Improving Educational Opportunities and Outcomes for Youth in Care

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Why Focus on Education?

**Education Realities for Youth in Foster Care**

- 83% of children in foster care are held back in school by 3rd grade
- 46% do not complete high school
- 75% are working below grade level
- Children in foster care are more likely to attend a low-achieving school than other children
- 35% of foster youth have experienced four or more school changes
Arizona’s Youth

All children in foster care:
- Almost 10,000 children in care
- Over 60% are school-age
- 27% have been in care for more than 2 years
- Average number of out of home placements = 3
Arizona’s Older Youth

Arizona’s Young Adult Program:

- Youth 16 years and older with a goal of independent living
- Average time in care = 4 years
  - 62% have been in care more than 2 years
- Average number of placements = 8
  - 50% have had 5 or more placements
Goals

• The Same Opportunities Should Be Offered to Youth in Foster Care that are Offered to Youth Outside of Foster Care

• Provide Uninterrupted Educational Access and Stability for Youth in Foster Care
What Can We Do to Ensure These Goals are Met?

- Educate the People Involved in a Youth’s Life
- Ensure School Placement Stability
- Improve Access to Records and Timely School Enrollment
- Ensure Access to Special Education Services for Youth in Foster Care, Where Appropriate
- Continue Foster Care Services Past Age 18
What Are The First Steps?

• Raise Awareness

• Engage and Empower Key Partners

• Develop Tools and Resources

• Listen to and Involve Youth
Arizona Education Summit Team

• Key Founding Members/Connectors and Leaders:
  – Casey Family Programs
  – Governor’s Office
  – Department of Economic Security, Division of Children, Youth and Families
  – Department of Education
  – Attorney General’s Office
Arizona Education Summit Team

• 2004 Education Summit Plan:
  - Raise awareness of key decision-makers including, the State Board of Education; Governor’s Children’s Cabinet; and Juvenile Court Judges
  - Develop and enhance education advocacy and training materials
  - Address policy barriers to effective surrogate parent assignments
  - Study promising practices from other states
  - Expand and sustain the AZ Education Summit Team
Arizona Education Summit Team

• Outcome – RESOURCES!
  – For Educators
  – For Judges
  – For Case Workers
  – For Youth
  – For Caregivers
Resources for Educators

– **What Arizona Schools Need to Know About Children in Care: A Guide for Teachers, Administrators, Foster Parents, and Case Managers**
  - [http://www.ade.state.az.us/schooleffectiveness/specialpops/homeless/fostercarebooklet.pdf](http://www.ade.state.az.us/schooleffectiveness/specialpops/homeless/fostercarebooklet.pdf)

– On-Line Course for Teachers based on Casey Family Programs *Endless Dreams*
  - [www.asset.asu.edu](http://www.asset.asu.edu)
Resources for Judges

• “Judge-Driven” Education Checklist

Questions Regarding:

– General Education
– Tracking Education Information
– Changes in Placement and/or School
– Health Factors
– Extracurricular Activities & Talents
– Transition Plan for Independent Living
– Questions for the Youth
Resources for Case Workers

• Specific Policies, Guidelines and Tools Focused on Educational Needs of Youth in Care
  • Revised Policy to reflect changes in the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), McKinney-Vento Law, and State law
  • Adding “Educational Status” Plan to case management system

• Timely Access to School Records:
  • Creation of a separate Order to Release Educational Records, now included within all Dependency petitions
  • Requires schools to expedite the transfer and delivery of school records of youth in care
Resources for Caregivers

• Education Advocacy Manual
    • How to Be a Good Advocate
    • Basic Education Rights
    • Special Education, Including Help for Young Children
    • School Discipline
    • Resources for Young Adults
    • Making Connections & Finding Supports

• New State Law and CPS Policy allows foster parents to be surrogate parents for children with special education needs when a birth parent is unable or unavailable to serve
Resources for Youth

• Arizona Legislature Passed 2006 Bill that Created:
  – CPS Educational Case Management Unit: two staff responsible to assist youth in the State Independent Living Program to accomplish four objectives:
    • Graduate from high school
    • Pass the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) test
    • Apply for postsecondary financial assistance
    • Apply for postsecondary education
  – Education Training Vouchers
    • Up to $5,000 per year to assist with expenses related to post-secondary education and training (supplements Federal funding)
    • ETV benefits may extend to the youth’s 23rd birthday
Resources for Youth

• Now allow youth who have left foster care after their 18th birthday to re-enter care anytime until their 21st birthday

• Enhanced Employment Supports for Youth
  – Vocational Rehabilitation
  – Shared Youth Vision Team

• Transitional Supports
  – Transitional Independent Living Program
  – Young Adult Transitional Insurance
Youth Voice

- Mentoring Programs
- Foster Youth and Alumni Surveys
- Foster Youth Advisory Board
- Annual Conference Led by Foster Youth
What’s Next

July 2007 Education Summit

Team Convening:

• Local Action Planning

• Engage Schools and Community Partners

• Implement Small Tests of Change

• Spread Progress and Localize Results
Resource Citations

- Chapin Hall Center for Children Reports: http://www.chapinhall.org/
- Arizona State Legislature: http://www.azleg.gov/
When I approach a child, he inspires in me two sentiments; tenderness for what he is, and respect for what he may become.

- Louis Pasteur
Thank You!

For more information, please contact:

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