

The Foster Care System & Higher Education

Amy M. Salazar, MSW, Ph.D. & Cheyanne Boyer
WSU Vancouver Department of Human Development
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Today we will talk about...

1. Overview of youth aging out of foster care
2. Overview of foster youth and higher education
3. Federal legislation for foster youth and higher education
4. Developing and testing interventions to help foster youth succeed in higher education
5. Ways you can get involved

Poll Question #1

How much would you say you know about the foster care system?

1. Nothing at all
2. A little
3. A moderate amount
4. A lot

Poll Question #2

What kind of experience do you have with the foster care system? (if you have more than one, just pick the one that has impacted you the most).

1. I am or have been a foster parent
2. I am or have been in foster care
3. I work or have worked for the child welfare system or a non-profit that serves kids in care
4. I have a friend or family member who has had foster care system involvement, so I have learned about it from them
5. None of the above

Overview of Youth Transitioning from Foster Care to Adulthood

- At any given time, there are over 400,000 children in the foster care system
- Over the last few years, this number has been on the rise
- About 100,000 of the children in foster care are aged 14-20
- About half of states now have extended foster care to 21
- The older youth are in foster care, the less likely they will be adopted

Background: Youth Transitioning from Foster Care to Adulthood

Youth transitioning from foster care to adulthood experience many well-documented challenges that persist throughout adulthood, including:

- Public assistance use
- Substance abuse
- Criminal justice system involvement
- Risky sexual behavior and early parenting
- Homelessness

- Mental Health
- Physical Health
- Employment
- Educational attainment
- Income

(Carpenter et al, 2001; Courtney et al, 2007; Davis, 2006; McMillen et al, 2005; Pecora et al, 2003; Salazar et al, 2013)

Postsecondary Access and Completion for Foster Youth

	Foster Youth	General Pop.	Sources
Some college by age 25-26	20-40%	60-72%	Courtney et al, 2011; Wolanin, 2005
Postsecondary degree completion (2- or 4-year) by age 26	8.2%	36.3%	Courtney et al, 2011
Bachelors degree graduation	2-9%	29%	Courtney et al, 2011; Pecora, et al., 2006; Pecora, et al., 2005; US Census Bureau, nd

Poll Question #3

What do you think are some of the challenges that make it hard for youth who have been in foster care to access and succeed in higher education?

- Please type your brief response into the chat box

Common Obstacles to College Success For Youth Coming from Foster Care

- Lack of caring, knowledgeable, supportive adults
- Lack of access to sufficient financial resources
- Lack of postsecondary preparedness
- Maltreatment/trauma history, mental health challenges
- Lack of comprehensive, long-term support that can meet diverse needs

College Aspirations

- Despite the many challenges youth transitioning from foster care to adulthood face, **the majority of these youth report wanting, and expecting, to go to college** (Courtney et al, 2004; McMillen et al, 2003).
- Postsecondary completion helps **close gaps in employment and income** between foster youth and their peers, and **reduces public assistance use** (Okpych & Courtney, 2014; Salazar, 2013)

Policies, Laws, Resources

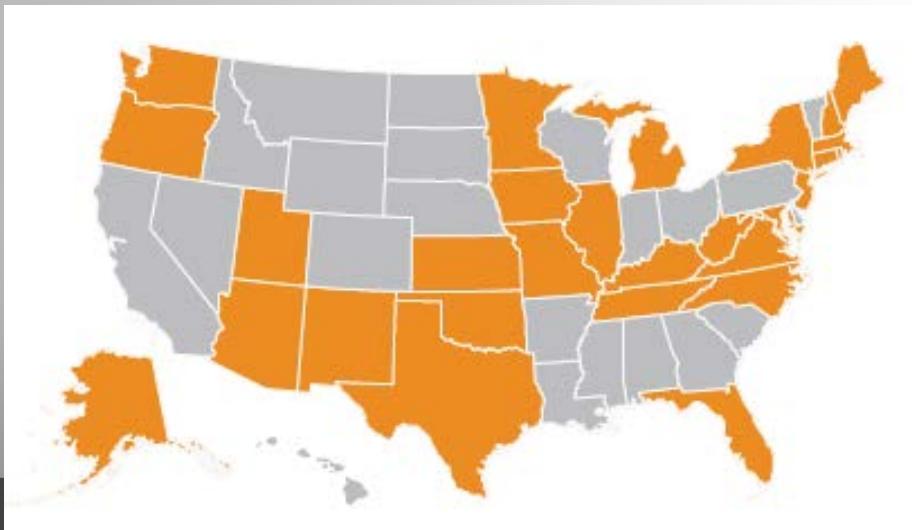
- The **1999 Foster Care Independence Act** established the **John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program**
 - provides federal funding to states to provide services to help prepare youth for the transition from foster care to adulthood
 - Support with education, employment, financial management, housing, emotional support, connections to caring adults, etc.
 - Some common services: case management, life skill building classes and workshops (e.g., cooking, resume building, Ready to Rent, applying for college), emergency funds, mentoring, educational advocacy

Policies, Laws, Resources

- In 2002, the **Educational and Training Vouchers Program (ETV)** for Youths Aging out of Foster Care was added to the Chafee Independence Program
 - Provides resources specifically to meet the education and training needs of youth aging out of foster care
 - Vouchers of up to \$5,000 per year per youth for postsecondary education and training

Policies, Laws, Resources

- State tuition waiver programs
 - Currently, 20 states have tuition waivers for former foster youth (mostly for state colleges/universities)
 - Eight additional states have foster youth-focused scholarship or grant programs



Orange states have state-level tuition assistance programs for youth from foster care

(copied from Parker, E. & Sarubbi, M. (2017). "Tuition Assistance Programs for Foster Youth Pursuing Postsecondary Education". Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States. <http://www.ecs.org/ec-content/uploads/Tuition-Assistance-Programs-for-Foster-Youth-in-Postsecondary-Education.pdf>)

Washington Passport to College Promise Program



- Created by the state of Washington to support youth in foster care to access and succeed in college
- It offers 3 main kinds of supports:
 - 1) student scholarships
 - 2) campus incentive funding to postsecondary institutions that designate campus support staff and take other steps to recruit and retain former foster youth
 - 3) a partnership with the College Success Foundation to provide additional student intervention and retention services to foster youth and training and technical assistance to campus staff
- In 2014-15 academic year, 376 students across the state were served
- Most college campuses in Washington have a Passport program

My recommendations to the US Congressional and Senate Caucuses on Foster Youth

Youth Support

1. Consistent caring adults
 2. Sufficient financial resources
 3. Postsecondary preparedness
 4. Flexible supports for diverse needs
 5. Youth knowledge of eligibility
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Program Support

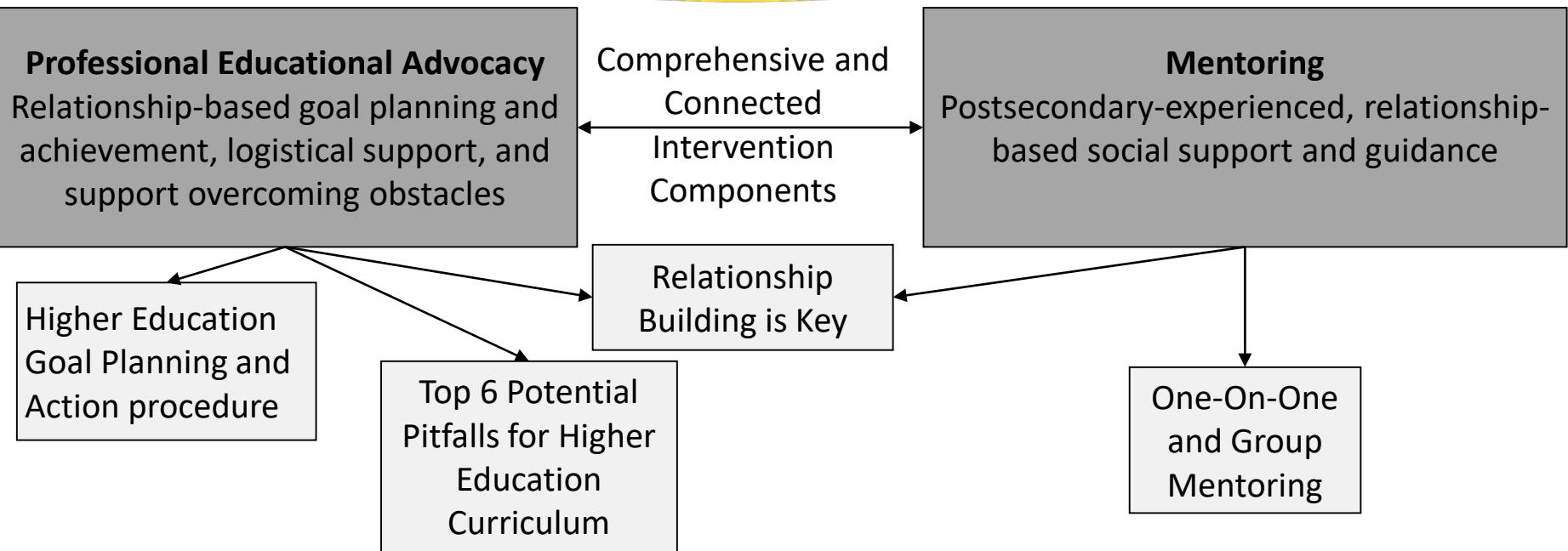
1. Support systems working together
2. Data systems to track progress
3. Evaluation resources

Developing and Testing Programs to Help Foster Youth Succeed in Higher Ed.

- Many postsecondary support programs and services exist, but
 - Very limited evidence of effectiveness
 - We are still not achieving an acceptable success rate
 - ***Need for Evidence-Based Practices

FOSTERING Higher EDUCATION

Intervention Overview





FOSTERING Higher EDUCATION

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Ways You Can Get Involved

- Be supportive of foster youth you may come across in your everyday life
- Look into being a CASA
- Have you considered being a foster parent?
- Be a mentor
- Donate to or volunteer at your local independent living program

Poll Question #4

What are some ways YOU might want to get involved in supporting youth with foster care experience who want to pursue higher education?

- Please type your brief response into the chat box

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Thank you!

- My email: Amy.salazar@wsu.edu