HB

358

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

REPRESENTATIVE LES GARA

HB 358: Increasing Opportunity for Alaska's Foster Children
Sponsor Statement

House Bill 358 (HB 358) is a multifaceted approach to improve the lives of children in the foster care. HB 358 assists children in the foster care system a few different ways.

First, it assists the education of children by ensuring in most cases they will be able stay in their original school, regardless of change of home placement. Many school districts already are doing this, but they do not receive any state general funds for it. In addition, it requires that the schools, in the event that a student must transfer, also transfer their records within ten days. A student's educational stability is a key determining factor in their success. A September 2007 report from the *National Working Group on Foster Care and Education* determined that each school change set a student back by four to six months.

Second, HB 358 gives the Commissioner of Health and Social Services the ability to increase the salaries of social workers if it is deemed necessary to attract and retain social workers who work with children in need of aid. This is a necessary step in providing support to those workers on the front line of preventing repeat child abuse, and caring for our most vulnerable population.

Finally, HB 358 requires the Department of Health and Social Services to re-adjust the foster family care reimbursement rates every year, based on the latest federal poverty guideline for Alaska. The fiscal year 2009 operating budget has an increase for this rate, but before this proposed increase, the rate had been changed one time in the last 16 years, and that was 9 years ago. The current rate is based on the 1993 federal poverty guideline. Alaska is facing critical shortages of qualified foster parents. Increasing the amount of money they are reimbursed for their services is just one way we can recruit and retain foster parents.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions, concerns or require additional information.

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ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

REPRESENTATIVE LES GARA

HB 358: Increasing Opportunity for Alaska's Foster Children
Sectional Analysis

Section 1.

Adds intent language relating to social workers.

Section 2.

Requires school districts, to the extent possible, to provide transportation to those students who are in foster care placement or are considered homeless to their "school of origin." In addition, it requires that a student's records be transferred within 10 days of a transfer.

Section 3.

Gives the commissioner of health and social services the latitude to raise social worker salaries if it is deemed necessary to recruit and retain social workers.

Section 4.

Amends the guidelines for policy related to children to include support for their intellectual well being and includes the importance of an adequate education for children in the state's care.

Section 5.

Adds that a child should remain in their school of origin to legislative findings relating to children.

Section 6.

Requires the department to recalculate the foster family care reimbursement rates every year based on the current year's federal poverty guideline.

Section 7.

Sets immediate effective dates for sections 1 and 3 of this act

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LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH REPORT

FEBRUARY 11, 2008

REPORT NUMBER 08.146

FOSTER AND HOMELESS CHILDREN AND SCHOOL TRANSFERS

PREPARED FOR REPRESENTATIVE LES GARA

BY TIM SPENGLER, LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

You asked about how changing schools during the year affects the education of homeless or foster children. Additionally, you wished to know how the Anchorage and Fairbanks school districts address this issue and how it relates to the McKinney-Vento Act. Briefly, all the individuals we contacted, and all the literature we read, agree that children and youth who change schools during the year are less likely to be successful—both academically and socially.

Among the provisions of the federal McKinney-Vento Act, is a guarantee that youth who are homeless—including those lacking a "fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" and those "awaiting foster care placements," have the right to remain in their original schools when they change living arrangements. It also assures transportation to their schools, and access to school-based liaisons to help them navigate the education system.[1] While the Act does not specifically include children and youth in foster care, many educational decision makers treat foster children as "homeless" for the purpose of attempting to avoid school moves. According to Melora Gaber, State of Alaska McKinney-Vento coordinator, opinions differ on the question of whether foster children fit into the McKinney-Vento definition of "homeless," but most Alaska districts attempt to keep foster children in their original schools.[2] Ms. Gaber notes that each district in the state currently has a homeless liaison and that this year Alaska received $161,901 from the federal government toward the ongoing implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act. The funds are distributed statewide via a competitive bid process, and currently four districts are receiving these federal dollars.[3] Whether or not districts receive grant funding, they are expected to comply with the Act.[4]

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[1] The McKinney-Vento Act was signed on July 22, 1987 as Public Law 100-77. It was reauthorized in 2001.

[2] Melora Gaber can be reached at (907) 465-8707.

[3] Districts receiving McKinney-Vento implementation funding are Anchorage, Mat-Su, Kenai, and Juneau.

[4] Ms. Gaber explains that other monies used by districts to assist homeless students include Title 1, Special Education and No Child Left Behind funds, as well as district general fund dollars. Nonetheless, she points out that it is very difficult for districts to be able to serve all their homeless youth as a result of funding shortages.

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Theresa Tanoury Lombardo, senior director, Alaska Strategic Consulting Office, Casey Family Programs, relates that there is a clear correlation between children who change schools mid year, and a lack of educational achievement.[5] Ms. Tanoury Lombardo notes that her professional experiences correspond with numerous studies on the question of school mobility—which emphasize the importance of educational stability. She pointed us to a white paper publication sponsored by Casey Family Programs entitled, *Educating Children in Foster Care, The McKinney Vento and No Child Left Behind Acts.*[6] The author notes that the high rate of mobility is one of the biggest educational challenges to children and youth in foster care. Citing a study of two northwestern states documenting that 65% of foster care alumni experienced seven or more school changes, the author points out the following in regard to the impact:

> Since it takes the average child four to six months to recover academically after each school change, many children in foster care not only fail to recover, they actually lose ground.

In a 2006 Casey national study of 1,082 foster care alumni throughout the country, youth who had had one fewer placement change per year were almost twice as likely to graduate from high school before leaving care.[7] As it is universally acknowledged that a quality education is an important factor in future success, these statics are especially noteworthy. According to statistics recently released by the U.S. Census Bureau, adults age 18 and over with a high school diploma earn an average of $28,655. Those without a high school diploma earn an average of $19,169. Additionally, individuals who graduate from high school live six to nine years longer than those who drop out.[8]

While much of the Casey Family Programs information pertains directly to children and youth in foster care, similar, or more difficult educational challenges, apply to homeless youth. The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) articulates some of the issues faced by homeless children in *Homeless Education: An Introduction to the Issues.*[9]

- At lease 20% of homeless children will not attend school.
- Within a year, 41% of homeless children will attend two different schools; 28% of homeless children will attend three or more schools.
- With each change in schools, a student is set back academically by an average of four to six months.

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[5] Theresa Tanoury Lombardo can be reached at (907) 586-4014. Prior to working with the Casey Family Programs, Ms. Tanoury-Lombardo was the director of the State of Alaska's Division of Family and Youth Services (now titled the Office of Children's Services). The Casey Family Programs' mission is to provide and improve—and ultimately prevent the need for—foster care.

[6] Scott Joftus, EdD., *Educating Children in Foster Care, The McKinney-Vento Act and No Child Left Behind*, Casey Family Programs, 2007. We include this as Attachment A.

[7] *Educational Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster Care and Out-of-Home Care*, National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, September 2007.

[8] *Educational Stability and Continuity for Children and Youth in Out-of-Home Care*, Legal Center for Foster Care and Education, 2007.

[9] *Homeless Education: An Introduction to the Issues*, can be found at http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/introduction.pdf

- Children experiencing homelessness often feel like outsiders and have difficulty maintaining friendships due to frequent moves. Their lives feel out of control, and they often experience anxiety and depression as a result.

According to Carol Comeau, Superintendent of the Anchorage School District (ASD), changing schools is extremely disadvantageous for the academic and social progress of children and youth.[10] The district devotes a significant amount of resources in Anchorage to keep students from changing schools. Last year the Anchorage school district spent $285,000 in transportation costs to keep homeless youth in the schools where they started the year, and to serve children in the foster care system—as much as possible—along with those who fall under the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless.[11] The bulk of these transportation expenses go to providing bus tokens, a scuttle service, and taxi cab fares. Spending such a large amount of funds on transporting these children puts a significant strain on the ASD's budget. Anecdotally, Ms. Comeau related that in her long career she has witnessed numerous situations where changing schools has adversely affected students.

According to Mike Fischer, Chief Financial Office with the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, the district spent approximately $120,000 last year on transporting homeless children and youth to avoid educational disruption.[12] The district does not receive any state grant money for the McKinney-Vento Act but uses general funds to cover the expenses. We also spoke with Leona McDaniels, Fairbanks Homeless Education Liaison and Cheryl Mayo-Kriska, the district's Alaska Native Education Liaison.[13] Both spoke of how difficult it can be for children—many of whom may come from troubled backgrounds—when forced to change schools mid-stream. They note that such changes can cause youth to have difficulties building strong relationships—a situation that can lead to anti-social behavior.

The experts agree that when a child does need to change schools, it is very important that their transcripts follow them promptly and that they receive credit for what work they have done. When records are not transferred in a timely manner, this too can discourage students. This seems to be especially problematic when youth transfer between districts. The frustration and confusion may become one more barrier to academic success and, according to our sources, can be the final straw that leads students to drop out completely.[14]

I hope you find this information to be useful. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions or need additional information.

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[10] Carol Comeau can be reached at (907) 742-4312.

[11] The majority of the money used on transportation came from the ASD's general fund, according to Marie Laule, Budget Director. Ms. Laule can be reached at (907) 742-4330.

[12] Mike Fischer can be reached at (907) 452-2000.

[13] Both Leona McDaniels and Cheryl Mayo-Krista can be reached at (907) 452-2000.

[14] Carol Comeau voiced concern that Alaska's compulsory education cuts off at 16. She believes that if youth legally had to attend school until 18 it would affect at least a fraction of the drop out rate.

Attachment A

White Paper, Educating Children in Foster Care, The McKinney-Vento and No Child Left Behind Acts, Scott Joftus, Ed.D., Casey Family Programs, 2007

White Paper

casey family programs

fostering families, fostering change

Educating Children in Foster Care

The McKinney-Vento and No Child Left Behind Acts

Contents

Casey Family Programs' mission is to provide and improve—and ultimately to prevent the need for—foster care.

Established by United Parcel Service founder Jim Casey, the Seattle-based national operating foundation has served children, youth, and families in the child welfare system since 1966.

The foundation operates in two ways. It provides direct services, and it promotes advances in child welfare practice and policy.

Casey collaborates with foster, kinship, and adoptive parents to provide safe, loving homes for youth in its direct care. The foundation also collaborates with counties, states, and American Indian and Alaska Native tribes to improve services and outcomes for the more than 500,000 young people in out-of-home care across the United States.

Drawing on four decades of front-line work with families and alumni of foster care, Casey Family Programs develops tools, practices, and policies to nurture all youth in care and to help parents strengthen families at risk of needing foster care.

For more information, contact Casey Family Programs at info@casey.org or 1300 Dexter Avenue North, Floor 3, Seattle, WA 98109. Visit our Web site at www.casey.org.

Bella Rosenberg and Debbie Staub contributed heavily to the research of this white paper.

Executive Summary

Education begins at home. Educators and policymakers often point out that parents are children's first and most enduring teachers. Indeed, no bond is more fundamental and life-defining than the one between parent and child. Children in foster care or out-of-home care, however, have had that crucial bond broken, frayed, or interrupted through no fault of their own. Traumatized first by the maltreatment, neglect, or abuse that brings them to the attention of the authorities, then by their removal from their family, and possibly yet again by their experiences in the foster care system, these children are among our most vulnerable.[1] For the 800,000 children and youth who are involved in the foster care system each year, a solid education is their best hope—in some cases, their only hope—of achieving independence and success in adulthood.

A quality education builds on a foundation of educational continuity and school stability. Unfortunately, too many children in foster care experience multiple placement changes, and each change in home placement frequently results in a change in school placement. Every school change has a significant impact on a student's education. Whenever students enter a new school, they must adapt to different curricula, different expectations, new friends, and new teachers. A stable school environment provides children with opportunities to develop positive relationships with supportive and caring teachers, school counselors, and classmates. These relationships and an established school routine often provide a measure of protection from the disruption and uncertainty associated with foster care. Hence, both school stability and uninterrupted attendance are necessary.

Education is vital for the future success of all children, but children and youth in foster care are particularly vulnerable to academic failure:

According to a 2004 study of Chicago public school youth, fifteen-year-old students in foster care were only about half as likely as other students to have graduated from high school five years later, with significantly higher percentages of youth in care having dropped out (55%) or become incarcerated (10%).[2]

In a three-state Midwest study from 2004, youth in foster care on average read at only a seventh grade level after completing tenth or eleventh grade.[3]

High rates of foster home placement changes are also documented, with direct consequences on academic outcomes:

The same study of youth aging out of care revealed substantial levels of school mobility associated with placement in foster care. Over a third of young adults reported having had five or more school changes.[4]

[1] Christian, S. (2003). *Educating children in foster care*. Washington, DC: National Conference of State Legislatures. Retrieved March 27, 2006, from http://www.ncsl.org/programs/cyf/CPeducate.htm; Gerber, J. & Dicker, S. (2005). Children adrift: Addressing the educational needs of New York's foster children. *Albany Law Review, 69*(1), 1-74; Casey Family Programs. (2006a). *Breakthrough Series Collaborative: Improving educational stability for children in out-of-home care*. Seattle, WA: Author. Retrieved March 18, 2007, from http://www.abanet.org/child/rclr/education/bsc_topic_selection_flow_chart.ppt

[2] Smithgall, C., Gladden, R.M., Howard, E., Goerge, R., & Courtney, M. (2004). *Educational experiences of children in out-of-home care*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. Abstract available online at http://www.chapinhall.org/article_abstract.aspx?ar=1372. This report compared children in the Illinois Chicago Public Schools system. Data were pulled from the Integrated Database on Child and Family Services Child and Youth Center Information System and matched using probabilistic record matching with the Chicago Public Schools Student Information System to almost 16,000 students. Academic performance indicators used included elementary students' scores on the reading section of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), the percent of elementary students who were at least one grade level behind for their age, and high school dropout rates.

[3] Courtney, M.E., Terao, S. & Bost, N. (2004a). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Conditions of youth preparing to leave state care*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

[4] Courtney et al., 2004a.

A 1999 study found that California high school students who changed schools even once were less than half as likely to graduate as those who did not change schools, even when controlling for other variables that affect high school completion.[5]

On the other hand, when youth in foster care have stable home placements, with stable school attendance as a result, outcomes improve dramatically:

In a national study of 1,087 youth who had been in foster care, those who had one fewer placement change per year were almost twice as likely to graduate from high school.[6]

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is the principal federal statute that addresses school stability, primarily for homeless youth.[7] McKinney-Vento was reauthorized and strengthened by amendments made in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.[8] The McKinney-Vento Act has proven an effective law and successful program for addressing the needs of homeless children and youth—those who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Currently, however, it covers only a fraction of the approximately 513,000 young people under the age of 18 who are in the U.S. foster care system on any given day.[9] All children in out-of-home care could benefit greatly from inclusion in the scope of the McKinney-Vento Act.

While McKinney-Vento focuses on homeless children and youth, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) identifies many other categories of at-risk students. Children in foster care often fall into one or more of the at-risk categories of students NCLB identifies. But while most disadvantaged children are explicitly singled out by NCLB for each of multiple academic risk factors, children in foster care are not specifically recognized. The result is to deprive many vulnerable students of the full benefit of the services provided under the law.

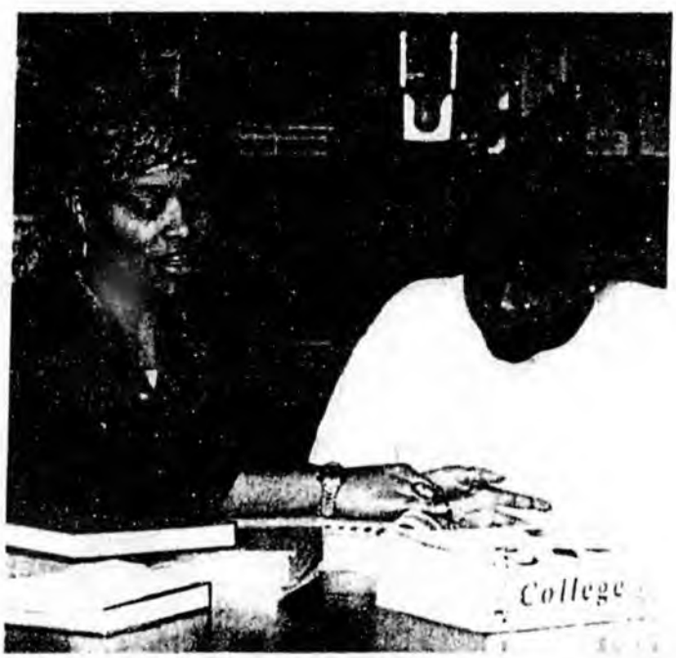
The reauthorization of the NCLB and McKinney-Vento Acts represents an opportunity to help ensure that children in foster care are no longer left behind. This opportunity for federal policymakers to take a leap forward in improving educational outcomes for these children also comes at a favorable time. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and state and local child-welfare agencies, the authorities that traditionally, and appropriately, hold chief responsibility for addressing the broad and acute needs of youth in out-of-home care, have identified improving educational outcomes as part of ongoing federal reviews.[10] But as the child-welfare community recognizes, advancing educational attainment requires the expertise of and collaboration with the education system.

A collaboration between schools and the child-welfare system would turn a sharpened focus on the problem. Although federal child-welfare policymakers seek to improve the foster care system by including educational outcomes in the federal reviews of each

[5] Rumberger, R., Larson, K., Ream, R., & Palardy, G. (1999). The educational consequences of mobility for California students and schools. *PACE Policy Brief* (University of California at Berkeley), *1*(1), 1–12.
[6] Pecora, P.J., Williams, J., Kessler, R.C., Downs, A.C., O'Brien, K., Hiripi, E., & Morello, S. (2003). *Assessing the effects of foster care: Early results from the Casey National Alumni Study*. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs.
[7] 42 U.S.C. § 11431 *et seq.*
[8] Public Law 107-110. The Act reauthorized and substantially revised the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.
[9] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. (2006). *The AFCARS report No. 13: Preliminary FY 2005 estimates as of September 2006*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved November 7, 2006, from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report13.htm
[10] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, 2006.

state's child-welfare system, this is only a first step in improving partnership. To realize this aim, federal lawmakers should make use of the largest significant program for the education of disadvantaged children, NCLB, and should align and address these issues in companion child-welfare legislation reform efforts.

The following recommendations are designed to bring students in foster care into the spotlight of NCLB and into the purview of educational systems that can address their needs and ensure their success. Because of the overriding importance of school stability for children in care and their need for educational advocates, the recommendations seek to expand the current coverage afforded children under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. In addition, reflecting research findings on improving educational outcomes, the recommendations also aim to strengthen NCLB provisions concerning supplemental educational services, school counselors, and mental health services.



The recommendations are:

1) Improve school stability by ensuring that the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act applies to all children in out-of-home care and increase funding for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act under Title X, Part C, Subtitle B to a level that covers all eligible children.

2) Ensure that children and youth in foster care have access to education-related support services by making them automatically eligible for Title 1, Part A services and including them in the set-aside that exists for homeless children. Increase funding for school counselors (Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Programs), and mental health services (Grants to Improve the Mental Health of Children).

These recommendations are critical steps toward improving educational outcomes for children and youth in foster care. Accordingly, it is time for federal policymakers to address these concerns as the reauthorization of NCLB and McKinney-Vento looms.

Introduction:
Foster Care and Educational Outcomes

Education is a powerful determinant of quality of life in terms of economic, social, civic, and personal benefits.[11] For children in foster care, education is a route to life as an independent, responsible and contributing adult; virtually the only route available to some. Children in foster care depend heavily on schools, not only for education, but also for role models and social capital.

Educational attainment is a positive counterweight to the abuse, neglect, separation, and lack of permanence experienced by children in out-of-home care. Positive school experiences enhance well-being, help facilitate successful transitions to adulthood, and increase chances for personal fulfillment and economic self-sufficiency, as well as the ability to contribute to society. Unfortunately, children in care are particularly prone to academic failure:

> In a 2004 study of Chicago Public School youth, fifteen-year-old students in out-of-home care were about half as likely as other students to have graduated from high school five years later, with significantly higher percentages of students in care having either dropped out (55%) or become incarcerated (10%).[12]
>
> In a 2001 Washington State study, youth in out-of-home care attending public schools scored 16 to 20 percentile points below the general student population in statewide standardized tests.[13]
>
> In a three-state Midwest study from 2004, youth in foster care read on average at only at a seventh grade level after completing tenth or eleventh grade.[14]

Children in out-of-home care are far more likely than other children to be classified as having emotional behavioral problems.[15] Their post-traumatic stress disorder rates exceed those in American Gulf War veterans.[16]

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[11] Joftus, S. (2002). *Every child a graduate*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education; Carnevale, A. & Desrochers, D. (2003). *Standards for what? The economic roots of K-16 reform*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

[12] Smithgall et al., 2004

[13] Burley, M. & Halpern, M. (2001). *Educational attainment of foster youth: Achievement and graduation outcomes for children in state care*. Olympia, WA: Washington State Institute for Public Policy. The sample of 4,559 children and youth in foster care in Washington State was generated by merging foster care data from the Division of Children and Family Services with Iowa Standardized Test Scores received from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction for grades 3, 6, and 9.

[14] Courtney et al., 2004a. Wave One of Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, as a comparison national sample.

[15] Smithgall et al., 2004.

[16] McMillen, J. et al. (2005). Prevalence of psychiatric disorders among older youths in the foster care system. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 44*(1), 88-95; Pecora, P., Kessler, R., Williams, J., O'Brien, K., Downs, A., English, D., et al. (2005). *Improving family foster care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study*. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs. Retrieved March 19, 2007, from http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/NorthwestAlumniStudy.htm

A significant cause of the stress these children face is the lack of stability in their lives. According to the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the average time spent in foster care is 29 months (the median time is 16 months), with 15 percent languishing in care for 5 years or more.[17] Youth in foster care average 3–4 placements before leaving care, with many youth experiencing one placement change approximately every 12 months. In fact, some youth in foster care have endured more than 20 placement changes by the time they age out of the foster care system.[18]

A change in home placement is often accompanied by a move to a new school. In Washington State, twice as many youth in foster care changed schools during the year, compared with the general student population.[19] Over a third of young adults in one study reported five or more school changes while in care.[20] School mobility rates are highest for those entering care for the first time—with over two-thirds changing schools in a Chicago study.[21]

It is also important to recognize that the foster care population consists disproportionately of children of color—58 percent compared to 42 percent of all U.S. children in 2005—with African American children comprising 32 percent of the foster care population.[22] These children are also disproportionately from low-income families, both in terms of their birth parents and their foster parents. Not surprisingly, then, like other low-income youth of color, children in foster care tend to be concentrated in high-poverty, underfunded, and low-achieving schools.[23] Attention to disparate outcomes must be considered in any solutions to be put forward.

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[17] Based on those children still in care on September 30, 2005. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, 2006. Yu, E. et al. (2002). *Improving educational outcomes for youth in care.* A national collaboration. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America; Hochman, G. et al. (2004). *Foster care: Voices from the inside.* Washington, DC: Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care; Burrell, S. (2003). *Getting out of the red zone: Youth from the juvenile justice and child welfare system speak out about the obstacles to completing their education, and what could help.* San Francisco, CA: Youth Law Center. Available at http://www.ylc.org/Getting%20out%20of%20Red%20Zone_October%203.pdf

[18] Wolanin, T. (2005). *Higher education opportunities for foster youth: A primer for policymakers.* Washington, DC: The Institute for Higher Education Policy; Yu et al., 2002.; Hochman et al., 2004.; Burrell, 2003.

[19] Burley & Halpern, 2001.

[20] Courtney et. al., 2004a

[21] Smithgall et. al., 2004.

[22] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, 2006; Annie E. Casey Foundation (2005). KIDS COUNT State level Data Online. Retrieved January 19, 2007, from http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/sld/profile_results.jsp?r=1&d=13&c=98&p=5&x=1&i=4y=5

[23] Smithgall et al., 2004.

Left Behind:
Educational Aspirations and Reality

Most youth hold high educational aspirations. Youth in foster care are no different.[24] But youth in care have traditionally received little or no help on the postsecondary education path. Although comprehensive national educational data on youth in out-of-home care are scarce, the best estimates place their high school completion rate at only about 74 percent, significantly lower than in the high school population rate in the general population (86 percent).[25] Moreover, youth in foster care complete their high school studies by getting a GED about five times as often as their peers. This is cause for concern because GED holders earn significantly less than holders of a traditional high school diploma.[26] Despite their college aspirations, only 37 percent of the youth in foster care who graduate from high school actually go on to attend college, in contrast with the approximately 60 percent of all high school graduates who attend college (based on a study from 1990–2001).[27]

[24] Courtney, M. et al. (2004b). The educational status of foster children. Issue Brief 102. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago; Courtney, M. et al (2001). Foster youth transitions to adulthood: A longitudinal view of youth leaving care. *Child Welfare 80*, 685–717; McMillen, C. et al. (2001). Educational experiences and aspirations of older youth in foster care. *Child Welfare 82* 475–495; Reilly, T. (2003). Transition from care: Status and outcomes of youth who age out of foster care. *Child Welfare 82*, 727–746.

[25] These figures are cited for comparability purposes. They include individuals taking more than four years to graduate high school and individuals earning a GED. They are also likely inflated as they are based on self-reported census data. There is general agreement among researchers that the on-time graduation rate of the general population in the United States is closer to 71 percent, but there are not comparable figures for youth in foster care. Casey Family Programs. (2006b). Foster Care by the Numbers. WA: Author. Casey Family Programs, 2006a; National Foster Youth Advisory Council. *Promoting Educational Success for Young People in Foster Care*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved March 20, 2007, from http://www.fyi3.com/fyi3/Involved/yb/pdfs/educationStatement.pdf; Pecora, 2003; Blome, W. (1997). What happens to foster kids: Educational experiences of a random sample of foster care youth and a match group of non-foster care youth. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 14*(1), 41–53; Burley & Halpern, 2001; McDonald, T. et al. (1996). *Assessing the Long-Term Effects of Foster Care: A Research Synthesis*. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.

[26] Boesel, D., Alsalam, N. & Smith, T. M. (1998). *Educational and labor market performance of GED recipients*. Washington, D.C.: Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement; Cameron, S. V. & Heckman, J. J. (1993). The nonequivalence of high school equivalents. *Journal of Labor Economics 11*(1), 1–47.

[27] The foster care alumni college enrollment statistic was derived by averaging the results of a representative set of foster care alumni studies that interviewed older foster care alumni, who had more time to complete high school via a diploma or a GED, attend a postsecondary educational program, or complete a bachelor's degree than younger alumni. The studies were then weighted by study sample size so the larger studies carried more weight in the average. For more information contact Peter J. Pecora at ppecora@casey.org. Examples of studies included in the analysis for the high school completion rate include:

Blome, 1997.

Buehler, C., Orme, J. G., Post, J., & Patterson, D. A. (2000). The long-term correlates of family foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review, 22*(8), 595–625.

Casey Family Services. (1999). *The road to independence: Transitioning youth in foster care to independence*. Shelton, CT: Author. (www.caseyfamilyservices.org)

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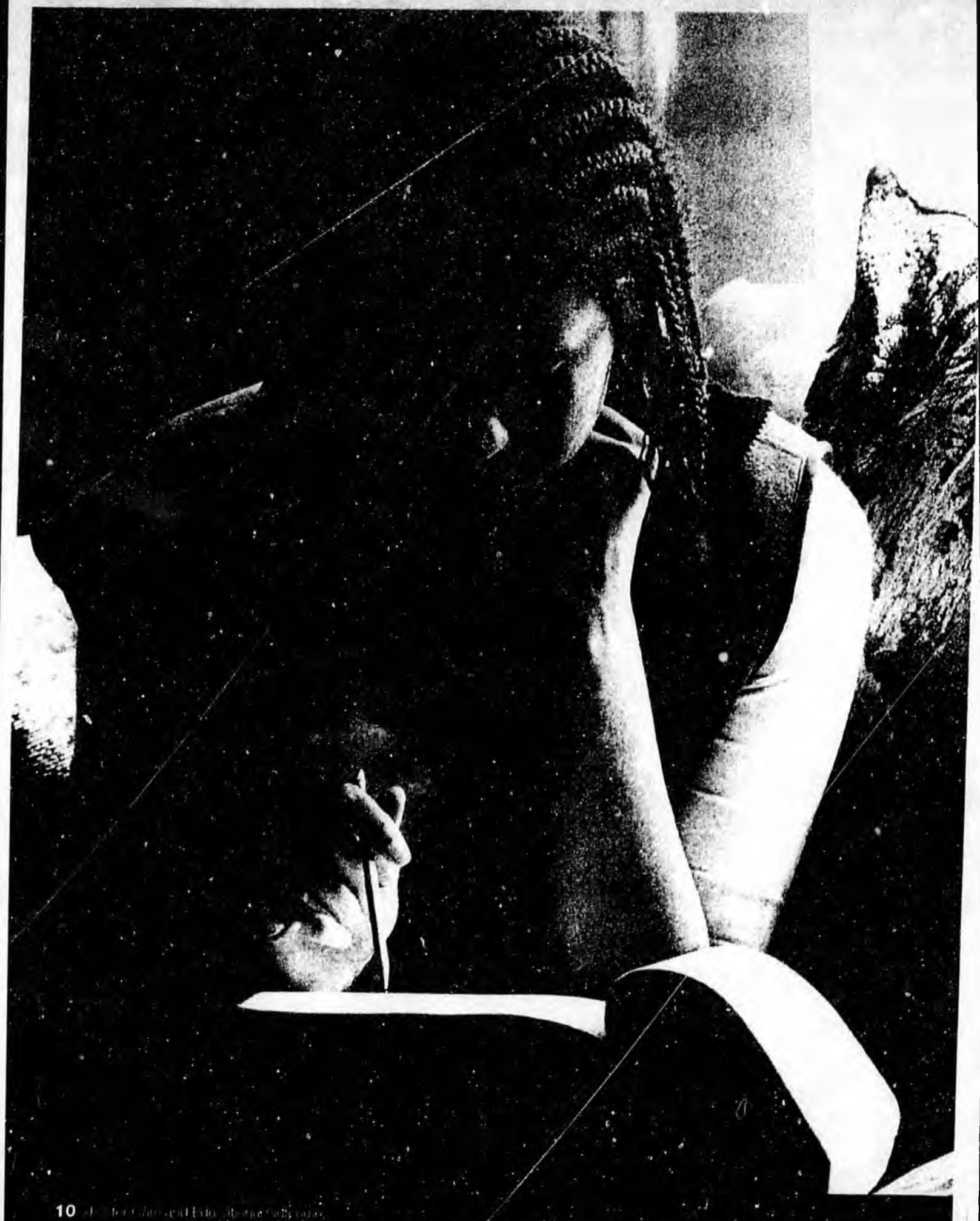
Courtney et al., 2001.

Festinger, T. (1983). *No one ever asked us... A postscript to foster care*. New York: Columbia University.

Pecora et al., 2005.

Pecora et al., 2003.

Reilly, 2003.



College statistics also tell a discouraging story: One regional study found that only 2.7 percent of foster-care alumni age 25–34, compared to 28 percent of those age 25–34 nationally, hold a bachelor's degree.[28]

School Stability Versus Mobility of Youth in Foster Care

For children and youth in foster care, one of the biggest challenges to their educational achievement is their high rate of mobility. One study of two northwestern states showed that 65 percent of foster care alumni had experienced seven or more school changes.[29] This lack of stability is deeply significant. Youth in foster care who average one less placement in care per year are nearly twice as likely to finish high school.[30]

Since it takes the average child four to six months to recover academically after each school change, many children in foster care not only fail to recover, they actually lose ground.[31] The rate of placement change is associated not only with grade retention but also with the disproportionate likelihood of classifying children in foster care as emotionally disturbed.[32] One researcher observed that some children classified as emotionally challenged may instead be exhibiting transitory behavioral problems stemming from placement disruptions.[33]

Compounding the frequency of school moves for youth in care is their high rate of absenteeism and tardiness. In fact, they are absent at twice the rate of their peers, at least partly as a result of enrollment delays when they change placements, due to the length of time generally taken for records to be transferred. Frequent health and mental health needs and numerous appointments with child-welfare agencies also contribute to the higher levels of absenteeism.[34]

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[28] Pecora et al., 2005.

[29] Pecora et al., 2005. For other placement change data see Courtney et al., 2004a, Gerber & Dicker, 2005.

[30] See, for example, Pecora et al., 2003. Although changes in foster care placements and changes in school placement are not synonymous, the two are closely correlated.

[31] Burley & Halpern, 2001; Yu et al., 2002.

[32] Courtney et al., 2004a, Gerber & Dicker, 2005; Smithgall et al., 2004.

[33] Smithgall et al., 2004. The research noted that schools do a good job of recognizing the special needs of children in foster care, however.

[34] Conger, D. & Rebeck, A. (2001). *How children's foster care experiences affect their education.* New York: Vera Institute for Justice. Retrieved March 20, 2007, from http://www.vera.org/publication_pdf/117_183.pdf; Finkelstein, M. et al. (2002). *What keeps children in foster care from succeeding in school? Views of early adolescents and the adults in their lives.* New York: Vera Institute of Justice. Retrieved March 26, 2007, from http://www.vera.org/publication_pdf/169_280.pdf; Smithgall et al., 2004; Gerber & Dicker, 2005.

It is obvious that school mobility ends the continuity of curriculum and instruction, relationships with teachers or guidance counselors and school friends, and participation in extracurricular activities. Not surprisingly, the greater the number of residential placements and school changes, the lower the odds that youth in foster care will complete high school, go on to postsecondary education, and achieve self-sufficiency.[35] Consequently, every major study of these youth—and every account of these young people's experiences in their own voices—has concluded that tackling the school mobility issue is a necessary and vital condition for improving outcomes for youth in foster care.

Counselors, Advocates, and School Supports

Because of the lack of stability in their school and family lives, children in foster care need adults who can advocate for their educational supports and rights. Youth, caregivers, and child-welfare agencies all identify the lack of education advocacy as a major failure of the child-welfare system, and conversely, when advocacy is available, as one of its most important assets. The federal Child and Family Services Reviews cited a lack of "adequate educational advocacy" as a problem for 14 of 37 states on whom reports have been issued to date.[36]

Consistent education advocacy requires knowledge of a youth's needs and education history. Effective advocates can provide services in numerous areas, including increasing and improving access to school services and programs, facilitating school enrollment, working with schools on disciplinary actions resulting in expulsions or suspension, insuring that youth in out-of-home care attend school regularly, identifying and securing academic supports, and teaching youth how to be self-advocates.[37]

Frequent school changes also diminish a student's access to needed academic supports, school enrichment opportunities and participation in extracurricular activities. Children in foster care may also miss out on supportive relationships with adults and mentors. A recent study of alumni of foster care found that fewer than half reported having a positive

[35] Courtney et al., 2004a; Smithgall et al., 2004; Pecora et al., 2003.
[36] Christian, 2003, p.4.
[37] Treehouse. (2007). *Educational Advocacy Program Annual Report 2006*. Seattle, WA: Author

relationship with an adult while growing up. This finding is buttressed by the self-reports of youth in out-of-home care.[38]

As several studies have demonstrated, when youth in out-of-home care do receive such support, their educational, employment, and social outcomes are improved.[39] The child-welfare system must continue to assume the major role in meeting those needs, but the schools remain the best providers of academic supports. Reports on the education issues of youth in foster care consistently point out that increased collaboration among child welfare and education is critical. Effective collaboration means working together to maintain school placement stability, sharing a youth's pertinent information and records, and ensuring a youth's timely enrollment in school.[40] Advocates and counselors can also help ensure that student learning is effectively supported. They are the best source of expert help in navigating children in foster care through the academic route to high school graduation and entry into postsecondary education.

[38] Pecora et al., 2003. On self reports, see, for example, Hochman, G. et al., 2004.
[39] Ayasse, R. (1995). Addressing the needs of foster children: the foster youth services program. *Social Work in Education 17*(4), 207–216; Kerman, B. et al. (2002). Outcomes for young adults who experienced foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review, 24*(5) 319–344; Pecora, 2003.
[40] Yu et. al., 2002a.

Recommendations

Over 800,000 children and youth experience foster care every year. Our schools can improve the academic outcomes of these children with the support of the U.S. Department of Education and the harnessing of the power of the No Child Left Behind Act, the principal federal program for the education of disadvantaged children and youth. As noted, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and its state and local counterparts have recognized the importance of improving educational outcomes for youth in foster care; doing so is one of seven priorities to be assessed in the CFSRs.[41]

Effective pursuit of this goal requires coordination with the public school system. To maintain school stability, the first recommendation seeks to expand the current coverage afforded children in foster care under McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. The intent is not to identify children in care as homeless, but rather to recognize the negative impact of school mobility on educational outcomes. Improving school stability is the catalyst for activating the improvements in the other NCLB recommendations.

Each recommendation, considered singly, can make a positive difference in the lives of these disadvantaged children and youth. But without greater school stability, none of these children can achieve their full potential. If children in foster care experience less upheaval in their schooling, all available evidence indicates that their academic achievement and attainment will improve—especially if they are provided supplemental education services such as tutoring, school counseling, and mental health services.

The recommendations, then, are as follows:

A. Improve school stability by ensuring that the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act applies to all children in out-of-home care and increase funding for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act under Title X, Part C, Subtitle B to a level that covers all eligible children.

[41] Christian, 2003.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which was reauthorized by NCLB, is the primary federal statute that addresses the harmful effects of school mobility on children without fixed, regular, and adequate housing. Currently, McKinney-Vento provides that homeless children and children awaiting foster care placement are eligible for its protections and services. The act provides eligible students with numerous specific educational rights and benefits, including educational stability. It allows for children to remain in their school of origin, when feasible, and provides transportation to allow for that continuity.

The act also insures that eligible students have access to immediate school enrollment in a new school when remaining in the school of origin is not feasible, regardless of whether the students have required documention such as school records, medical records, or proof of residency. Not only must eligible children be allowed to enroll in classes, they must also be permitted to participate fully in school activities.

A critical component of the act is the provision of liaisons for eligible students. Local education agencies (LEAs) must designate a staff person as liaison for these students to assist with identification, enrollment, and referrals for services and programs. States award competitive subgrants to LEAs to assist with implementation and provide direct services. McKinney-Vento also enables critical professional development for educators and pupil services personnel in meeting the needs of the students targeted by the act. Finally, students eligible under this act are also eligible for Title I benefits without needing to qualify based on their current academic performance.

A March 2006 U.S. Department of Education report on the McKinney-Vento program concluded that "states and LEAs have generally made significant progress in reducing the barriers that homeless children and youth face in enrolling, attending and succeeding in school."[42] There are, however, two challenges to making the services available to children in foster care. The first is the language of the act. McKinney-Vento provides services to homeless children, including those "awaiting foster care placement." This phrase is somewhat ambiguous. The

[42] U.S. Department of Education (2006). *Report to the President and Congress on the Implementation of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved on March 26, 2007, from http://www.ed.gov/programs/homeless/rpt2006.doc

states have taken a wide array of approaches in determining which children in out-of-home care are eligible under McKinney-Vento, from Delaware's approach of including all children in care, to only including children in short-term placements, and many variations in between. If McKinney-Vento were explicitly to extend services to all children in out-of-home care, these vulnerable children would be protected, and they would be treated more consistently across all fifty states.

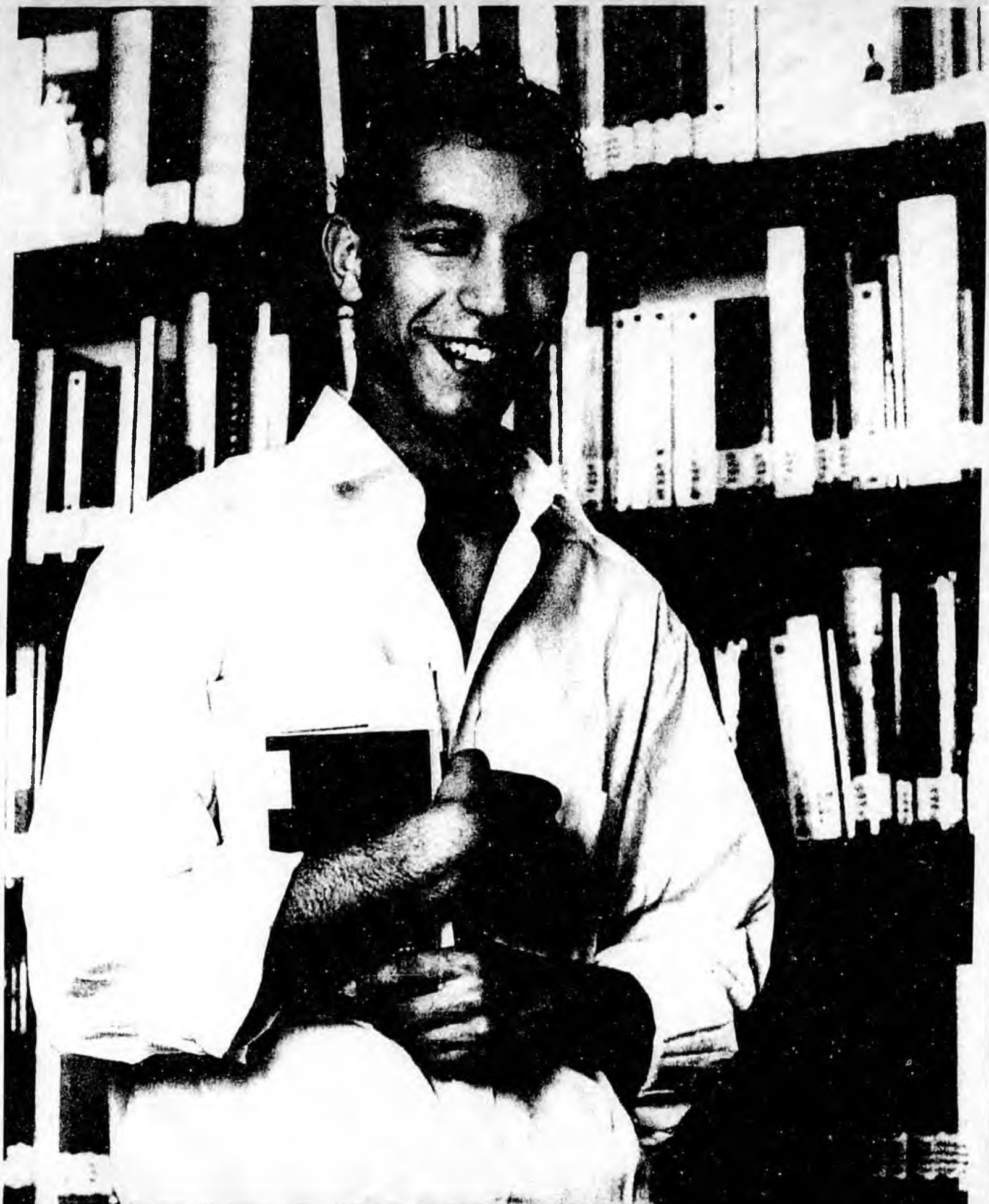
Second, as the report notes, districts are stretched thin in providing all necessary services to the existing population of eligible students. Alarmingly, almost half of the 914,225 students identified under the McKinney-Vento Act in 2005–2006 were enrolled in school districts that do not have subgrants.[43] The current appropriation of $61 million does not adequately cover all the children currently eligible. Including all children in foster care under the act would necessitate a significant increase in funding. Additional research is suggested to determine how much additional need exists.

The infrastructure for extending McKinney-Vento to children in foster care is generally already in place through the state coordinators and local education agency liaisons for children currently eligible under the act. These education contacts will be a tremendous benefit to child-welfare system professionals charged with responsibility for addressing all the needs of children in out-of-home care. While the overall responsibility for these children will remain with the child-welfare agencies (and will not be transferred to LEA liaisons), the child-welfare agencies' capacity to address the education needs of children will improve dramatically when they can work collaboratively with LEA liaisons and make use of them as points of contact for communications with the school system.[44]

B. Academic Support Services: Increase access to educationally related support services and increase funding for school counselors and mental health services.

Currently, NCLB provides for a variety of support services that are critical to children in foster care and other students at the greatest

[43] U.S. Department of Education, 2006.
[44] U.S. Department of Education, 2006; Gerber and Dicker, 2005.



risk of failing to meet state standards. Children in foster care would benefit from eligibility for many of these services, but expansion of three services in particular would result in the most immediate and long-lasting impact:

1) **Ensure that children and youth in foster care have access to education-related support services by making them automatically eligible for Title 1, Part A services and including them in the set-aside that exists for homeless children.**

The purpose of the Title I program is to serve disadvantaged children who are at risk of academic failure. Homeless children and youth are covered by Title I, Part A services. Title I resources must be accessible to serve a school district's homeless children and youth, and these children must be included in school district Title I accountability systems to ensure that their academic needs are addressed.

NCLB requires that both state and LEA Title I plans be coordinated within the McKinney-Vento Act. Homeless children are automatically eligible for Title I services. In addition, NCLB currently requires all LEAs reserve dollars to provide educationally related support services to homeless children. These Title I set-asides provide essential educational support, including tutoring, to help children achieve academically in schools throughout the district. In light of their similar needs, children in foster care would benefit from inclusion in these same provisions. Title I, Part A should include children in foster care in these provisions explicitly.

While increasing the funding to McKinney-Vento in order to include youth in out-of-home care would support transportation and liaison staffing costs, ensuring access to Title I, Part A services would provide for additional support, such as tutoring, that directly affects academic growth and progress.

In addition, according to Title I, Part A regulations, states must include homeless students in their academic assessment, reporting, and accountability systems. Eligibility for Title I, Part A services for youth in foster care means that outcome data on their educational attainment could be collected and their progress tracked. Collaborative data systems to track education outcomes would be tremendously helpful to both the education and child-welfare systems.

2) Increase funding for the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Programs (ESSCP) under Title V, Part D, Subpart 2.

Research confirms the intuitive conclusion that children with multiple academic risk factors who do not have stable adults in their lives to guide their education rarely succeed in school and beyond. Conversely, when such children are provided structured supports, their educational and other outcomes improve markedly. This is particularly true for students in foster care. Yet the students who most need school counselors to help them navigate the requirements of academic and adult success have the least access to structured educational support.

Typically, this support role is filled by school guidance counselors, who also work with classroom teachers to prevent or deal with behavioral problems. Counselors also help to connect students to postsecondary financial aid opportunities and are usually the point of contact between the school and outside agencies that have, or need to have, a role in a student's life.[45]

In schools that serve disadvantaged children, the number of students assigned to a full- or part-time counselor already exceeds the American School Health Association's recommended ratio, 250:1, by a factor

[45] Committee for Education Funding (2006). *Budget Response FY2007*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved April 16, 2006, from http://www.nabe.org/documents/policy_legislative/CEF_Response_FY07.pdf

of anywhere from three to 50 (i.e., 750:1 on up to 12,500:1).[46] NCLB adopted ASHA's ratio, but the resources it devotes to school counseling are inadequate for increasing the supply of qualified elementary and secondary school counselors, let alone for improving services and coordinating with nonschool agencies.

ESSCP provides competitive grants to school districts to establish or expand school counseling services through qualified school counselors, social workers, and psychologists—all of whom provide services that play a vital role in improving educational outcomes for youth in foster care and other students with multiple risks. Grants also support professional development for these personnel. In addition, the program promotes school-linked integration of services and requires collaboration with other social service agencies, public or private entities and business, community and higher education institutions.

Currently funded at just under $35 million,[47] ESSCP grants are for a maximum of $400,000 per fiscal year and may not exceed three years. Not surprisingly, then, ESSCP presently benefits only 103 school districts spread out over 33 states and the District of Columbia, a reach that falls far short of current need (even without including the population in foster care). Increasing current appropriations would be a positive start toward demonstrating a commitment to support services for all youth at risk of academic failure, including youth in foster care.

3) Increase funding for Grants to Improve the Mental Health of Children under Title V, Part D, Subpart 14 and target funding to high-poverty school districts.

Because such a high proportion of youth in foster care face mental health challenges that affect their school performance, mental health services are vital. Both the education and child-welfare communities are striving to coordinate services to improve the educational outcomes of children and youth in foster care with mental health needs, but much

[46] Wolanin, 2005; McDonough, P. *Counseling and college counseling in America's high schools*. Alexandria, VA: National Association for College Admission Counseling. Retrieved March 15, 2007, from www.nacac.com/downloads/p2_counseling.pdf

[47] At this funding level, the law requires that funds be used for counselors only in elementary schools, not in secondary schools. The current appropriations threshold that would enable districts to allocate funds for secondary school counselors is $40 million.

remains to be done. This Title V provision supports the education community in this work. It authorizes the U.S. Secretary of Education to make funding arrangements, on a competitive basis, with state or local educational agencies or Indian tribes for the purpose of increasing student access to high-quality mental health care by developing innovative programs to link local school systems with the local mental health system.

Yet this vital program is funded with only $4.9 million. This appropriation level is sufficient to provide only 20 awards over an 18-month period. Increasing appropriations will enable more districts, states, and Indian tribes to develop and evaluate programs for improving the mental health services received by youth in foster care and other needy students. Programs found to be successful should be replicated immediately in other parts of the country using local, state, and private resources.

Conclusion

The reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act, including McKinney-Vento, offers a timely opportunity to work with the education system to substantially improve the educational outcomes and attainment of children and youth in out-of-home care. The recommendations identified here underscore the need for school stability and continuity, as well as increased academic and mental health support services designed for youth in care. It should be noted that school stability is the glue that binds these recommendations together in a comprehensive program of support and accountability.

School stability is the glue that binds these recommendations together in a comprehensive program of support and accountability.

For too long, children and youth in foster care have languished in the shadow of the education system. With these policy improvements and increases in funding, children and youth in care will be able to fulfill their dreams of school success, independent living, and fuller participation in family and community life.

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42 U.S.C. § 11431 *et seq.*

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2. **Blome, W. W.** (1997). What happens to foster kids: Educational experiences of a random sample of foster care youth and a matched group of non-foster care youth. *Child an ' Adolescent Social Work Journal, 14*(1), 41–53.

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3. **Burley, M., & Halpern, M.** (2001). *Educational attainment of foster youth: Achievement and graduation outcomes for children in state care.* Olympia, WA: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

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4. **Cheung, S. Y., & Heath, A.** (1994). After care: The education and occupation of adults who have been in care. *Oxford Review of Education, 20*(3), 361.

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   This study uses a database of school and child welfare records to analyze specific indicators of the educational achievement of 16,000 children in foster care in New York City. The study finds that foster care experiences strongly affect rates of attendance and school transfer but have little effect on reading and math test scores. Overall, foster children have very poor attendance rates compared to other students, but there are some groups of foster students who improve their attendance after entering care.

7. **Cook, R., Fleishman, E., & Grimes, V.** (1991). *A national evaluation of Title IV-E foster care independent living programs for youth: Phase 2 final report.* Rockville, MD: Westat.

This evaluation assesses the influence of the Independent Living Initiatives, Public Law 99-272, on states' development of programs, policies and services and the impact of services on outcomes for older youth discharged from foster care. The study finds that services authorized by the Independent Living Initiatives have the potential to improve outcomes for youth. In particular, skills training in specific skill areas lead to better individual outcomes and more comprehensive effects are achieved when a combination of skills is delivered within a prescribed set of five skill areas: money management, consumer skills, skill in obtaining credit, skill in the use of educational opportunities, and skill in finding and maintaining employment.

8. **Courtney, M., Piliavin, I., Grogan-Kaylor, A., & Nesmith, A.** (2001). Foster youth transitions to adulthood: A longitudinal view of youth leaving care. *Child Welfare, 80,* 685–717.

This study tracks young adults for 12–18 months after they leave foster care in Wisconsin. It reports on the youths' experiences in foster care and after exiting, including the training, educational, health services, and other forms of public assistance they receive, their incidence of delinquency, their living situations, and their finances and employment. Findings related to education include the following: the young adults had high aspirations about their educational goals—79% planned to enter college. However, 12-18 months after exiting foster care only 55% had finished high school, 37% hadn't received a diploma or GED, and only 9% had entered college.

9. **Courtney, M. E., Terao, S., & Bost, N.** (2004). *Evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 19.* Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. http://www.chapinhall.org/article_abstract.aspx?ar=1355&L2=61&L3=130

This report presents findings from a longitudinal study of youth exiting the foster care system and transitioning to independent living in Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois. These analyses compare youth who are still in care at age 19 to those who had exited care and to a nationally representative sample of 19-year-olds from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health on a number of indicators including those pertaining to education, health, finances, victimization, and child bearing. Foster youth have greater educational deficits than other youth. Despite high aspirations, over one-third of the youth in care did not receive a high school diploma or GED compared to fewer than 10% in the national sample. In addition, 19-year-olds in the national sample are significantly more likely to be enrolled in an education program than those in care, and of those enrolled they are much more likely to be enrolled in a 4-year college (62% compared to 18%).

10. **Courtney, M. E., Terao, S., & Bost, N.** (2004). *Evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Conditions of Illinois youth preparing to leave state care.* Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. http://www.chapinhall.org/article_abstract.aspx?ar=1355&L2=61&L3=130

This study reports on the experiences of youth living in Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois who are in foster care at age 17. The study reports on the youths' physical and mental health, experiences with the juvenile justice system, and their education compared to a national sample. The study finds that almost half of the youth in care are placed in special education and they are more likely than the youth in the national sample to be retained in grade. They are also more than twice as likely to be suspended and nearly four times as likely to be expelled. The 17-year-old respondents read on average at a seventh-grade reading level.

11. **George, R. M., VanVoorhis, J., Grant, S., Casey, K., & Robinson, M** (1992). Special-education experiences of foster children: An empirical study. *Child Welfare, 71,* 419–437.

This study analyzes records from the databases of the state departments of social service and of education in Illinois to examine the characteristics and service experiences of children who are both in foster care and receiving special education services. The study finds that foster children in special education are older than the general special education population and they suffer disproportionately from emotional disturbance as their primary condition.

12. **Jackson, S.** (1994). Educating children in residential and foster care. *Oxford Review of Education, 20*(3), 267–279.

This article reviews research over nearly twenty years that consistently shows that children in residential and foster care have lower educational achievement than those living with their own families and leave school with few qualifications. The article then suggests new approaches to improve the educational achievement of these children.

13. **Kerman, B., Wildfire, J., & Barth. R.P.** (2002). Outcomes for young adults who experienced foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review, 24*(5), 319–344.

    This paper highlights the role of extending support during the critical transition through young adulthood. After a brief review of adult outcome literature, results from a follow-up study of foster children for whom reunification was not planned are described. Adoptees and children who remain in foster care into young adulthood are functioning better than those who exit at age 18 or before. Moreover, youth who remain for extended support in foster care are doing as well as those who are adopted.

14. **Kortenkamp, K., & Macomber, J.E.** (2002). *The well being of children involved with the child welfare system.* Washington, DC: Urban Institute. http://www.urban.org/publications/310413.html

    This brief presents a national overview of the well-being of children involved with the child welfare system. Findings are based on data from the 1997 and 1999 National Survey of America's Families (NSAF), a nationally representative survey of households with persons under age 65 and includes measures of economic, health, and social characteristics of more than 44,000 households. The study finds that children involved with child welfare are less likely to be engaged in school and involved in school activities and more likely to be in special education compared with children living with their parents.

15. **McDonald, T., Allen, R., Westerfelt, A., & Piliavin, I.** (1996). *Assessing the long-term effects of foster care: a research synthesis.* Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.

    This book reviews the findings of 29 studies published between 1960 and 1992 on the impact of childhood out-of-home care on adults' self-sufficiency, adjustment, family and social support, and personal well-being. The findings indicate that in comparison to those not receiving childhood out-of-home care, adults placed in childhood out-of-home care have poorer school performance and higher rates of school dropout.

16. **McMillen, C., Auslander, W., Elze, D., White, T., & Thompson, R.** (2003). Educational experiences and aspirations of older youth in foster care. *Child Welfare, 82*(4), 475–49.

    This study documents the school experiences of 262 youth referred for independent-living preparation from the foster care system of one midwestern U.S. county. Of the youth, 73% had been suspended at least once since the seventh grade, and 16% had been expelled. In the past year, 58% had failed a class, and 29% had physical fights with students. Yet the group reports high educational aspirations: 70% want to attend college.

17. **Pecora, P.J., Williams, J., Kessler, R.J., Downs, A.C., O'Brien, K., Hiripi, E., & Morello, S.** (2003). Assessing the effects of foster care: Early results from the Casey national alumni study. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs. http://www.casey.org/NR/rdonlyres/CEFBB1B6-7ED1-440D-925A-E5BAF602294D/0/casey_alumni_studies_report.pdf

    This report presents findings from a study that tracks over a thousand Casey Family Program foster care alumni and examines their educational attainment, employment, and life experiences. The study is based on data collected from case records and interviews. The study finds that the Casey alumni have high rates of high school completion but low rates of college completion compared to the population as a whole. The high school completion rate for the interviewed sample of Casey alumni (86.1%) is similar to that for the general population while the college completion rate (9%) is much lower than the rate for the general population group (24.4%).

18. **Reilly, T.** (2003). Transition from care: status and outcomes of youth who age out of foster care. *Child Welfare 82*(6), 727–746.

    This study uses administrative data from the state of Nevada's Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) to assess the experiences of youth aging out of foster care. The study assesses youths' living situations, educational attainment, employment, health status, and experience with the criminal justice system. The study finds that 50% of youth leave foster care without a high school degree, although respondents

have high educational aspirations—75% indicate they want to obtain a college degree.

19. **Shin, S.H.** (2003). Building evidence to promote educational competence of youth in foster care. *Child Welfare 82*(5), 615–632.

    This article reports the results of a study of educational competence in a sample of 152 foster youth in one Midwestern state. The study explores predictors of reading ability of youth in foster care and finds that four factors—aspiration for higher education, placement in kinship care, participation in extracurricular activities, and drug use—account for 39% of the variance in reading ability scores.

20. **Smithgall, C., Gladden, R. M., Duck-Hye Yang, Goerge, R. M.** (2005) *Behavior problems and education disruptions among children in out-of-home care in Chicago*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. http://www.chapinhall.org/article_abstract.aspx?ar=1415&L2=64&L3=116

    This report presents findings from a study that compares the educational experiences of students in the Chicago Public Schools that are in foster care and are classified with ED (emotional disturbance) with those in care with other special education classifications and with students not in foster care classified with ED. The study methods include analyses of administrative data and interviews with case workers, special education staff, foster parents, probation officers, and mental health professionals. The study finds that children in care receive ED classifications at higher rates than other children. In addition, a significant portion of children classified as ED continue to display serious behavioral problems at school after being classified and receiving appropriate services and are less likely to graduate than students with other classifications or no classifications (16% compared to 26% and 33%).

21. **Cheryl Smithgall, Robert Matthew Gladden, Robert M. Goerge, Courtney, M.E.** (2004). Educational experiences of children in out-of-home care. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. http://www.chapinhall.org/article_abstract.aspx?ar=1372Have

    The report presents findings from a study assessing the educational experiences of youth in foster care in Illinois. Data from Chapin Hall's Integrated Database on Child and Family Services in Illinois in addition to qualitative interviews with caseworkers, foster parents, and school staff are used to provide information on students' educational experiences. Students in care are found to have lower achievement test scores than other students—almost 50% of third to eighth grade students in out-of-home care score in the bottom quartile on the ITBS reading section. Students in care are also more likely to be retained (they are 1.8 times more likely to be old for grade) or drop out of school (15% are dropping out between ages 13 and 16).

22. **Stein, M.** (1994). Leaving care: Education and career trajectories. *Oxford Review of Education, 29*(3), 349–360.

    The paper explores the career trajectories of young people age 16–19 years who were under social service supervision using data from three "leaving care" research studies carried out at the University of Leeds in Great Britain. The analyses assess the youth in four substantive areas: their educational attainment, further education, employment and training routes, and some of the influences upon their career trajectories. The majority of youth surveyed in all three surveys are found to have no educational qualifications at the time they leave care.

23. **Vandivere, S., Chalk, R. & Anderson Moore, K.** (2003). *Children in Foster Homes: How Are They Faring?* Washington, DC: Child Trends.

    This research brief presents findings on indicators of foster children's well being. Data are taken from Child Trends' analyses of two nationally representative surveys—the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being and the National Survey of America's Families. The survey asks foster children about their engagement and participation in school. About three quarters report getting along with teachers, listening and paying attention in school and getting homework done. However, a smaller proportion of foster children than other children report getting along with other students and enjoying being in school.

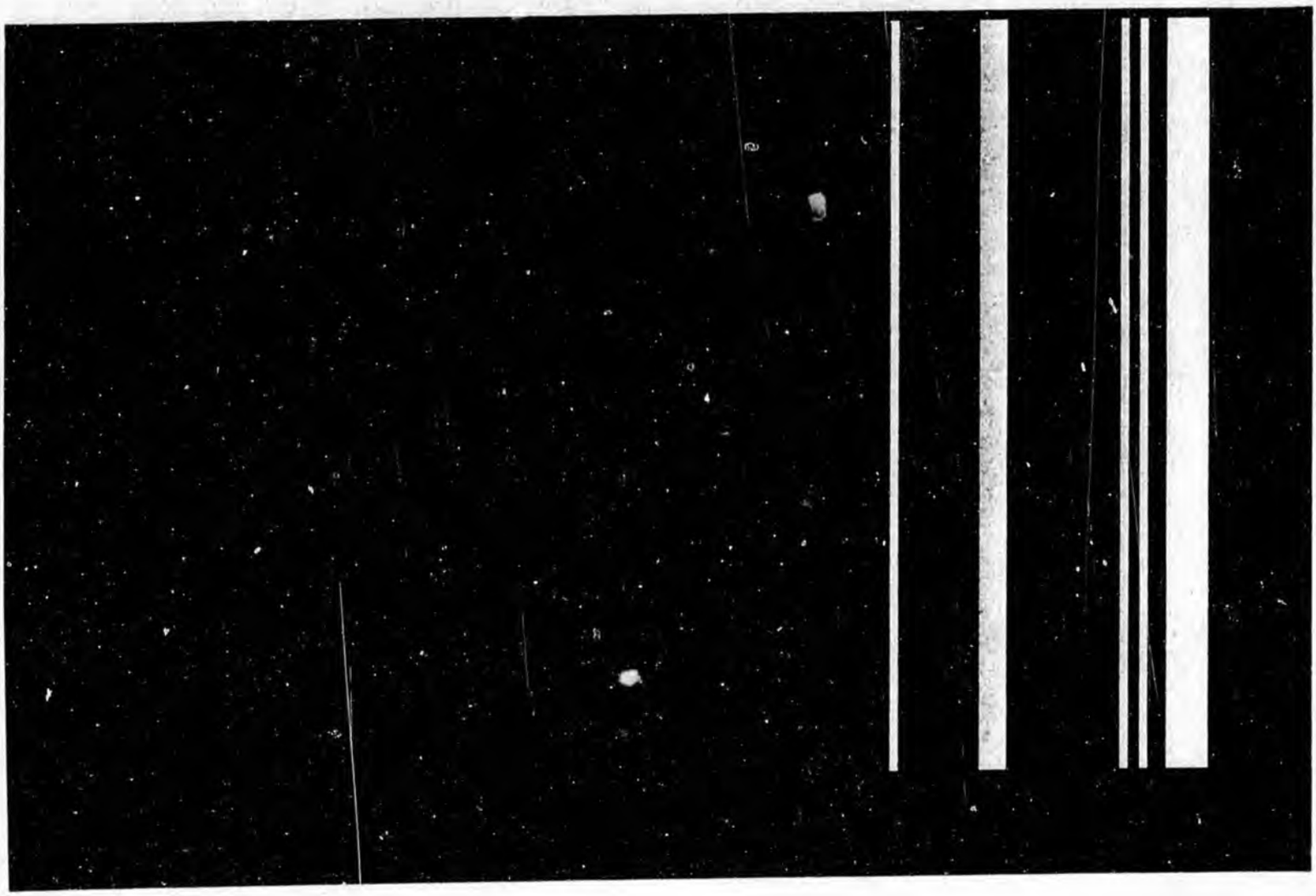
24. **Yu, E., Day, P., & Williams, M.** (2002). *Improving educational outcomes for youth in care: A national collaboration.* Washington, D.C.: Child Welfare League of America.

    The Child Welfare League of America and the National Council for Juvenile and Family Court Judges convened a symposium in 2002 to initiate a dialogue

among the child welfare, judicial, and education fields and to build consensus about improving the educational outcomes for youth in care. This report summarizes the findings of this symposium.

25. **Zima, B. T., Bussing, R., Freeman, S., Yang, X., Belin, T. R., & Forness, S. R.** (2000). Behavior problems, academic skill delays and school failure among school-aged children in foster care: Their relationship to placement characteristics. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 9*(1), 87–103.

    The study describes the level of behavior problems, academic skill delays, and school failure among school-aged children in foster care. It also examines how behavior problems are associated with academic problems, and explores how these outcomes are related to children's placement characteristics. Foster parent and child home interviews, as well as teacher telephone interviews, are conducted from a randomly selected sample of 302 children age 6 through 12 years living in out-of-home placement. Interviews included standardized screening measures. Results show that 27% of the children score in the clinical range for a behavior problem, and 34% are rated as having at least one behavior problem in the classroom. Twenty-three percent of the children have severe delays in reading or math, 13% repeat a grade, and 14% have a history of school suspension and/or expulsion. Behavior problems reported by foster parents are related to child suspension and/or expulsion from school, but are not associated with severe academic delays or grade retention.



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Alaska's children and their families deserve caseworkers that have been given the tools and training necessary to provide exemplary services. These improvements are expected to positively impact annual employee turnover rates, the numbers of positions available to provide direct services, and worker effectiveness.

In addition, the OCS intends to offer all OCS staff continued education opportunities. Any Internet search or walk through a local bookstore will lead the researcher to a sea of findings related to the importance of staff training. Simply put, training is critical in helping staff develop skills and knowledge; perform their job effectively and efficiently; perform their job safely; feel confident and professional; and feel valued and motivated. OCS recognizes that while education for new front-line workers is the priority, continued education for front line and all other OCS workers is extremely important as well.

Front Line Social Workers

Implement Front-line Worker Study Recommendations — Phase 2: $860.9 Total *$260.9 Federal, $600.0 GF/Match*
In FY 2008, the OCS was given six additional case workers in response to a Workload Study contracted with Hornby Zeller Associates. The study was conducted in response to legislative concerns and Citizen's Review Panel findings. The primary purpose of the study was to determine whether or not front-line caseworkers have sufficient time to meet the basic requirements of their jobs — protecting children and serving families.

The outcome of this six-month study was based on the time needed to handle a case appropriately, the time available for case-specific work, and caseload per worker. The results indicated a need for 17 additional workers.

The OCS is now requesting funding for an additional seven front-line positions and three administrative staff workers. Support positions are necessary to help alleviate some of the administrative duties that fall on line workers. The workload study revealed that line workers spend an average of 12.4 percent of their time on administrative tasks. OCS has increased its front-line staff by 63 positions over the last four fiscal years with no additional administrative staff hires.

Increased Lease Costs – Anchorage: $583.3 Total $143.3 Federal, $440.0 General Fund
This increment provides the additional funding for adequate office space for staff in Anchorage. Staff are currently housed in three different buildings.

Transfer out I/A Receipts to Infant Learning Program: ($425.0 Interagency Receipt)
Excess Interagency Receipt authorization is being transferred to the Infant Learning Program.

Family Preservation

Discontinue Private Proshare Refinancing: $322.4 General Funds
This increment replaces federal funding with general funds, due to the discontinuation of the Private ProShare Medicaid program by the federal Medicaid agency.

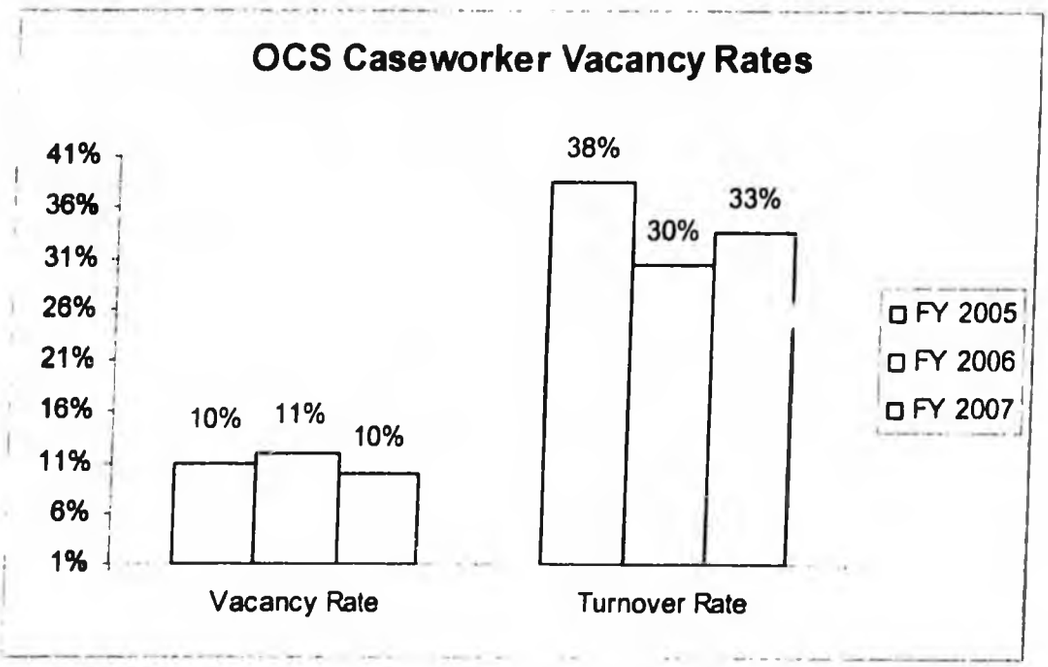
Recruitment and Retention

Child protective services are an emotionally demanding vocation. Across the nation, compassion, fatigue and vicarious trauma lead to high turnover and vacancy rates among caseworkers.

- 50 percent of OCS front-line caseworkers have been employed with the agency for less than two years, and
- 20 percent have less than one year of experience.

The OCS has been experiencing consistently similar vacancy and turnover rates since 2000. It has been an ongoing challenge to maintain full staffing levels, train staff to proficient levels of competency and institutionalize the agency's core mission and standard practice model.

The ending turnover rate for FY07 was 33 percent. The vacancy rate at the end of FY07 was 9.5 percent.



Funds requested in FY 2009, and discussed in the Explanation of FY2008 Budget Changes section previously, will allow OCS to expand new caseworker training by two weeks to offer and provide staff the full spectrum of training recommended by national experts, UAA professionals, Tribal partners, and OCS management and staff.

OCS is working toward solutions to address retention and recruitment issues and has formed a workgroup that includes a representative from the UAA Family and Youth Services Training Academy and is receiving technical assistance from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Work has begun on establishing a realistic job profile DVD to be provided to each candidate upon application, prior to an interview. The applicant is asked to sign a simple attestation form that 1) they've watched the video, and 2) they still want to be interviewed and considered for the opening. States using this technique are seeing an increase of new employees that truly have the competencies and the heart to do child protective services work, and a decrease of early resignations dismissals.

The OCS also holds hope for several of the short- and long-term tools for recruitment and retention that were presented in October by Commissioner Karleen K. Jackson to the Executive Branch Working Group assigned to Administrative Order 237.

Other recruitment and retention challenges rotate around the question that initiated the workload study also discussed in the Explanation of FY2008 Budget Changes above: Does the Office of Children's Services have an adequate number of social workers to keep Alaska's children safe, and do some geographical areas have excess staff that could be diverted to geographical areas that need additional staff?

The continuing effort to completely implement the Hornby Zeller Associates Inc. time study remains a challenge. The study found that OCS needed 17 more positions to meet the demands of its workload and recommended regular updates to caseload distribution. Subsequent use of the workload study data set indicates that the data are confounded by a large number of cases that are not being worked and are awaiting closure. OCS is making a concerted effort to close all cases that qualify for closure, and will continue using the workload study data until it is confident that the number of caseworkers needed is as accurate as possible.

OCS has explored the option of relocating positions to Anchorage, an area of high need. A review of existing positions (PCNS) by the regional case managers indicated that the study had misidentified some positions as front-line caseworker positions that were actually supportive positions. Consequently, there is only minimal and transitory excess capacity in any field office and no significant gains would occur by transferring positions to Anchorage.

Foster Care Reimbursement Rates Have Not Been Increased In Nine Years

The Foster Care Base Rate component reimburses providers for expenditures associated with caring for children placed in their homes. The expenditures include food, clothing, daily supervision, personal items, school supplies, games and recreational activities, allowance, usual transportation costs, and other items relevant to raising a child.

There has been one family foster care rate increase in the last 16 years and that was nine years ago. Rates paid to the people of Alaska willing to bring into their homes children who have had to be removed from their own homes, and to provide care for them, are not adequate to cover the costs to these families, making it even more difficult to recruit foster parents.

As the costs of raising children have increased, front-line workers must use other means to adequately reimburse care providers forcing expenditure increases in other areas of the budget, in particular Foster Care Special Needs.

LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH REPORT

JANUARY 23, 2008

REPORT NUMBER 08.102

FRONT LINE SOCIAL WORKERS WITH THE OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

PREPARED FOR REPRESENTATIVE LES GARA

BY ROGER WITHINGTON, LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

You asked for information regarding the front line social worker component of the Office of Children's Services. Specifically, you asked five questions which are as follows.

1) For the Office of Children's Services (OCS), what is the current total number of filled and vacant front line social worker positions?

2) In the past year, what is the net increase, or decrease, in the number of filled front line social worker positions?

3) How many administrative support staff have been added in each of the last two years?

4) How many front line social worker and administrative support positions have been created and filled within the OCS as a result of the 2006 Hornby Zeller audit recommendation?

5) What was the turnover rate for front line social workers and the OCS as a whole for the past year?

Table 1, provides the total number of filled and vacant front line social worker positions for each of the four administrative regions of the OCS. These figures represent the number of caseload carrying workers as of January 14, 2008.

907-465-3991
907-465-3908 (fax)

Alaska Legislature
Legislative Research Services
w3.legis.state.ak.us/laa/research/research.php

State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Table 1: Caseload Carrying Frontline Staff Positions as of January 17, 2008								
Location and Position Status	**Children's Services Specialists I**	**Children's Services Specialists II**	**Children's Services Specialists III**	**Social Worker I**	**Social Worker II**	**Social Worker IIII**	**Social Worker IV**	**Total**
Anchorage Authorized	**16**	**39**	**1**	**1**	**21**	**3**	**15**	**96**
Vacant	2	6	0	0	4	0	1	13
Filled	14	33	1	1	17	3	14	83
Northern Authorized	**10**	**10**	**0**	**1**	**14**	**1**	**10**	**46**
Vacant	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
Filled	10	9	0	1	14	0	10	44
Southcentral Authorized	**13**	**28**	**0**	**4**	**23**	**0**	**14**	**82**
Vacant	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	4
Filled	12	26	0	4	23	0	13	78
Southeast Authorized	**4**	**15**	**0**	**1**	**5**	**0**	**6**	**31**
Vacant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Filled	4	15	0	1	5	0	6	31
Statewide Authorized	**43**	**92**	**1**	**7**	**63**	**4**	**45**	**255**
Vacant	3	9	0	0	4	1	2	19
Filled	40	83	1	7	59	3	43	236
Notes:	Social Worker IV positions are supervisory.							
Sources:	Michael D. Lesmann, Community Relations Manager, Office of Children's Services, 907-465-3548.							

Figures provided in Table 1 show that 7 percent of the front line social worker positions statewide were vacant as of January 14. For individual regions, 14 percent were vacant in the Anchorage region, 4 percent were vacant in the Northern region, and 5 percent were vacant in the Southcentral region, while the Southeast region was fully staffed.

According to Michael Lesmann, Community Relations Manager for the Office of Children's Services, during calendar year 2007, the OCS experienced a net increase of eleven front line social workers. On January 1, 2007, there were 226 case worker positions filled, while on January 1, 2008, the number of filled positions had increased to 237.[1] Mr. Lesmann also notes that no new regional administrative support positions have been authorized for the Office of Children's Services front line social worker component in the past five years.[2]

In response to our questions regarding the statewide workload study prepared in 2006 by Hornby Zelier Associates, which recommended that the OCS add additional staff, Mr. Lesmann notes that there have been no administrative positions filled in response to the Hornby Zeller workload

[1] Michael D. Lesmann, Community Relations Manager, Office of Children's Services, 907-465-3548

[2] In addition to the Social Worker and Children's Services Specialist job classes, the Front Line Social Worker component of the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services' budget includes job classes such as Administrative Clerk, Eligibility Technician, Nurse, and Research Analyst.

study.[3] He further notes, however, that six new positions have been authorized in the front line social worker component in response to the workload study; one case worker, four licensing specialists, and one position with job duties yet to be determined by the region. Two of the five established positions have been filled, one position is currently in the interview process, and two positions are vacant.

According to Mr. Lesmann,

> 31 positions were authorized in 2006, but not in response to the workload study that was released in May of 2006. If these 31 positions and the six positions related to the workload study are considered, 48 hires have been made.

Mr. Lesmann reports that the turnover rate for front line social workers in FY 2007 was 33 percent. He also notes that the OCS did not track total worker turnover prior to July 1, 2007. To date, however, the FY 2008 fiscal year turnover rate for all OCS employees is 21 percent. This figure does not include Division of Finance and Management Services staff that support the OCS.

I hope you find this information to be useful. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions or need additional information.

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[3] One of the recommendations from the Hornby Zeller *Statewide Workload Study*, is for the OCS to "make an effort to attain additional positions at whatever speed they can be absorbed from both a political and an agency standpoint." *Statewide Workload Study*, produced in May 2006 by Hornby Zeller Associates, Inc., can be viewed at *http://hss.state.ak.us/ocs/Publications/default.htm*

Consumer Price Index - All Urban Consumers

Series Id: CUURA427SA0,CUUSA427SA0
Not Seasonally Adjusted
Area: Anchorage, AK
Item: All items
Base Period: 1982-84=100

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual	HALF1	HALF2
1999													148.4	148.6	148.3
2000													150.9	150.0	151.9
2001													155.2	154.4	156.0
2002													158.2	157.5	159.0
2003													162.5	161.1	163.9
2004													166.7	165.6	167.8
2005													171.8	169.6	174.1
2006													177.3	176.7	177.9
2007													181.237	179.394	183.080

12 Months Percent Change

Series Id: CUURA427SA0,CUUSA427SA0
Not Seasonally Adjusted
Area: Anchorage, AK
Item: All items
Base Period: 1982-84=100

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual	HALF1	HALF2
1999													1.0	1.3	0.9
2000													1.7	0.9	2.4
2001													2.8	2.9	2.7
2002													1.9	2.0	1.9
2003													2.7	2.3	3.1

2004													2.6	2.8	2.4
2005													3.1	2.4	3.8
2006													3.2	4.2	2.2
2007													2.2	1.5	2.9

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Phone: (202) 691-5200
Do you have a **Data question**?
Do you have a **Technical (web) question**?
Do you have **Other comments**?

Meagan Foster

From: Tamara Keech [TKeech@nwresource.org]
Sent: Monday, October 22, 2007 9:11 AM
To: Meagan Foster
Subject: FW: Foster Care Rates

Here is a letter from one of our foster parents.

From: Tammy Keech [mailto:keechtammy@hotmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, October 17, 2007 3:32 PM
To: Tamara Keech
Subject: FW: Foster Care Rates

Tamara L. Keech
Never take things for granted

Date: Wed, 17 Oct 2007 14:50:45 -0700
From: saverlifes@yahoo.com
Subject: Foster Care Rates
To: keechtammy@hotmail.com

Sir,

I am writing in regards to the foster care rates. I am a foster parent and have been for almost five years. I have to say that the foster care payment for infants is reasonable. Yet as the children get older their issues increase and require more time, energy and money. Yet that is when the stipend goes down. Children would often benefit from being in a sport or gymnastics of some kind to work out, yet it is often not done because of money issues. As is, the rate takes care of food, housing (laundry, heating the house, etc), some toys and some clothes. Yet I don't think it has been considered that most people in foster care need bigger homes, bigger vehicles and insurance to cover the bigger vehicle, and most importantly child care so that the foster parents can go out for an evening. It costs quite a bit for someone to care for a bigger family especially kids with special needs. A babysitter would cost at least two or three days worth of the current rate, just for one evening. I will be so bold as to say that a lot of foster parents get burned out after just a few years because they do not get adequate time to re-energize away from the children.

Thank you for considering what I have said. I do appreciate the fact that the issue is being addressed. We as foster parents aren't doing this for the money, but we would like to be given rates that would help us deal with the costs of having larger families.

Thank you again for your time and consideration,
Sara C.
foster parent

Meagan Foster

From: Tamara Keech [TKeech@nwresource.org]
Sent: Monday, October 22, 2007 9:11 AM
To: Meagan Foster
Subject: FW: Foster Care Rates

Another letter...

From: Tammy Keech [mailto:keechtammy@hotmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, October 17, 2007 3:33 PM
To: Tamara Keech
Subject: FW: Foster Care Rates

Tamara L. Keech
Never take things for granted

Date: Wed, 17 Oct 2007 13:49:39 -0800
From: ldsblueyes@gmail.com
To: keechtammy@hotmail.com
Subject: Foster Care Rates

Thanks for including me.

I have two toddlers, one with special needs: between the WIC and medicaid, the stipend is enough. But, we are also blessed to have family and friends who watch our boys for free (or really cheap). I could see other families struggling with affording good quality babysitters. I define "good quality" as someone who has a drivers license, capable of handling challenging situations responsibly and lovingly; and capable of loving the children (so they can be more understanding and attentive of their needs). Now, these qualities aren't terribly hard to find, BUT affording a wage that competes with their desire to spend Friday or Saturday night with their friends can be pricey... not to mention the last minute pleas for a night out! I was able to find an amazing sitter that was willing to committ to almost every Friday night for three hours, at $10/hour. Now, when you plan on going out to spend money... that can add up to a lot. So, I think the stipend "Matrix" should reconsider upping the approx $29/month for sitters.

Hope that helps!
Becki

--
"My life is like my shoes - to be worn out in services" Spencer W. Kimball

Carlene Hockema

PO Box 232586, Anchorage, AK 99523-2586
Phone: 868-1208 Email: carlene_hockema@yahoo.com

716 W. 4th Avenue Ste 310
Anchorage, AK 99501-2133
October 18, 2007

Dear Representative Gara,

I am a new foster parent and am concerned about the current foster care rates. I have taken in an infant and receive the monthly rate of $664.95.

My main concern comes primarily from the awakening I received when trying to find adequate daycare for my foster child. I am one of the lucky ones; I was able to find a wonderful childcare provider whose monthly rate has me paying roughly $75.00out of the monthly rate I receive for caring for the child to make up the difference between what the care provider charges and what the Office of Children's Services (OCS) pays for daycare each month.

OCS pays $550 per month and the rates for a few of the daycares were $700 and $925 per month. As I said, I am one of the lucky ones because the care provider I was able to find is a wonderful person and I am comfortable leaving my foster child with her. I would have been less comfortable leaving him with one of the other providers; higher rates do not indicate better care.

My household expenses in setting up for taking in a child far exceeded the first month's rate. I have also incurred an increase in my utilities and automobile expenses. While my child is receiving the majority of his formula through WIC the food percentage allowed on the foster care rates offsets some of these expenses. I budget for the appropriate developmental toys and books which are not inexpensive, even if they are second hand. I assure he receives all of available and appropriate early interventions he needs in order to overcome notable deficits.

Many, if not all, of the children in foster care have multiple special needs that require foster parents to provide more than basic care and supplies. If you want quality people to care for some of the older children in the system I believe it is necessary to increase the rates to take care of the personal and developmental needs of all the children.

Thank you,

Carlene L. Hockema

Meagan Foster

From: Tamara Keech [TKeech@nwresource.org]
Sent: Wednesday, October 24, 2007 7:58 AM
To: Meagan Foster
Subject: FW: Bonnie

Megan here is some thoughts from another foster parent.

From: Tammy Keech [mailto:keechtammy@hotmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, October 23, 2007 8:32 PM
To: Tamara Keech
Subject: FW: Bonnie

Tamara L. Keech
Never take things for granted

Date: Wed, 17 Oct 2007 15:39:57 -0800
From: Starblue@gci.net
Subject: RE: Bonnie
To: keechtammy@hotmail.com

Hey Tammy I am not sure if I qualify for writing something since my pay is so different from regular pay. I know getting the regular pay that it does not cover caring for a baby at all!!! Even with the emergency pay that I receive formula and diapers add up fast! And my kids usually come in a diaper and I have to buy clothes right away to put on them. Plus now gas if so high running kids back and forth to school adds up real fast. Not to mention visits two to three times a week. I can put 40 miles plus on for each visit when I take them come home and go back to get them again. And I do not have them long enough most of the time to put the babies on WIC to help get formula, so I go buy what they need. The one I have right now is on the expensive one at $26.98 a can. The doctor will not authorize WIC for him as he did not put him on that formula, but by the time I find the doctor who will he will be gone.

Anyway that is my 2 cents about the pay. I have been fostering here in Alaska since 1988 and only seen a small, I mean very small increase in all these years. It is time if they want to even have foster parents to raise the pay to cover the care. Right now to care for a baby 24 hours foster parents get $.89 an hour. And with babies you are up lots during the night. And then to buy formula at $15.00 a can and diapers, clothes and gas it is not any pay at all. Yes we do this as volunteers but now day's people can not afford to take care of their own family and take on others without help.

I would love to see some of the State people or Governor try to care for a child on $19.07 or $21.45 a day.

Bonnie Large

Starblue@gci.net

Windows Live Hotmail and Microsoft Office Outlook – together at last. Get it now!

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

REPRESENTATIVE LES GARA

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 17, 2008

TO: Rep. Peggy Wilson, Chair
House Health, Education, and Social Services Committee

FROM: Rep. Les Gara

RE: Testifiers on HB 358

We anticipate the following people testifying on HB 358.

- Theresa Tanoury (By request) Teleconference
- Amanda Metivier (By request) Teleconference
- Barry Levit Foster Care Parent, Homer Legislative Information Office
- Representative from Office of Children's Services, Teleconference
- Possible foster care youths, alumni, and parents

January-May: State Capitol • Juneau, AK 99801-1182 • (907) 465-2647 • Fax (907) 465-3518
June-December: 716 W. 4th Avenue • Anchorage, AK 99501• (907) 269-0106• Fax (907) 269-0109
Representative_Les_Gara@legis.state.ak.us

Meagan Foster

From: Tamara Keech [TKeech@nwresource.org]
Sent: Monday, October 22, 2007 9:11 AM
To: Meagan Foster
Subject: FW: Foster Care Rates

Here is a letter from one of our foster parents.

From: Tammy Keech [mailto:keechtammy@hotmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, October 17, 2007 3:32 PM
To: Tamara Keech
Subject: FW: Foster Care Rates

Tamara L. Keech
Never take things for granted

Date: Wed, 17 Oct 2007 14:50:45 -0700
From: saverlifes@yahoo.com
Subject: Foster Care Rates
To: keechtammy@hotmail.com

Sir,

I am writing in regards to the foster care rates. I am a foster parent and have been for almost five years. I have to say that the foster care payment for infants is reasonable. Yet as the children get older their issues increase and require more time, energy and money. Yet that is when the stipend goes down. Children would often benefit from being in a sport or gymnastics of some kind to work out, yet it is often not done because of money issues. As is, the rate takes care of food, housing (laundry, heating the house, etc), some toys and some clothes. Yet I don't think it has been considered that most people in foster care need bigger homes, bigger vehicles and insurance to cover the bigger vehicle, and most importantly child care so that the foster parents can go out for an evening. It costs quite a bit for someone to care for a bigger family especially kids with special needs. A babysitter would cost at least two or three days worth of the current rate, just for one evening. I will be so bold as to say that a lot of foster parents get burned out after just a few years because they do not get adequate time to re-energize away from the children.

Thank you for considering what I have said. I do appreciate the fact that the issue is being addressed. We as foster parents aren't doing this for the money, but we would like to be given rates that would help us deal with the costs of having larger families.

Thank you again for your time and consideration,
Sara C.
foster parent

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