

# Blueprint for Change

## Education Success for Children in Foster Care

### GOALS AND BENCHMARKS

#### GOAL 1 • Youth Are Entitled to Remain in Their Same School When Feasible

*Benchmarks that show progress toward this goal:*

- 1-A** Youth's foster care placement decisions take school stability into account, and school stability is a priority whenever possible and in the child's best interests.
- 1-B** Youth have sufficient foster home and permanent living options available in their home communities to reduce the need for school moves.
- 1-C** When in their best interests, youth have a legal right to remain in the same school (school of origin) even when they move outside the school district, and schools that retain children are not financially penalized.
- 1-D** Youth are entitled to necessary transportation to their school of origin, with responsibilities clearly designated for transportation costs.
- 1-E** Youth have necessary support and information to make school of origin decisions; youth, birth parents, caseworkers, foster parents, courts, attorneys, schools, and educators are trained about legal entitlements and appeal and dispute procedures.
- 1-F** Youth with disabilities continue in an appropriate education setting, regardless of changes in foster care placements, and transportation is provided in accordance with the youth's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

#### GOAL 2 • Youth Are Guaranteed Seamless Transitions Between Schools and School Districts When School Moves Occur

*Benchmarks that show progress toward this goal:*

- 2-A** Youth have a right to be enrolled immediately in a new school and to begin classes promptly.
- 2-B** Youth can be enrolled in school by any person who has care or control of the child (i.e., caseworker or foster parent).
- 2-C** Youth enrollment and delivery of appropriate services are not delayed due to school or record requirements (i.e., immunization records, birth certificates, school uniforms); designated child welfare, education, and court staff facilitate and coordinate transitions and receive training on special procedures.
- 2-D** Youth education records are comprehensive and accurate, and promptly follow youth to any new school or placement; records are kept private and shared only with necessary individuals working with the youth.
- 2-E** Youth who arrive in a new school during the school term are allowed to participate in all academic and extracurricular programs even if normal timelines have run or programs are full.
- 2-F** Youth receive credit and partial credit for coursework completed at the prior school.
- 2-G** Youth have the ability to receive a high school diploma even when they have attended multiple schools with varying graduation requirements.

- 2-H** Eligible youth with disabilities receive the protections outlined in federal and state law, including timelines for evaluations, implementation of an IEP or an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP), and placement in the least restrictive environment, even when they change school districts.

#### GOAL 3 • Young Children Enter School Ready to Learn

*Benchmarks that show progress toward this goal:*

- 3-A** Young children have all the appropriate health interventions necessary, including enrollment in the Medical Assistance Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) Program, and receive comprehensive evaluations and treatment.
- 3-B** Young children are given special prioritization and treatment in early childhood programs (including Head Start, Early Headstart, and pre-school programs).
- 3-C** Young children receive developmentally appropriate counseling and supports in their early childhood programs with sensitivity to their abuse and neglect experiences.
- 3-D** Young children have caretakers who have been provided information on the children's medical and developmental needs, and who have received training and support to be effective advocates.
- 3-E** Children under age three with developmental delays, or a high probability of developing such delays, are identified as early as possible, promptly referred for evaluation for early intervention services, and promptly evaluated and served.
- 3-F** Young children at high risk of developmental delays are screened appropriately and qualify for early intervention services whenever possible.
- 3-G** Children under age three who have been involved in a substantiated case of child abuse and neglect, who have been identified as affected by substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal drug exposure, or who have experienced a substantiated case of trauma due to exposure to family violence are referred to the early intervention system for screening.
- 3-H** Children with disabilities ages three to school age are referred and evaluated, and receive appropriate preschool early intervention programs.

#### GOAL 4 • Youth Have the Opportunity and Support to Fully Participate in All Aspects of the School Experience

*Benchmarks that show progress toward this goal:*

- 4-A** Youth are entitled and encouraged to participate in all aspects of the school experience, including academic programs, extracurricular activities, and social events, and are not excluded because of being in out-of-home care.
- 4-B** Youth receive the additional supports necessary to be included in all aspects of the school experience.
- 4-C** Youth's records relating to his or her education and needs are made available to necessary individuals working with the youth, while respecting the youth's privacy.

Goal 4 continued...

- 4-D** Youth's appointments and court appearances are scheduled to minimize their impact on the child's education, and children are not penalized for school time or work missed because of court or child welfare case-related activities.
- 4-E** Youth are not inappropriately placed in nonpublic schools or other alternative school settings, including schools for students with disabilities.
- 4-F** Youth receive supports to improve performance on statewide achievement tests and other measures of academic success (such as attendance and graduation).
- 4-G** Youth are surrounded by trained professionals that have the knowledge and skills to work with children who have experienced abuse and neglect; school curricula and programs utilize the research on trauma-informed care.
- 4-H** Youth with disabilities are located, evaluated, and identified as eligible for special services.
- 4-I** Youth with disabilities receive the special help they need to learn content appropriate to their grade level or, when that is not possible, the content that is appropriate to their learning level.
- 4-J** Youth with disabilities receive their education in regular classrooms (with the necessary supports and accommodations) whenever possible.

## GOAL 5 • Youth Have Supports to Prevent School Dropout, Truancy, and Disciplinary Actions

*Benchmarks that show progress toward this goal:*

- 5-A** Youth are not disproportionately subjected to school discipline or school exclusion, and are not placed in alternative schools for disruptive students as a means to address truancy or as a disciplinary measure.
- 5-B** Youth have access to school counselors and other school staff familiar with the needs of children who have experienced abuse and neglect, and the staff has mastered effective remediation strategies.
- 5-C** Youth have advocates at school disciplinary and other proceedings who are trained on procedures related to dropout, truancy, and discipline.
- 5-D** Youth at risk of truancy or dropping out have access to programs and supports designed to engage them in school.
- 5-E** Youth who have dropped out of school have access to programs and supports designed to reintegrate them into a school or a General Educational Development (GED) program.
- 5-F** Youth with disabilities have behavior intervention plans in place to minimize inappropriate school behaviors and to reduce the need for disciplinary action or referral to the police.
- 5-G** Youth with disabilities receive the procedural protections outlined in federal law so that they are not punished for behavior that is a symptom of their disability.

## GOAL 6 • Youth Are Involved and Engaged in All Aspects of Their Education and Educational Planning and Are Empowered to Be Advocates for Their Education Needs and Pursuits

*Benchmarks that show progress toward this goal:*

- 6-A** Youth are routinely asked about their educational preferences and needs, including their view on whether to change schools when their living situation changes.
- 6-B** Youth receive training about their educational rights commensurate to their age and developmental abilities.

- 6-C** Youth are given the opportunity to participate in court proceedings, and their engagement is supported with transportation and accommodations to decrease the impact on school attendance and schoolwork; attorneys, guardians ad litem, CASAs and judges are trained on involving youth in court, and encourage youth participation.
- 6-D** Youth participate in school and child welfare meetings and planning about their education and their future.
- 6-E** Youth are surrounded by school and child welfare professionals with appropriate training and strategies to engage youth in education planning.
- 6-F** Youth with disabilities actively participate in the special education process, especially in transition planning for post-school education and employment, and are provided with the supports necessary to effectively participate.

## GOAL 7 • Each Youth Has An Adult Who Is Invested in His or Her Education During and After His or Her Time in Out-of-Home Care

*Benchmarks that show progress toward this goal:*

- 7-A** Youth are entitled to have a knowledgeable and trained education advocate who reinforces the value of the youth's investment in education and helps the youth plan for post-school training, employment, or college; efforts must be made to recruit appropriate individuals (i.e., foster parents, birth parents, child welfare caseworkers, teachers, and guidance counselors).
- 7-B** Youth exiting care (because of age or because their permanency objectives have been reached) have significant connections to at least one adult to help the youth continue education pursuits.
- 7-C** Youth have an education decision maker at all times during a child welfare case, who is trained in the legal requirements relating to education decisions for children with and without disabilities.
- 7-D** Youth with disabilities who are eligible for the appointment of a surrogate parent have access to a pool of qualified, independent, and well-trained individuals who can serve in that role, and are assigned a surrogate in a timely manner, but no later than 30 days after a determination that a surrogate is needed.

## GOAL 8 • Youth Have Supports to Enter into, and Complete, Postsecondary Education

*Benchmarks that show progress toward this goal:*

- 8-A** Youth are exposed to postsecondary education opportunities, and receive academic support to achieve their future education goals.
- 8-B** Youth in care and youth who have exited care (because of age or because their permanency objectives have been reached) have financial support or tuition fee waivers to help them afford postsecondary education.
- 8-C** Youth have clear information and concrete help with obtaining and completing admission and financial aid documents.
- 8-D** Youth have access to housing during postsecondary school vacations or other times when school housing is unavailable.
- 8-E** Youth over 18 can remain in care and under the courts' jurisdiction to receive support and protection while pursuing postsecondary education.
- 8-F** Youth have access to academic, social, and emotional supports during, and through completion of, their postsecondary education.
- 8-G** Youth with disabilities pursuing higher education goals receive the supports to which they are entitled to under federal and state laws.