A LOOK AT CHILD WELFARE FROM A HOMELESS EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

NCHE

National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE

National Center for Homeless Education

Supporting the Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

A Look at Child Welfare from a Homeless Education Perspective

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A Look at Child Welfare from a Homeless Education Perspective

More and more frequently, local homeless education liaisons are asked to determine whether students involved with the child welfare system are eligible for services under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and, if so, how to serve them appropriately. Although the confusion of navigating the child welfare system can deter local liaisons from their task, the McKinney-Vento Act requires that they collaborate with community agencies; and increasingly, child welfare personnel are held accountable to help children and youth achieve successful educational outcomes. In addition, the Basic Center and Transitional Living programs (authorized under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program) must coordinate with local liaisons.

In view of the mandates (and the fact that it makes good sense) for these groups to work with each other, the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) developed this examination of the child welfare system in hopes that a better understanding would lead educators and child welfare workers to establish better working relationships, simplify the process of working together, and ultimately provide more appropriate services for children and youth.

Overview of the Child Welfare System

"The child welfare system is a group of services designed to promote the well-being of children by ensuring safety, achieving permanency, and strengthening families to successfully care for their children."[1] Since most public child welfare agencies collaborate and contract with a myriad of public, private, and nonprofit organizations to serve children and families, this typically is a very complex system with processes and procedures that vary widely by state and community.

The public child welfare system includes child protection, foster care, family strengthening/support, adoption, and other services. It is responsible for:

- Investigating community-initiated reports of abuse and neglect and removing children from harmful living situations.

- Providing services to address the causes of abuse and neglect so that children separated from their families because of safety issues can return home.

- Arranging for and ensuring adequate care of children until they can be returned safely to their homes.

- Securing permanent placements for children who cannot return safely to their families.

In 2005, over three million allegations of child abuse and neglect involving six million children were made to Child Protective Service (CPS) agencies in the United States.[2] Although anyone can report suspected child neglect or abuse, all states have designated mandatory reporters, such as school and law enforcement personnel, who are required by law to report their suspicions. In addition, many states require everyone who suspects abuse or neglect to file a report. (For more information on laws about reporting child abuse or neglect in your state, go to http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/state/reporting.cfm.)

Upon receiving a report, a Child Protective Services (CPS) worker determines whether, according to that state's guidelines, the report contains sufficient information to warrant an investigation. If so, an investigation is conducted to determine if the report can be substantiated and whether the risk is so great that the child must be

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1 Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2006, p. 1

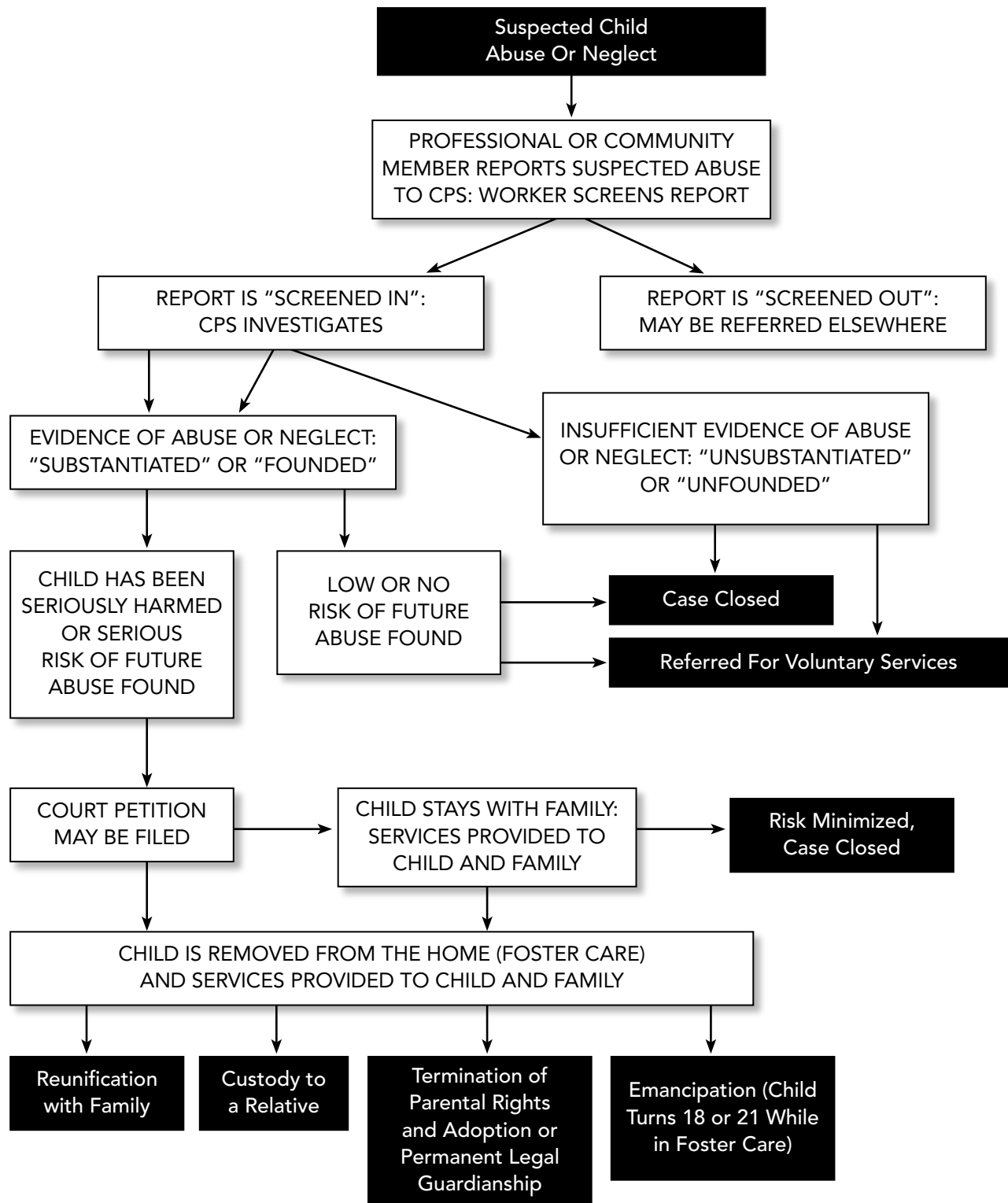2 Administration for Children and Families, 2005, para. 2

removed from the situation immediately or if services can be provided to the family to minimize risk to the child (see diagram on page 5.) If it is decided that a child must be removed, the child welfare agency files a petition with the court, which then initiates a series of judicial hearings. (For more information on how child abuse and neglect referrals are prioritized, see Action for Child Protection's website at *http://www.actionchildprotection.org/archive/article0404.htm*.)

A child who has been removed from home is considered to be in the legal custody of the child welfare agency, but physical custody (placement) can be with relatives, with a foster family (relative or non-relative), or in a group home setting. Upon removal of the child, caseworkers develop a permanency plan (usually reunification with the birth parents) based on the family's circumstance and the child's needs. At each subsequent court hearing, discussions center on the appropriateness of the child's placement and the services provided to the child and the family in order to enable them to meet future goals. Federal law requires that a permanency planning hearing be held within 12 months (some states require this sooner) or when it is determined that reunification is no longer the goal.[3] (For a flowchart showing a child's progression through the child welfare system, see *A Child's Journey through the Child Welfare System* at *http://pewfostercare.org/research/docs/journey.pdf*.)

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3 *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004. 42 U.S.C. 675 (1)(5)(C).*

The Child Welfare System

Suspected Child Abuse Or Neglect

PROFESSIONAL OR COMMUNITY MEMBER REPORTS SUSPECTED ABUSE TO CPS: WORKER SCREENS REPORT

REPORT IS "SCREENED IN": CPS INVESTIGATES

REPORT IS "SCREENED OUT": MAY BE REFERRED ELSEWHERE

EVIDENCE OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT: "SUBSTANTIATED" OR "FOUNDED"

INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT: "UNSUBSTANTIATED" OR "UNFOUNDED"

CHILD HAS BEEN SERIOUSLY HARMED OR SERIOUS RISK OF FUTURE ABUSE FOUND

LOW OR NO RISK OF FUTURE ABUSE FOUND

Case Closed

Referred For Voluntary Services

COURT PETITION MAY BE FILED

CHILD STAYS WITH FAMILY: SERVICES PROVIDED TO CHILD AND FAMILY

Risk Minimized, Case Closed

CHILD IS REMOVED FROM THE HOME (FOSTER CARE) AND SERVICES PROVIDED TO CHILD AND FAMILY

Reunification with Family

Custody to a Relative

Termination of Parental Rights and Adoption or Permanent Legal Guardianship

Emancipation (Child Turns 18 or 21 While in Foster Care)

Note: From *Child Abuse and Neglect*, by Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2006. Reprinted with permission. Retrieved May 9, 2007, from *http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/can_info_packet.pdf*.

Intersection of Child Welfare and Homelessness

> *"...there was a clear link between families at risk of entering the child welfare system and homelessness"*[4]

Similar to those living in homeless situations, families involved with the child welfare system are disproportionately poor.[5] Because of their experiences with poverty, housing and family disruption, and high mobility, many children involved in the child welfare system also face the same educational challenges as those living in homeless situations.[6] It is common for youth in both groups to be separated from family members and friends and forced to live in unfamiliar environments with few of their own possessions.

Frequent bouts and longer periods of homelessness are related to an increase in child welfare involvement.[7] One study of homeless and low-income mothers reported that mothers with at least one homeless episode had the greatest rate of child welfare involvement (37%), and among all families involved with child welfare services, the rate of placement in foster care was highest (62%) for the children of parents with at least one episode of homelessness.[8]

According to Ruth White, Director of Housing and Community Development for Catholic Charities USA, roughly 30% of children in foster care were separated from their parents because the family did not have access to affordable housing.[9] A family's homelessness is often considered to be neglectful and therefore cause for removing a child from his/her family. Although few states specifically mention homelessness in their definition of neglect, most state laws concerning abuse and neglect include not providing adequate shelter for children. (You can find a summary of your state's laws at *http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/ laws_policies/statutes/defineall.pdf*.)

Despite serving many of the same children, child welfare and school systems have had little interaction historically. Much has been written on the difficulties of communicating with and navigating the different systems, each with its own policies and procedures (See NCHE's *Collaborations of Schools and Social Service Agencies* at *http://www. serve.org/nche/ibt/sc_collab.php*); however, the high rate of crossover between groups highlights the need for open and frank dialogue between the two systems. The McKinney-Vento Act goes a step further by requiring local homeless education liaisons to collaborate with others who serve highly mobile children and youth. When school and child welfare personnel understand how each other's system works, they can create and implement overarching policies, thereby increasing the efficiency of all the agencies involved. (For examples of interagency agreements, go to *http://www.abanet.org/ child/rclji/education/#3*). In this way, the education of homeless and foster children becomes the shared focus of educators and child welfare workers who are united in their endeavor to provide more effective and comprehensive services.

Awaiting Foster Care Placement

On September 30, 2005, there were approximately 514,000 children and teens

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4 Williams, 2006

5 Vondra,1993

6 For a summary of the risk factors facing children in foster care, see McDonald, Allen, Westerfelt,& Piliavin, 1996

7 Park, Metraux, Broadbar, & Culhane,, 2004; Cowal, Shinn, Weitzman, Stojanovic, & Labay, 2002

8 Culhane, Webb, Grim, Metraux, & Culhane, 2003, p. 79

9 National Association of Homebuilders, 2005, para. 2

in the U.S. child welfare system, but over 800,000 spent some time in care during that year.[10] According to the McKinney-Vento Act, children and youth "awaiting foster care placement" are eligible to receive services. States and districts have such wide-ranging interpretations of the term "awaiting foster care placement" that each local liaison must work with other agencies to develop policies that include children and youth in the child welfare system who are eligible to be served under the Act. For example, Delaware's state policy mandates that all children in foster care are eligible to receive McKinney-Vento services. (For other foster care/education state legislation, see the American Bar Association's website: *http://www.abanet.org/child/rclji/education/ fostercareeducation_legislation_draft1.doc* .)

Foster Care Mobility Issues

> *"Perhaps the single most important thing that each of us can do to improve the educational outcomes for foster children is to ensure that their school placement remains stable."[11]*

Although many factors contribute to poor educational outcomes for children and youth in foster care, educational success often hinges on school stability. Even the 50% of children or youth who are in child welfare custody for less than 12 months[12] will change residences at least twice in one year – once when they are removed from their families and once when they are returned. Young people stay in foster care an average of three years with an average

of three foster families,[13] but some children remain in care much longer. One study found that more than 30% of youth in foster care had eight or more placements with foster families or group homes and 65% experienced seven or more school changes from elementary through high school.[14] It is not uncommon to hear of children who have been in 20 or 30 different homes.[15] Frequent moves can be profoundly unsettling for children, and many have been separated not only from their parents, but also from their siblings. Frequently, those residence changes are accompanied by a school transfer that can be just as damaging to the child as a change in the home setting.

Most researchers agree that school transfers require a substantial adjustment for any child. But foster children (whose transfers typically coincide with additional adjustments to a new home, foster family, and peers) are particularly vulnerable to adverse educational effects due to their experiences with residential instability coupled with family separation/difficulties. Children and youth in care are more likely than their peers to test lower,[16] repeat grades and drop out,[17] and be in special education.[18] They also have higher absenteeism, tardiness, and truancy.[19] With all this in mind, school stability becomes even more critical both from a personal and academic standpoint.

A large Chapin Hall study found that over two-thirds of the students who entered care during one of the last three academic years experienced a change of schools

10 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007, p. 1

11 Heybach & Winter, 1999, p. 3

12 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006, p. 4

13 Pew Charitable Trust, 2004, p. 2

14 Pecora, Kessler, Williams, O'Brien, Downs, English, 2005, p. 35

15 Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2006, p.1

16 Emmerson & Lovitt, 2003.

17 Altshuler; Smithgall, Gladden, Howard, Goerge, & Courtney; Yu, Day, & Williams, 2002.

18 Zetlin, 2006, p. 162

19 Parrish, Graczewski, Stewart-Teitelbaum, & Van Dyke, 2002

during that year, and more than one in ten students were retained in the same grade the year after they entered care.[20] Children in care also experience delays between schools (sometimes weeks or more) as well as disruption and even discontinuation of special education services partly due to lack of coordination between school and child welfare personnel.[21] Studies from across the country report delays or refusals to enroll foster children, especially those who require special education or English language services.[22] The problems often stem from lack of transcripts, immunization forms, birth certificates, Special Education and other records.

Information and Records Sharing

It is vitally important for school districts and social service agencies to agree on protocols for sharing information and records; unfortunately, misunderstandings about what information can and cannot be shared are common. In general, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prohibits sharing education records with a third party without parental consent, but there are a number of exceptions. One exception is that records may be released to "school officials ...with legitimate educational interest in the child,"[23] which would include school administrators, local homeless education liaisons, and teachers. Another exception allows release of records to officials of other schools when a student is transferring schools.[24] As such, FERPA should never act as a barrier to having all school staff who work with the child and

have a need to know from obtaining specific information about the child's educational history or programming. A final applicable exception for the release of records without parental consent is when the "release of information is needed to comply with a judicial order."[25] Because the juvenile court is involved with children in out-of-home care, mechanisms exist to obtain such orders from the court.

For youth in the child welfare system, confidentiality stipulations vary according to state law. Those who need more information on serving children in care should contact their state's Office of the Attorney General to clarify what information can be shared and with whom.

Special Populations

Older Youth

Although many families bounce back and forth between bouts of homelessness and involvement with child welfare, the most common connection between the two is when youth exit foster care either by aging out or leaving the system voluntarily. Despite their lack of adequate educational, financial, and emotional stability, they are expected to make a successful transition to living on their own. As the most vulnerable of all high-risk populations, it is not surprising that former out-of-home care youth are significantly overrepresented among the homeless.[26] Of the approximately 20,000 foster youth who age out of the child welfare system each year, up to 25% will have no housing[27] while many others spend significant time couch-surfing (staying temporarily with friends or relatives); both of these situations are considered homeless under the McKinney-

20 Smithgall, Gladden, Howard, Goerge, & Courtney, 2004, p. 46.

21 Smithgall, Gladden, Howard, Goerge, & Courtney, p. 57

22 Conger & Finkelstein, 2003

23 Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g (b)(1)(A) (1974).

24 Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g (b)(1)(B) (1974)

25 Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g (b)(1)(J) (1974)

26 Christian, 2003

27 Folman & Anderson, n.d., p.10

Vento Act.

The transition to adulthood is challenging for every adolescent, but for youth who have spent time in foster care, this challenge is further compounded by the lack of a family safety net for emotional and financial support. As mentioned earlier, many adolescents spend years in the foster care system, experiencing multiple placements and numerous disruptions to their schooling. As a result, foster youth are often disconnected from supportive family and social networks that other youth take for granted. For example, in one study of youth's transitions from foster care to adulthood, fewer than 70% of the respondents reported receiving training in money management, legal skills, parenting, and utilizing community resources[28]; these are skills that typically would be learned in family settings. This may partially explain the fact that one in three receives public assistance within two years of leaving care.

Even though older youth in care say they have high educational aspirations and resent that more is not expected of them, few are encouraged to think about college or even participate in extra-curricular school activities associated with high academic achievement. Instead, despite studies that show low-achieving students are far more likely to pass challenging classes than less demanding ones, these students are more likely to be steered toward vocational education programs.[29]

Many students in care struggle to successfully make the transition to high school and consequently approximately half (some estimates are nearly 70%) drop out at an early age[30], limiting their ability to secure employment and achieve self-sufficiency. This transitional period is a critical point for local liaisons, social workers, and other youth advocates to work closely with the students, encouraging them to remain in school and helping to secure the necessary resources to support their academic success.

Fewer foster youth eventually earn their GED than non-foster dropouts[31], and only about 3% obtain a bachelor's degree within a few years of emancipation.[32] In addition, those who age out of foster care experience higher rates of criminality, drug abuse, and unemployment.[33] These alarming statistics highlight the need for education advocates to listen to the voices of the youth and help these young people receive the academic resources they need to graduate from high school, proceed to college, and transition to adulthood successfully.

For those students in care who persevere through high school, there are resources to help with funding post-secondary education. The Chafee Foster Care Independence Program includes Education and Training Vouchers (ETVs) of up to $5,000 per year for youth who have aged out of foster care.[34] These ETVs can be used at universities, community colleges, and even vocational schools. (To learn more about this program and other federal and state programs aimed at youths transitioning out of foster care, download "State Policies to Help Youth Transition Out of Foster Care" at *http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0701YOUTH.PDF*.)

Special Education

28 Courtney, Dworsky, Terao, Bost, Cusick, Keller, et al., 2001

29 Barth & Haycock, 2004

30 Smithgall, et al.,2004, p. 2

31 Blome, 1997, p. 47

32 National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, n.d.

33 Christian, 2003, p. 1

34 More information on the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program is available at *http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/programs_fund/state_tribal/jh_chafee.htm*

Up to half of foster children and youth are placed in special education (two to three times the rate of non-foster youth).[35] Much of the confusion surrounding educational issues among those outside the education system involves special education (60% of caseworkers were "not aware of existing laws when referring children to special education"),[36] particularly regarding Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and parental consent/decision-making. This is partially because in addition to the biological or adoptive parent, IDEA defines a parent as a foster parent, a guardian (but not the State), a person acting in the place of a parent, or a surrogate parent. Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs), Guardians ad Litem (GALs), and children's attorneys also may act as a parent if the court gives them the power to act as the child's parent or to make educational decisions for the child.

The school district must appoint a surrogate if no "parent" can be identified, the school cannot locate a parent, the child is a ward of the state, or the student is an unaccompanied homeless youth. But the school cannot appoint a surrogate just because the biological/adoptive parent is uncooperative or will not attend a meeting. For "wards of the state," surrogates may be appointed by a judge. This would apply to students in foster care when a foster parent does not wish to or is unable to serve as the child's special education decision-maker. (For more information, the U.S. Department of Education website *http://idea.ed.gov/ explore/view/p/,root,regs,300,E,300%252E5 19*, contains the IDEA legislation.)

Employees of the school district or State Education Agency or "any agency that is involved in the education or care of the child" (i.e., child welfare agency) are prohibited from serving as surrogates although for unaccompanied youth, any staff member of an emergency shelter, transitional shelter, independent living program, or street outreach program may be appointed as a temporary surrogate parent if the education agency determines the youth needs an educational advocate.[37] This information can be confusing to those within the educational system, but doubly so for those outside it, thus highlighting the need for having clearly defined procedures and roles.

Education Advocacy: Who's Responsible for What?

According to a Vera Institute of Justice study, adults in the lives of foster children often lack a full picture of the children's educational needs. Foster parents tend to be more concerned with the children's behavior than their poor grades. Caseworkers often are unaware of academic issues. School staff usually is not privy to information about a child's foster care background and how that might hinder academic progress and the development of social relationships. For instance, some foster youth choose not to develop relationships because they are ashamed of being in care. Furthermore, children in foster care may be disciplined because of behaviors resulting from their past abuse or neglect, such as being disruptive to seek attention, lying to please others, or skipping school because of school phobias.[38]

Helping children maintain relationships with the important people in their lives, while building new relationships in their foster homes and in schools, is an important aspect of social workers' and caregivers'

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35 Stotland, 2007, p. 23

36 Ibid

37 For more information on Special Education for students in foster care, see Stotland, Stocco, Darr, & McNaught.

38 Finkelstein, Wamsley, & Miranda, 2002, p. 31-43.

roles that requires additional training and support.[39] Although there may be many adults involved, it is often unclear who has ultimate accountability for the educational progress of these students. Increasing cooperation between the child welfare system and schools, along with designating one person to have primary responsibility for a child's education, are vital to academic success. Greater information sharing can provide caseworkers with access to children's academic records and school staff with more information about a child's foster situation.

To be more effective advocates, child welfare workers need a better understanding of:

- The importance of educational success to a youth's well-being and successful transition to adulthood.

- The value of school stability and why it should be considered when determining residential placement location and timing.

- How the education system works, particularly concerning special education programs and IEPs.

- The necessity of having educational records and special educational needs in the case plan including attendance, grades, disciplinary issues, teachers'/counselors' reports, and the student's attitude toward school.

- The significance of preparing youth to transition out of care successfully.

Educators could benefit from basic training on:

- Policies governing child welfare and foster care.

- How their involvement affects a child's development.

- Roles and responsibilities in educational decision making of social workers and birth, foster, and surrogate parents.

- Concrete ways to support and avoid stigmatizing students involved in the child welfare system.

- The importance of keeping up-to-date, accurate, and complete educational records in the student's file and transferring those records quickly if the student moves to another school.

- The need for timely enrollment and special education evaluations, if warranted.

Attorneys, judges, CASAs, and GALs need to know:

- The importance of educational success to a youth's well-being and successful transition to adulthood.

- The value of school stability and why it should be considered when determining residential placement location and timing.

- How the education system works, particularly concerning special education programs and IEPs.

- How to make education a priority in court reports and proceedings.

Many foster care agencies have not clearly defined the educational roles that foster parents are expected to play, so foster parents have generally received little training or support in this area.[40] There is a wide disparity in the understanding of the education system among foster parents.

39 Fox and Berrick, 2007, p. 47.

40 Dougherty, 2001

Experienced foster parents have had many interactions with school personnel and understand how to maneuver through the bureaucracy. But with annual foster parent turnover as high as 50% among some agencies, it is clear that there are very inexperienced foster parents who need basic help in understanding how to be educational advocates for children.[41] Some ideas for accomplishing this include:

- Reinforcing the importance of educational success to a youth's well-being and successful transition to adulthood.

- Helping foster parents to recognize the effects of trauma, violence, and family disruption on children's behavior.

- Providing training on how the education system works, particularly concerning special education programs and IEPs, and the value of their input and participation.

- Highlighting the importance of keeping a file with all the child's educational records. (One study found that "missing information from prior schools increased the odds of enrollment delays by 6.5 times."[42])

School is an important source of stability for children with tumultuous family and home lives and school staff may be the best people suited to spearhead collaborative efforts. Many communities are now focusing on schools as the basis for collaborations simply because that is where the children are.[43] This provides local homeless education liaisons the opportunity to take the lead in developing collaborations that include schools, child welfare agencies, juvenile/

family courts, foster parents, CASA/GAL volunteers, children's attorneys, and other advocates. CASA/GAL volunteers and children's attorneys can be particularly effective education advocates because of their personal knowledge of the students' situations.[44] Many advocates also encourage involving students, which not only engages them in their own educational outcomes, but also tends to discourage them from running away from care. (For more information on beginning a collaborative, see NCHE's collaboration resources at *http://www. serve.org/nche/ibt/sc_collab.php* and the *Additional Resources* section beginning on page 14.)

Best Practices

Collaborations have proven to be very successful in serving the educational needs of children in foster care. Some effective practices are listed below.

- Create a greater understanding of the child welfare system's structure and function including: legal and custodial responsibilities of caseworkers, parents, biological parents, and surrogate parents; and who should be contacted for various educational issues, i.e., who is invited to IEP meetings and who signs parental consent forms.

- Pass laws such as those in Arkansas, California, Delaware, Florida, Maryland, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Washington ensuring that foster children have stable school placements. (For more information on state laws concerning serving children in foster care, see *http:// www.abanet.org/child/rclji/education/ fostercareeducation_legislation_draft1. doc*.)

- Develop a MOU or interagency agreement

41 University of Tennessee Family Foster Care Project, 2002, p. 4.

42 Choice, D'Andrade, Gunther, Downes, Schaldach, Csiszar et al., 2001, p. 44

43 Moore, 2005, p. 6

44 Stone, D'Andrade, & Austin, 2007, p. 63

involving the child welfare agency, education agencies, and the family/juvenile courts, that promotes keeping youth in the same school whenever possible and outlines how agencies will communicate with each other and share records appropriately. Many states issue passports containing foster youth's medical and educational records. These passports move with the students and are updated throughout their stay in foster care.

- Below are some successful examples of interagency agreements, partnerships, and collaborations.

  - San Louis Obispo County (CA) and Broward County (FL) Interagency Agreements; see *http://www.abanet.org/child/rclji/education/#3*.

  - Center for Child Welfare and Education, a partnership of Northern Illinois University and the Department of Children and Family Services provides training and technical assistance to improve educational outcomes for students in care; see *http://www.cedu.niu.edu/ccwe/*.

  - Education Specialists, liaisons between the school district and child welfare agency, help students with academic and emotional issues (including adjustment to a new home and school) facilitate assessments, and help with transferring records. This position is utilized in Texas, Tennessee, California and some CASA programs.

  - Project Achieve, a model program developed by Advocates for Children of New York, has shown promise in ensuring children in, or at risk of, foster care placement receive appropriate educational services; see *http://www.abanet.org/child/rclji/education/#1*.

Additional Resources

- *Asking the right questions: A judicial checklist to ensure that the educational needs of children and youth in foster care are being addressed.* http://www.casey.org/NR/ rdonlyres/5F0E9C58-3608-4B55-81FF-A8B0514ED034/932/NCJFCJournalSpring06.pdf

- *Better Together.* Facilitated curriculum to foster collaboration between agency workers and former foster youth. http://www.casey.org/NR/rdonlyres/8EF1DD14-A377-416E-A0CA-555E3054CC1F/766/BetterTogetherGuide.pdf

- *John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program.* Grants for states to help current and former foster care youths achieve self-sufficiency. Activities and programs include, but are not limited to, help with education, employment, financial management, and housing. http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/programs_fund/state_tribal/jh_chafee. htm

- *Endless Dreams: A Video and Curriculum to Educate Teachers about Foster Care.* Shows educators how their schools can support students in out-of-home care. To learn more about the *Endless Dreams* curriculum, e-mail contactus@casey.org

- *Foster Care and Education: Tools and Resources for Improving the Education Success of Children and Youth in Foster Care* brochure http://www.casey.org/NR/rdonlyres/ 3C5BEBB5-CDD0-462E-BC76-721945D6F031/1138/NationalEducationBrochure1.pdf

- *Helping Foster Children Achieve Educational Stability and Success: A Field Guide for Information Sharing.* Although this guide was created for foster parents, educators, GAL and CASA volunteers, and social workers in the state of Washington, it contains helpful information for anyone seeking a greater understanding of information sharing. It also could be used as a template for other states and localities seeking to develop their own instruction manual. http://www.wa-schoolcounselor.org/documents/Field_Guide_DRAFT_ _ rev%5B1%5D._.pdf

- *Improving Family Foster Care: Results of the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study.* The report gives recommendations to improve outcomes for youth currently in care, making it a useful tool for administrators in program and policy development. http:// www.casey.org/NR/rdonlyres/4E1E7C77-7624-4260-A253-892C5A6CB9E1/923/ CaseyAlumniStudyupdated082006.pdf

- Casey Family Programs. (2001). *It's my Life: A Framework for Youth Transitioning from Foster Care to Successful Adulthood.* Designed for child welfare professionals and others responsible for guiding and supporting teens as they prepare for adulthood. One of its seven key elements is education. http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/ ItsMyLifeFramework.htm

- *It's My Life: Postsecondary Education and Training.* Offers specific strategies, tactics, and resources for youth transitioning out of foster care and the adults who support them. http://www.casey.org/NR/rdonlyres/92960D67-DDA4-4E50-9E4F-D52315D55D45/746/ CaseyPostSecondaryGuide021306.pdf

- *Mythbusting: Breaking Down Confidentiality and Decision-Making Barriers to Meet*

the Education Needs of Children in Foster Care. Answers common questions by individuals involved with the child welfare system and suggests strategies to overcome confidentiality and decision-making hurdles when addressing the needs of children in foster care. *http://www.abanet.org/child/education/mythbusting2.pdf*

- *National Child Abuse Hotline*. Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. 1.800.4.A.CHILD

- *A Roadmap for Learning: Improving Educational Outcomes in Foster Care*. Resource guide to improve educational outcomes. *http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/RoadMapForLearning.htm*

- *Toolkit for Change: Starting an Education Advocacy Project in Your State*. Includes steps for adapting the Washington State Education Advocacy Manual to your own state laws. E-mail: *questions@teamchild.org*, Phone: 206-381-1741

National Organizations Focusing on Child Welfare Issues

American Public Human Services Association *http://www.aphsa.org/Home/home_news.asp*

Casey Family Programs *http://www.casey.org/Home*

Chapin Hall Center for Children *http://www.chapinhall.org/*

Childhelp *http://www.childhelp.org/*

Child Welfare Information Gateway *http://www.childwelfare.gov/*

Child Welfare League of America *http://www.cwla.org*

Children's Defense Fund *http://www.childrensdefense.org/site/PageServer*

Connect for Kids *http://www.connectforkids.org*

Child Welfare League of America *http://www.cwla.org/*

Education Law Center (Pennsylvania) *http://www.elc-pa.org/*

Juvenile Law Center *http://www.jlc.org/*

Legal Center for Foster Care and Education *http://www.abanet.org/child/education/*

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth *http:www.naehcy.org*

National CASA Association *http://www.nationalcasa.org/*

National Center for Homeless Education *http://www.serve.nche.org*

National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues *http://www.abanet. org/child/rclji/home.html*

National Children's Advocacy Center *http://www.nationalcac.org/*

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges *http://www.ncjfcj.org/*

National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty *http://www.nlchp.org*

National Foster Care Coalition *http://www.nationalfostercare.org/*

National Foster Parent Association *http://www.nfpainc.org/*

National Indian Child Welfare Association *http://www.nicwa.org*

Vera Institute of Justice *http://www.vera.org/*

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