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# PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUCCESS



## Case Studies in Successful Collaboration Between Child Welfare and Higher Education

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September 2013

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California College Pathways provides resources and leadership to campuses and community organizations to help foster youth succeed at community colleges, vocational schools, and four-year universities. By engaging institutions to work together, sharing best practices, and advocating for policies that support foster youth in higher education, California College Pathways is helping foster youth across the state achieve their higher education goals and move on to fulfilling careers.

California College Pathways:

- Supports campus networks of programs for foster youth
- Provides training and technical assistance for emerging and established campus programs
- Advocates for policies and regulations to improve higher education outcomes for foster youth
- Collaborates to create a more seamless pipeline to college for K-12 foster youth

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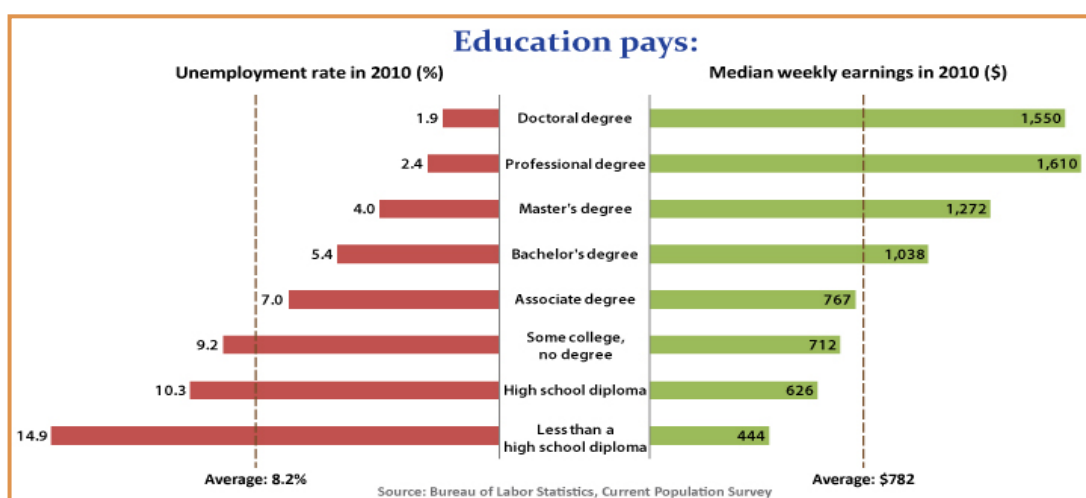
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*Photography by Ana Homonnay*

# INTRODUCTION

It is well documented that those who participate in higher education enjoy higher standards of living as well as greater financial stability. A recent New York Times article explained, “In 2012, the typical full-time worker with a bachelor’s degree earned 79 percent more than a similar full-time worker with no more than a high school diploma.”<sup>1</sup> As the job market changes and evolves, education has become even more paramount. Many jobs in the fastest-growing industries such as health care, education, and business support services require education beyond a high school diploma. On the flip side, there are fewer options for those without college degrees now - and there will be even fewer in the future. Occupations losing the most jobs are low-skill service sector jobs such as clerks, cashiers, telemarketers and packagers. The chart below, based on data from the 2010 *Current Population Survey* by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, demonstrates the difference in both earnings and job stability that higher education can make.



It is also well documented that foster youth are among America’s most disadvantaged populations when it comes to opportunities for higher education. Significantly fewer foster youth complete high school both when compared to the general population and other closely-matched disadvantaged students. In California only 45% of foster youth complete high school compared to 53% of closely matched and 79% of general population students. For youth who complete high school, when compared to the general population, fewer foster youth enter (60% versus 65%) and a significantly lower percent persist (enroll from one year to the next) in community college (30% versus 41%). Similar trends are found at the university level. A significantly lower proportion of foster youth achieve these goals in relation to the general population. Of all the students who complete high school, only 9% of foster youth enroll and 5% persist at the university level compared to 15% who enroll and 11% who persist in the general population.<sup>2</sup> Nationally, the rate of degree completion is similarly low for foster youth as compared to other students: only 5 percent or less of foster care youth who enter higher education receive a degree compared to 20 percent for their peers.<sup>3</sup>

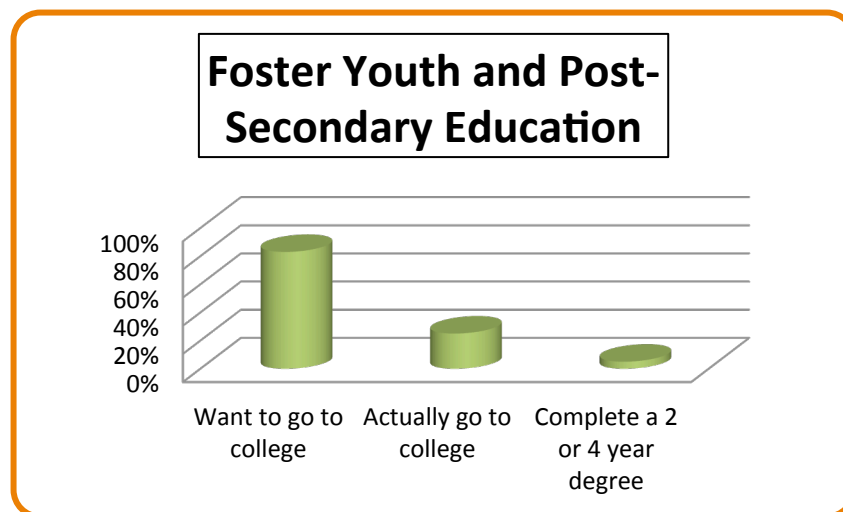
<sup>1</sup> Rampell, Catherine, “College Graduates Fare Well in Jobs Market, Even Through Recession,” *New York Times*, May 4, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Center for Social Services Research and The Institute for Evidence-Based Change, *Foster Youth Transitions, A study of California foster youth high school and college educational outcomes, 2013*.

<sup>3</sup> Wolanin, Thomas R. 2005. *Higher Education Opportunities for Foster Youth: A Primer for Policymakers*. Washington, DC: The Institute for Higher Education Policy.

The passage of the California Fostering Connections to Success Act (AB12), which extends the availability of foster care support to the age of 21, provides a tremendous opportunity to positively impact these dismal statistics for foster youth in California. Research has clearly demonstrated the potential benefits that extending benefits for foster youth can have on successful participation in post-secondary education. Mark Courtney and Amy Dworsky's pivotal 2007 study on extended benefits and postsecondary education concluded that former foster youth from Illinois were nearly twice as likely to have attended college and more than twice as likely to have completed at least one year of college as their peers in Iowa and Wisconsin. They attributed this difference in educational attainment to the fact that Illinois was one of the few states at the time of the study in which young people could and routinely did remain in foster care until their 21st birthday, whereas Iowa and Wisconsin exited youth from foster care at age 18.<sup>4</sup>

Surveys conducted as part of the planning and implementation process for AB12 demonstrated that an overwhelming majority of foster youth aspire to go to college. In one survey conducted by the Alliance for Children's Rights, 83% of foster youth indicated a desire to go to college. This is a dramatically different number from those who actually attend college and even lower yet than the number who successfully graduate.



In order to realize the potential of Extended Foster Care to improve educational outcomes for foster youth, better collaboration and coordination between systems of child welfare and post-secondary educational institutions is needed. Up until recently, when youth typically exited foster care at the age of 18, the nature of collaboration between these two systems, where it existed at all, was focused on preparing youth for college and the “hand off” upon emancipation. In many counties, the Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP) program interacts directly with local college campuses to coordinate resources for individual youth. Fewer counties however have instituted a more systematic form of alliance between child welfare and post-secondary education. And while ILSP programs are a tremendous resource for foster youth ages 16-21, not all foster youth access these supports whereas all foster youth are visited monthly by a county social worker.

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<sup>4</sup> Mark Courtney and Amy Dworsky, *Does Extending Foster Care beyond Age 18 Promote Postsecondary Educational Attainment*, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, 2007.

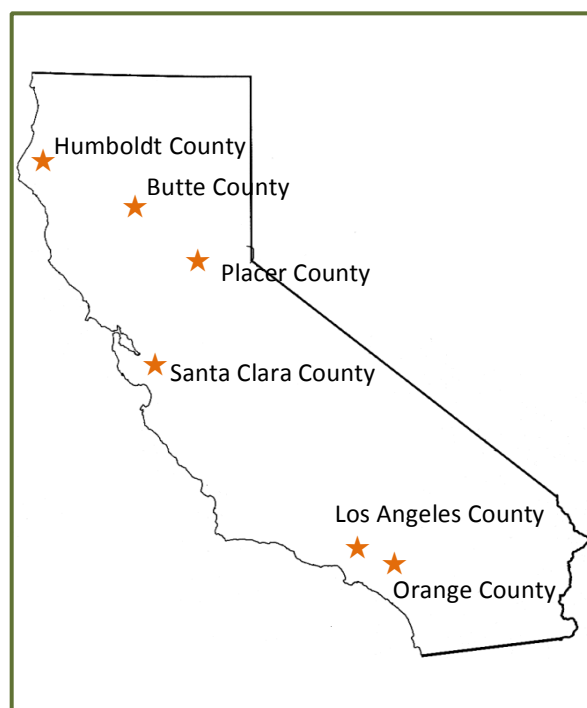
County child welfare agencies very often do not have formalized systems of collaboration in place with local colleges and universities to address broader policy and practice issues. With youth now able to stay in foster care until the age of 21 however, the nature of collaboration between these two systems needs to evolve to reflect the new paradigm. College preparation remains an important aspect of collaborative efforts, but this needs to be supplemented by additional coordination designed to support youth while they are actively enrolled in college. Moving forward, foster care and post-secondary education will be overlapping in the lives of many young people in ways that they never have before. This creates both new opportunities and new imperatives to enhance partnerships between these systems.

## MODELS OF COLLABORATION

This report highlights six communities that have established collaborative bodies whose function includes supporting foster youth to enroll in college and complete their higher education goals. Each community described in this report is different and the nature of how each collaborative effort came into being and evolved over time is unique. The highlighted counties include both urban and rural as well as small and large counties. The models described here focus on those counties who have established formalized mechanisms that bring together stakeholders from a variety of different arenas on a regular basis to address issues related to foster youth and higher education. The exact makeup within each community may vary but all involve at a minimum the child welfare agency, local college and university representatives and the Foster Youth Services (FYS) program housed within the County Offices of Education.

The representatives interviewed for this report indicated that there had been significant benefits accrued from these collaborations for both colleges/universities and child welfare professionals, along with other key partners. In addition to accomplishing concrete objectives, participation resulted in improved communication, with colleges gaining new information about child welfare policies and child welfare agencies gaining a greater understanding of college protocols and requirements. Collaboration has also provided a forum in some cases for campuses to provide their voice to influence local child welfare policy.

The examples below highlight information about the formation, organizational structure and accomplishments of some of the partnerships that exist throughout the state. This is not a comprehensive list of all such efforts but rather provides a sampling of different community efforts with their varying histories, make-up and accomplishments.



## **Placer County College Transition Support Team (CTST)**

**Formation:** The creation of the CTST was initiated by the Foster Youth Success Initiative (FYSI) Liaison at Sierra College, along with the Placer County Office of Education (PCOE) Foster Youth Services program in 2007. PCOE and Sierra College initiated a stakeholders meeting to brainstorm a vision, discuss who was missing at the table, and develop ideas for what types of support could be made available to foster youth attending college. The goal was to provide holistic services to this student population to increase graduation and retention rates. It took about one year to formulate and solidify the team.

**Participants:** Current participants include representatives from the Placer County Children's System of Care (which encompasses child welfare, children's mental health, public health, and juvenile probation), the Placer County ILSP program as well as ILSP programs in surrounding counties, several local community colleges, the Placer County Office of Education, community based organizations serving foster youth, Department of Rehabilitation, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), the local THP-Plus provider, Foster Kinship Care Education (FKCE) and minors' attorneys. The group hopes to have the involvement of local California State Universities moving forward.

***TIP: A glossary of terminology that provides definitions for many of the terms used in this report can be found at the end of the document.***

**Organizing Structure:** Meetings are led and organized by representatives from Sierra College. The meetings occur once per month, although in the beginning phases the group met twice per month. The Children's System of Care provides administrative support such as documenting meeting minutes while all the partners listed work on efforts to create unique collaborations supporting former foster youth. Every year the partners and youth craft a new agenda for the coming year's efforts. Topics discussed include a mix of both big picture issues and triage needs of students attending local campuses. The intention of the group is to approach students not just academically or just in relation to their foster care needs but instead holistically, taking into account the myriad aspects of each individual student's journey including social emotional wellness, asset skills building, and resource development.

### **Accomplishments:**

- ★ Created of a list-serve to advertise resources and solicit for specific needs of students. Through the list serve, youth have been connected to services and benefits such as mental health counseling, vision and dental care, housing, transportation, job training, Medi-Cal and laptop computers.
- ★ Access to the Placer County Network of Care, which is a web based resource directory containing resources for physical health, mental wellness, and over 800 service providers.
- ★ Organized an Independent City event, a fun and informative "game of life" that allows youth to enjoy hands on experience where they try out their life skills through accomplishing various tasks.
- ★ Increased number of youth accessing ILSP services.
- ★ Organized an annual luncheon at the college to create kinship with other foster youth.
- ★ Created a system for priority registration that is considered a model for colleges around the state.

- ★ Improved the transition to college by supporting child welfare staff to create systems for better and earlier planning.
- ★ Brought in local hospitals to provide mental health training and wellness to youth and provide assistance with fundraising.
- ★ Implemented strategies for improving persistence such as bringing ILSP services to campus dorms.
- ★ Improved foster youth retention from 25% to 70% at Sierra College.
- ★ Through recent collaboration between the Children's System of Care and other partner agencies, every foster youth student in need of a computer is provided with one at no cost to them.
- ★ Cross system collaboration with the Community College California Mental Health Services Act Project.
- ★ Community awareness programs to promote the accomplishments of CTST, the result of which has been donations by private citizens of funds, services, and goods to support a successful academic year.

## **Orange County Foster Youth Outcomes Group**

***Formation:*** The Foster Youth Outcomes meeting combined two previously existing workgroups focused on education outcomes and transition to independent living. The meetings of this newly formed group focus on strengthening and improving outcomes for foster youth in the areas of education, permanency, housing, employment, and independent living skills. Subgroups have also been developed to focus on specific projects in each of these areas including an Education Subgroup.

***Participants:*** Partners in this collaboration include the Orange County Social Services Agency, several local community colleges, THP-Plus and ILSP providers, Foster Youth Services, former foster youth, CASA, Juvenile Probation staff, healthcare agencies, 211-resource line, the Workforce Investment Board and local school districts.

***Organizing Structure:*** The Foster Youth Outcomes meetings are co-led by a Deputy Director and a Program Manager from the Orange County Social Services Agency and the Manager from Orange County Foster Youth Services. The group meets monthly with about thirty people typically attending the meetings. The group decides together on the frequency and times of the meetings. The co-leaders create the agendas and facilitate the meetings with input from the members.

### ***Accomplishments:***

- ★ The Education Subgroup of Foster Youth Outcomes Group, with the assistance of Irvine Valley College, developed several brief videos about how enroll in college, to be posted online.
- ★ Orange County hosted a regional meeting with all local colleges to discuss foster youth issues. Many great connections were made at this meeting and it resulted in the creation of a flyer for foster youth with contact info for support resources such as the EOP/EOPS programs, and FYSI liaisons at all local colleges.

- ★ The County holds an annual college and career fair which is a collaborative effort between Social Services, Juvenile Probation, the County Department of Education, Orangewood Children's Foundation, the Juvenile Court and local colleges. This event has taken place for four years and is hosted at a different college each year. It is open to youth ages 12-19 and includes a campus tour, youth panel and information about financial aid and admissions. A flyer with contact information for each college is made available and caregivers and CASAs are encouraged to participate.
- ★ Future goals include developing a protocol to enable the use of California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) scores to identify foster youth who may need remedial courses or additional assistance upon entrance to college.

## **Butte County**

**Formation:** The first meeting of the group occurred in 2009 at a conference rolling out the work of the State's Blue Ribbon Commission process. Butte County Representatives met at the conference and spent a day reviewing the state report and making the initial plans for local work. Since that time the Higher Education workgroup has been meeting quarterly to keep the process moving forward.



**Participants:** Current participants include Butte County Children's Services, Butte County Independent Living Program (ILP), Alliance for Workforce Development, Butte College, Chico State University, the County Office of Education-Foster Youth Services Program, the Juvenile court and CASA.

**Organizing Structure:** The group meets quarterly and is organized and hosted currently by the Butte County Office of Education. The group tackles issues related to providing better support to foster youth entering or attending college. One of the most significant benefits cited by participants is the creation of personal relationships that can then be drawn upon to problem solve around issues related to specific individuals or larger systemic issues.

### **Accomplishments:**

- ★ Sponsorship of an annual Higher Education Lunch. All ILP eligible youth are eligible to attend and many attorneys, social workers, CASAs and judges also participate. The 2½ hour program includes lunch and various speakers such as former foster youth, motivational speakers and financial aid information. The program ends with a campus tour and alternates between Butte College and Chico State University.
- ★ Creation of a foster youth committee at Chico State University to promote cross department coordination. The committee includes representatives from admissions, EOP, veterans' services, counseling, BSW/MSW program, housing office, financial aid and the student health center. Efforts are currently underway to expand support for foster youth even further at Chico State.

- ★ Providing a forum for updates from each arena to keep participants informed of new developments within the different segments. This can include policy updates, new resources and upcoming events.
- ★ Providing a forum for the discussion of individual cases that require problem solving.
- ★ Facilitation of improved access for foster youth to college preparatory courses such as Upward Bound, Trio and Talent Search.
- ★ Upcoming goals include creating a foster youth page for the Butte College web site (linked to and from EOPS, financial aid, etc.) with information regarding Extended Foster Care (AB12), Chafee grants and other support resources.

## **Santa Clara County Juvenile Court Educational Partnership (JCEP)**

***Formation:*** JCEP emerged from the Foster Youth Services program housed within the County Office of Education. The group initially focused on K-12 education but has since incorporated linkages to post-secondary education. Prior to the creation of JCEP there were several different meetings taking place related to foster youth and education and these were collapsed into one combined meeting to create JCEP.

***Participants:*** Juvenile dependency and delinquency judges, Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) – Foster Youth Services, Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), juvenile probation placement unit, Silicon Valley Children’s Fund, Legal Advocates for Children & Youth, Kids in Common, Child Advocate, ILP, Guardian Scholars at San Jose State, Community College representatives including Mission College, Evergreen College and San Jose College. The group plans to recruit a youth representative and caregiver representative in the near future.



***Organizing Structure:*** The group meets monthly, alternating between a full workgroup meeting and an advisory group meeting. Foster Youth Services functioned as the coordinator initially but this role was recently taken over by *Kids in Common*, a local non-profit advocacy organization. *Kids in Common* provides a trained facilitator to run the meetings. This responsibility may become a shared responsibility between DCFS, FYS, and Juvenile Probation in the future. The committee is not limited to higher education but rather focuses on education issues more broadly including higher education. The group functions largely as a clearinghouse for information and updates.

In addition to JCEP, a group led by Silicon Valley Children’s Fund that includes SCCOE, DCFS, ILP and the FYSI liaisons from each community college meets bi-monthly. This group focuses on improving coordination between the child welfare agency and local community colleges by identifying and addressing specific issues related to improving access and retention.

### ***JCEP Accomplishments:***

- ★ Information sharing among stakeholders about upcoming events and opportunities, legislative updates and other pertinent information.

- ★ Developed a program that uses interns at state universities to act as mentors for foster youth and assist them to get on track for college. Interns meet with high school students every other week to discuss homework, course selection, employment goals and educational prerequisites and upcoming deadlines.
- ★ Organization of annual higher education summit. This event is open to all foster youth in the 6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The event includes presentations about higher education options and the opportunity to talk with former foster youth who are attending college. All local colleges and universities are represented and the event takes place at San Jose State.
- ★ Efforts are underway to implement a GED prep program and SAT prep class in coordination with ILP.

*FYSI liaison/County Collaboration Accomplishments:*

- ★ Successful implementation of priority registration on all campuses.
- ★ Development of new retention strategies including establishing measurement guidelines for retention.
- ★ Outreach to foster youth and hosting of events at ILP offices for foster youth to find out about what colleges offer, financial aid options, etc.
- ★ Strategized about new federal financial aid requirements and how to make sure youth got the maximum available aid under new restrictions.

## **Los Angeles Court Scholars**

*Formation:* Commissioner Marilyn Mackel (retired) and Judge Emily Stevens (retired) spearheaded the creation of LA Court Scholars in 2009. The effort was a direct result of Judge Stevens' leadership as the Supervising Judge of the Dependency Court and her ongoing focus on the education of the Bench about the provision of Independent Living Services and Resources during her time on the Dependency Court Bench. Commissioner Mackel initiated the effort with a letter to campus presidents throughout the county requesting their participation in a collaborative partnership with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to bolster the level of support that foster youth attending local colleges were receiving. Cal State Los Angeles, which had an existing relationship with DCFS, was enlisted as the first campus to support the effort. The letter was signed by the presiding judge for Los Angeles County, DCFS and Cal State LA. The group adopted the name LA Court Scholars.

*Participants:* Since its inception, LA Court Scholars has grown significantly and now includes a broad range of stakeholders with an investment in supporting foster youth's success in higher education. Participants include DCFS representatives, higher education representatives from local community colleges, CSUs and UCLA, local advocacy organizations, community based organizations, the local chapter of the California Youth Connection (CYC), ILSP coordinators, judges, attorneys, and foster youth liaisons from the County Office of Education and the Los Angeles Unified School District.

*Organizing Structure:* A family court judge who presides over the child welfare caseload is assigned the duty of calling meetings and coordinating the group. Since Commissioner Mackel's retirement, this role has transitioned to a new judge. Meetings are held approximately every two to three months at the Los Angeles courthouse. An agenda is sent out in advance and minutes are kept of

each meeting. Typically about 20-25 people participate in any given meeting. The group has identified four subcommittees to hone in on specific issues. The committees are:

- Identification and Tracking of Foster Youth and Countywide Support to Colleges
- DCFS/College Partnership Committee
- Communication with Foster Youth, Caregivers, Partners
- Fundraising Committee

Agendas typically include unresolved issues from prior meetings, committee reports, future goals and other announcements. Any member can request that an item be added to the agenda. The focus of the meeting content is on information sharing, addressing larger system related issues and opportunities for leveraging existing resources rather than problem solving of individual cases.

Accomplishments:

- ★ Provides opportunities for networking and relationship building. Many individual relationships have grown from the work of the committee that have led to cross training, leveraging of resources and co-sponsoring of college events for foster youth between agencies.
- ★ Created protocols to facilitate the implementation of new requirements for priority registration for foster youth at college campuses.
- ★ Obtained a donation of computers for foster youth to utilize while at court buildings for hearings.
- ★ Provides a forum for information sharing about new legislation, policy changes within DCFS and opportunities at specific campuses or in the community.
- ★ Creation of fact sheets for court personnel on topics such as college enrollment and financial aid. The fact sheets include key deadlines so that judges who hear foster care cases are able to follow up at hearings with youth. Minor's attorneys also utilize these fact sheets to remind youth of upcoming deadlines and provide support with the college admissions and enrollment process.
- ★ Sponsored an information-sharing forum with over 100 attendees that included individual county social workers, representatives from different campus departments and ILSP staff.
- ★ Sharing of information by DCFS that helps those working with students to successfully navigate the county bureaucracy.
- ★ Accessing of funds to assist Cal State LA with programs for foster youth such as Christmas celebrations.
- ★ Creation of a verification system that enables college campuses to more easily verify foster youth status with DCFS.



- ★ The Committee served as a liaison for the placement of California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) MSW students on various college campuses to work directly with Foster Youth attending those campuses;
- ★ The Committee secured a CALSWEC MSW student to be stationed at the Children's Courthouse to talk with transition-aged youth when they came to court for their hearings.
- ★ Efforts are currently underway to create a more user-friendly interface for the ILP program's online portal along with an outreach campaign to make youth aware of services available through ILSP.

## **Humboldt County**

***Formation:*** Humboldt County's collaboration grew out of the California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I) which provided funding for the Humboldt County Child Welfare Services Agency to build comprehensive foster youth supports and services for youth ages 14 through 24. An essential component of this effort was focused on improving educational outcomes and the Humboldt County Foster Youth Education Steering Committee was created to address education-related issues. In 2009 a subcommittee on higher education was established apart from the larger steering committee, to address the unique issues and needs related to foster youth participation in post-secondary education. In addition, as part of the CC25I effort, funds were used to bring in an outside consultant to advise on improving collaboration between the Child Welfare Services and higher education.

***Participants:*** The core group of the sub-committee consists of representatives from College of the Redwoods, Humboldt County Office of Education Foster Youth Services, Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services - Child Welfare Services, (including the Independent Living Skills Program and Transition Age Youth Program), Talent Search (Federal TRIO Program), Humboldt County Probation and Humboldt State University.

***Organizing Structure:*** The Higher Education Sub-committee meets about two times a month for an hour and a half. The organizing structure of the Higher Education sub-committee meetings tends to be fairly informal. The core group is very task-oriented and focuses on larger system issues rather than specific cases. The meetings usually include a check-in that allows for cross system information sharing followed by a discussion of specific issues or upcoming events. Coordination that is necessary regarding specific case scenarios is generally dealt with separately over the phone or by e-mail as issues arise.

In addition, many members of the Higher Education sub-committee have assisted with the local Beyond the Bench events, which are coordinated out of the office of the Humboldt County Superior Court. The Beyond the Bench meetings are organized by the Juvenile Court Judge with assistance from a newly created educational liaison position housed within the Child Welfare Services Agency and other committee participants. The location of these meetings at the courthouse facilitates the participation of the child welfare judges.

### ***Accomplishments:***

- ★ Built a strong network of collaboration around issues related to access and success in post-secondary education.

- ★ Creation of a Standing Court Order which allows all major agencies to communicate with each other in regards to foster youth educational issues without individual Releases of Information. This was a very significant piece that opened up many doors to improve collaboration.
- ★ A mentorship program has been initiated with students from the Social Work and Sociology Departments serving as mentors to youth entering college.
- ★ Publication of the Humboldt County Interagency Education Guide to which Indian tribes, child welfare, minor's attorneys and juvenile probation contributed. The guide is updated annually and provides an overview of the legislative mandates related to foster youth and education.
- ★ Hosting of a yearly foster youth luncheon for 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders with approximately 55-60 youth in attendance each year. This event alternates between the local community college and Cal State University and has taken place for five years. Funding has come from a variety of sources including the Rotary Club and Humboldt State University. College and university staff organize the event and the Child Welfare Agency provides transportation for youth and outreaches to eligible foster youth. Over time the planning of the event has become progressively more youth driven.
- ★ Organized a series of team-based trainings for foster parents, CASA volunteers and probation staff. The training covers the basics of higher education such as the A-G requirements, the role of supportive adults in encouraging students to pursue higher education, working with tribal students, etc.
- ★ Creation of relationships with college campuses to facilitate transition to college. For example, College of the Redwoods now conducts outreach efforts to help new foster youth students get registered and settled. Foster youth are able to get individualized attention including direct linkages to appropriate persons within campus departments such as admissions and records, financial aid, Disabled Students Programs and Services and student assessment.
- ★ Creation of the Elite Scholars program for foster youth attending Humboldt State University.
- ★ Creation of an agreement with the Talent Search program at Humboldt State (a pre-college program that provides services to help improve the academic strengths and college readiness of students in the 6th through 12th grades) that guarantees admission into the program for foster youth who are referred by participating agencies.
- ★ Ongoing work to create a program that allows Elite Scholars to mentor younger foster youth.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below are a compilation of ideas that emerged from interviews with collaborative participants from the counties described above.

- ★ Take the time to find the right contact within each agency and at each campus. If the effort is being initiated by the child welfare agency, the FYSI liaison or the EOPS program can be a good place to start to identify participants from the local community colleges. Many public four-year universities have foster youth specific campus support programs or foster youth

liaisons in the EOP office. In addition, engaging campus leadership early in the process, such as deans, administrators and key faculty and continuing to involve them on an ongoing basis can help bolster the effort. Child welfare agencies can engage colleges by offering training to colleges about foster youth and sending ILSP coordinators to campus. Colleges can engage child welfare agencies by offering trainings to social workers about post-secondary education, sponsoring college fairs for foster youth and offering to provide workshops such as FAFSA completion to ILSP programs.

***TIP: Visit***

[www.cacollegepathways.org/  
explore-campus-support-programs](http://www.cacollegepathways.org/explore-campus-support-programs)  
*to find contact information for  
foster youth contacts at California  
colleges and universities.*

- ★ Cast the net wide and be inclusive rather than exclusive. Involve representatives from a range of sectors including local colleges and universities, child welfare, juvenile probation, Foster Youth Services, CASA, attorneys, court representatives, CYC and community based organizations. At the same time, if some agencies are difficult to engage, don't worry too much about who's not attending. Focus on using the expertise of those who *are* participating.
- ★ Child welfare agencies should consider inviting colleges to existing collaborative meetings that may exist in the county. Colleges are not always considered as potential partners. Bring up the issue of post-secondary education at every opportunity and let people know how they can get involved in collaboration.
- ★ Keep it simple. Don't try to make it perfect before you begin – just get it started. It is not necessary to have money to create a collaboration or even a clear charge or specific goal. Depending on the degree of interaction between the agencies within your county currently, it may be that the purpose can begin just with relationship development. Begin with regular meetings and develop a core group of participants. It can be helpful to pick a single project to work on together in order to create relationships. Keep your goals simple and obtainable at first. Once you have some successes under your belt the charge of the group can become more expansive and ambitious.
- ★ Once your collaborative group is solidified, it can be helpful to develop a comprehensive project plan. Begin with an assessment of assets and strengths and potential barriers. Ask the questions “where are we at” and “where do we want to be” and develop concrete goals, objectives and timelines.
- ★ It is helpful to have a central organizer to begin. Co-leadership involving multiple agencies can also be very helpful both for sharing of workload and making the collaborative more robust. If there are funds available, you may want to consider bringing in a skilled facilitator during the beginning developmental phases, however this is not required.
- ★ Hold regular meetings with core participants at a consistent time. Make the best use of time by remaining purposeful and task oriented. Consider holding meetings occasionally at the courthouse in order to encourage participation by judges.
- ★ Use data to tell your story and convey your message.

- ★ Design your group to meet the needs of your particular community. Map out the systems, key partners, and champions who can be resilient and persistent. Shape the collaboration in a way that's meaningful for your region. Each agency and campus may need to be approached differently depending on where the support for foster youth exists.
- ★ Budget limitations require the pooling together of resources. Combining resources towards a common goal makes achieving goals much more feasible. Also sharing the workload between entities made it much more doable.
- ★ Avoid blaming. Come together around common goals without criticizing any one piece of the system for insufficiencies.

## CONCLUSIONS

No county is too big or too small, too urban or too rural to consider enhancing partnerships between child welfare and higher education. With the myriad tasks on the plates of professionals from every sector, collaboration around foster youth success in higher education can fall to the bottom of the priority list. Such collaboration, however, is the lynchpin of improving outcomes for this population. As discussed in detail in the introduction to this report, access to education underlies individual's ability to achieve their career goals, maintain a comfortable standard of living and feel stable across their lifetime. Higher education is correlated with numerous other benefits beyond higher incomes including improved health and well-being and increased civic participation.

Regardless of your role in the lives of foster youth – whether you support them within the context of the child welfare system, secondary education or on a college campus – the stories presented here demonstrate that you can be the person to take the initiative in your county. No single organization or public system can achieve all that is required to improve outcomes for foster youth alone. It takes a partnership that includes a critical mass of key stakeholders to make this happen. There is no time like the present to begin these efforts or expand what your county already has in place to the next level. By working together, hand in hand with each other and with foster youth themselves, foster youth can turn their dreams into degrees.

# Acronyms and Terms

## Child Welfare Terms

**California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care:** Created in 2006, this commission was charged with providing recommendations to the Judicial Council of California on the ways in which the courts and their child welfare partners could improve safety, permanency, well-being, and fairness outcomes for children and families in the state. The commission was reappointed to work on implementing the recommendations.

**CA Fostering Connections to Success (AB12):** California's landmark legislation that extended foster care support to the age of 21 as of January 1, 2012.

**Transitional Housing Placement Program-Plus (THP-Plus):** The Transitional Housing Placement Plus program provides affordable housing and comprehensive supportive services for up to 24 months to help former foster care and probation youth ages 18 to 24 make a successful transition from out-of-home placements to independent living.

**Independent Living Program (ILP)/ Independent Living Services Program (ILSP):** An Independent Living Program (ILP), sometimes called an Independent Living Services Program (ILSP), is a federally funded program administered through counties that provides services for foster youth ages 14 and over to prepare for adulthood. The program provides classes in life skills, vocational training, tutoring, mentoring, and enrichment activities. It can also provide funds for college scholarships, skills training, and rent assistance.

**Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA):** CASA volunteers are appointed by judges to watch over and advocate for foster care children and youth. California hosts a network of 41 CASA programs across the state.

**Foster Kinship Care Education (FKCE):** The FKCE Program provides education, training and support to foster parents, relative caregivers and non-related extended family members caring for a foster child or youth.

## Post-Secondary Education Terms

**California Community Colleges (CCC)** – California's network of 112 campuses offer students a range of short-term certificate programs, two-year associate degrees or the opportunity to transfer to a four-year college.

**California State University (CSU)** - The CSU system includes 23 campuses across California and offers qualified students a path towards a four-year bachelor's degree.

**University of California (UC)** - The CSU system includes 10 campuses across California and offers qualified students a path towards a four-year bachelor's degree. Admissions standards are more stringent than at CSUs.

**Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)** – Programs at each CSU and UC designed to improve access and retention of historically low-income and educationally disadvantaged students

**Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS)** - All California Community College's offer EOPS. The program's primary goal is to encourage the enrollment, retention and transfer of disadvantaged students and to help them complete their goals and objectives in college.

**Guardian Scholars** - Many campuses have programs specifically to support current and former foster youth, often known as Guardian Scholars or Renaissance Scholars. These programs can provide academic advising, housing assistance, tutoring, mentoring, financial assistance, counseling and social activities.

**Foster Youth Success Initiative (FYSI)** - FYSI is a project of the Community College Chancellor's office. Each community college campus has a foster youth liaison designated to assist foster youth to access financial aid, scholarships, student services and other resources.

**Financial Aid** - Grants, loans and other forms of financial assistance available from the federal government, State of California and private sources to pay the tuition costs and living expenses for students enrolled in post-secondary education.

**Priority Registration (AB 194)** - This bill, which went into effect in 2012 allows foster youth to register for classes at community colleges, CSUs and some UCs prior to the general population.

**Talent Search** - One of the Federally funded "TRIO" programs that identifies and assists individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds who have the potential to succeed in higher education.

## Other Acronyms and Terms

**California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE)** - In California, all high school students must pass a test to earn a high school diploma. The test is called the CAHSEE. Some students with disabilities do not have to pass this test.

**Foster Youth Services (FYS)** - FYS programs, housed in County Offices of Education, provide educational advocacy and support services to foster children who suffer the traumatic effects of displacement from family and schools and multiple placements in foster care.

**Independent City** - A fun and informative "game of life" that allows youth to enjoy hands on experience where they try out their life skills through accomplishing various tasks.

**Workforce Investment Board (WIB)** - Local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) oversee the delivery of workforce services relevant to their local residents and businesses. They also bring together business leaders to respond to local workforce needs. Although each WIB has its own charter, organization, and unique context, they all operate local One-Stop Career Centers, which provide workforce, education, and business services.