

Providing Support and Guidance to College Students with Foster Care Experience

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Background of Foster Youth & College

Foster Care

Purpose

Types of Placement: Traditional (45%), Kinship (32%), Group Home (6%), and Supervised Independent Living (1%)

Statistics

Approximately **440,000** foster youth nationwide

30,000 youth age out between the ages of 18 - 21 annually

Within four years:

50% have **no earnings** or average annual income of **\$7,500**

70% will be on government assistance

25% will not have completed high school

20-30% attempt post-secondary education

<12% will ever earn their college degree

Barriers

Unemployment

Homelessness

Relationships/Connections

First-Generation

Awareness of resources

University of Penn Field Center

- ▶ The Field Center provides technical assistance to help PA colleges and universities develop campus-based support programs for foster youth.
 - ▶ How?
 - ▶ Provide consultation
 - ▶ on-site and remotely
 - ▶ Application guided our program development
 - ▶ vision
 - ▶ sustainability
 - ▶ operations
 - ▶ point of contact
 - ▶ our barriers
- ▶ University of Pennsylvania Field Center Website <https://fieldcenteratpenn.org/>

Campus Support Network Map



7 Life Domains



Education



Challenges:

- Students may have
 - moved several times and attended various schools
 - not been encouraged to enroll in college-prep courses
 - not been told they were smart enough

Responses:

- Provide stability
 - build trusting relationships (Point of Contact)
 - guide them to resources to help them build appropriate academic skills
- Make connections early
 - begin meeting with the students before they attend the college
 - workshops while in high schools, college open houses, New Student Orientation, Summer Bridge
 - “warm transfer”

Housing



Challenges:

- Increased risk of homelessness or “couch surfing”
- Discharge from foster care also disrupts other support services
- Students in residence halls may be without housing during semester breaks
- Community college students - lack of affordable housing that is accessible for school, work, and support services

Responses:

- Offer Residence Halls with availability during semester breaks and holidays
- Develop community partnerships to ensure affordable and accessible housing for community college students
- Support and encourage students to stay in care as long as possible to take advantage of supports

Finance and Employment



Challenge

- Help students identify employment opportunities on campus and in the local community.

Response

- Work alongside students to identify employment opportunities:
 - Referral to student aid for federal work-study award.
 - Provide comprehensive list of campus wage-payroll positions (ie. physical plant, cafeteria, office work etc.)
 - Work with campus career services to identify employment opportunities in the community.
 - Assist students with any issues relating to transportation if work placement is off campus.

Finance and Employment



Challenge

- Help students maximize financial aid opportunities

Response

- Work alongside students to identify funding opportunities that minimize dependence on student loans when possible:
 - Scholarship research assistance.
 - Referral to student aid for federal work-study award.
 - Assistance with FAFSA preparation and resolution of verification issues.
 - Assistance with university dependency review process
 - Assistance completing Chafee Grant application.
 - Assistance with eligibility determination and application for tuition waiver.

PA Chafee Grant Awards

2018-19 Academic Year PA Chafee Grant:

- Provided 376 Chafee grants
- Totaling \$1.62 million
- Maximum award \$5,000 - average award: \$4,308
- Over 90% of recipients have a \$0 Expected Family Contribution (EFC)
- Jointly administered for Pennsylvania by PHEAA and the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS)

Chafee Student Eligibility

New applicants must:

- Submit a completed Chafee application to PHEAA by December 31
- Applications reviewed by PHEAA/DHS to confirm the student:
- Eligible for services under the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program
- Was in foster care or was discharged or adopted after age 16
- Complies with the age requirements:
- New applicant on or prior to their 21st birthday

Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver

New Commonwealth of PA program effective 2020-21

- Program provides a postsecondary tuition waiver to eligible foster youth
- PHEAA working with DHS, PA Department of Labor and Industry (L&I), and PA Department of Education (PDE) on details



Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver

How to use the waiver:

- Tuition waiver applies only to tuition and mandatory fees
- Eligible youth may receive waiver for up to five academic years (consecutive or not) or until age 26
- Tuition waiver will only be applied to tuition and mandatory fees charged starting in Fall 2020

How to apply for the waiver:

- Must submit a FAFSA[®] and PA Chafee Grant Application (may also be required to apply for additional state and institutional aid)
- Information available on PHEAA.org and brochures available

Physical and Mental Health



Challenge

- Most young people in foster care have grown up experiencing abuse and neglect, often resulting in post-traumatic stress disorder (Day, Schmidt & Unrau, 2017).

Response

- Complete student intake assessing needs using life skills assessment tool (ie. Casey Family Programs Life Skills Assessment).
- Identify what services student may be eligible to receive based on their needs.
- Make timely connections to services that support mental and physical health
 - Campus Counselor, Campus Social Worker, Community Social Worker, Community Counseling, Liaisons through CYF, Medicaid, etc.

Supportive relationships & Community Connections

Challenges:

- Students may view relationships as transient and transactional.
- They may be unaccustomed to creating lasting friendships or relationships.
- Students may feel more comfortable relating to peers.



Responses:

- Work to establish relationships with agencies and case workers who may already be working with students, like KidsVoice and the Educational Liaisons through CYF.
- Create social components to programming to allow students to interact with each other. Consider having highly engaged students from a previous year's program be involved in planning and implementation for the following year.

Personal and Cultural Identity

Challenges:

- Systemic and Institutional Racism and “Otherism”
- Lack of connectedness with other students with foster care experience
- Hiding status due to fear of stigma

Responses:

- Developing spaces on campus for students with shared backgrounds and identities to “find” each other (example: Committed drop-in space for students with foster care experience)
- Connecting students to clubs related to their racial, ethnic, sexual and/or gender identities
- Professional development for faculty and staff to increase awareness and change behavior around Systemic and Institutional biases
- Examining institutional policy

- Research suggests that LGBTQ+ children are more likely to be removed from their homes than their heterosexual/cisgender peers, as are children of color.



Life Skills



Challenges:

- Students may have experienced a forced independence in the foster care system; they may have learned to take care of themselves at a younger age or in ways beyond their developmental age.

Responses:

- Build upon transactional relationships and incorporate opportunities to talk about physical needs, emotional well-being, and adjustment to college with mentors and peers.
- Create staff and mentor trainings which are trauma-informed.

Challenges

Wins

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References & Resources

University of Pennsylvania Field Center Website <https://fieldcenteratpenn.org/>

Fostering Success Michigan Website <http://fosteringsuccessmichigan.com>

Foster Care Statistics 2019 <https://www.ifoster.org/6-quick-statistics-on-the-current-state-of-foster-care/>

Foster Care Basics: Purpose <https://www.fc2success.org/knowledge-center/foster-care-the-basics/>

Independent Living Programs

https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Transitional_Living/Extended_Foster_Care/supervised_independent_living.asp

Foster Care Numbers & Percentages (2017) <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/foster.pdf>

Day, M., Schmidt, Li., (2017). A framework to approach postsecondary educational program design for college students with live experience in foster care.

Unrau, Y., Dawson, A., Hamilton, R. Bennett, J. (2017). Perceive value of a campus-based college support program by students who aged out of foster care. Children and Youth Services Review, 78, 64-73.

Unrau, Y., Font, S., Rawls, G. (2012). Readiness for college engagement among students who have aged out of foster care. Children and Youth Services Review, 34, 76-83.

Watt, T. T., Kim, S., & Garrison, K. (2018). The relationship between state supports and post-secondary enrollment among youth aging out of foster care: An analysis of the national youth in transition database. Child Welfare. 96 (3).

Foster Care to College Newsletter: info about issues related to foster youth & higher education across PA; Email: swasch@upenn.edu

Foster Club Transition Toolkit (Planning for youth aging out of foster care): Fosterclub.com

Join the Proposed Advising Community for NACADA by searching for @ACforcare on Facebook

Questions

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