster Youth Participant Level of Education

