



Washington Office of Superintendent of **PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

Foster Care Outcomes

1. **Purpose:**

With the recognition of the critical role education plays in improving outcomes for youth in foster care, the purpose of SHB 2254 (Foster Care—Education Success, 2012 Session) is to:

- a. Improve the high school graduation outcomes of foster youth through coordinated P–20 and child welfare outreach, intervention, and planning; and provide improved postsecondary outcomes.
- b. Facilitate the on-time grade level progression and graduation of students who are dependent.
- c. Provide for our students in foster care: wraparound educational advocacy services; mandate the timely transmission of educational records; recognize the importance of maintaining a foster child in the school program he or she was in before entering the foster care system and minimizing the number of times a child has to change schools.
- d. Increase/improve dependent student access to and participation regarding post-secondary scholarship opportunities.
- e. Increase/improve cross-system collaboration between education, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) and the Administrative Office of the Courts.

2. **Description of services provided:**

The Foster Care Education Program Supervisor at the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has accomplished the following tasks during the 2020–21 fiscal year:

- a. Collaborated closely with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to secure agreements between local school districts and their respective child welfare field offices committing to specific strategies for communication and collaboration, including implementing a new process for cost sharing of school transportation when needed.
- b. Successfully managed the Graduation Success Demonstration Site contract and the Educational Advocacy contract.
- c. Improved access to educational information regarding children and youth in foster care in Washington state public schools by establishing clear and consistent communication with the field through GovDelivery, and providing

- training to school districts, social workers, Educational Service Districts, advocacy organizations, foster parent organizations, and contractors.
- d. Supported a statewide system of foster care liaisons whose duty it is to ensure that their individual districts are collaborating with DCYF, service providers, and contractors. These staff also ensure that students receive the services they are entitled to by law.
 - e. Worked with the U.S. Department of Education on a pilot to develop a national platform to exchange information between state foster care points of contact.
 - f. Participated in the American Bar Association (ABA) national Foster Care Community of Practice.
 - g. Developed a legislative proposal to improve the framework of support for students in foster care by requiring a foster care building point of contact in every school.
 - h. Collaborated with the Court Improvement Training Academy (CITA) to provide training to dependency court judicial officers re: educational stability for students in foster care.
 - i. Participated in the following workgroups to ensure the needs of school-aged children and youth in foster care and the schools they attend are represented in higher level collaboration efforts:
 - 1) Court Improvement Program Grant Steering Committee (now known as the Innovative Dependency Court Collaborative)
 - 2) Children, Youth, and Family Citizen Review Panel
 - 3) Project Education Impact
 - 4) Passport Leadership Team
 - 5) Commission on Children in Foster Care

3. **Criteria for receiving services and/or grants:**

SHB 2254 does not include grants of other direct funding to local districts.

Beneficiaries in 2020-21 School Year:

Number of School Districts:	295
Number of Schools:	0
Number of Students:	0
Number of Educators:	0
Other:	0

Number of OSPI staff associated with this funding (FTEs): 1.0

Number of contractors/other staff associated with this funding: 0.0

FY21 Funding: State Appropriation: \$123,000

Federal Appropriation: \$0
Other fund sources: \$0
TOTAL (FY21) \$123,000

4. **Are federal or other funds contingent on state funding?**

- No
 Yes, please explain.

5. **State funding history:**

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
FY21	\$123,000	\$123,000
FY20	\$123,000	\$123,000
FY19	\$123,000	\$121,429
FY18	\$123,000	\$123,000
FY17	\$123,000	\$120,988
FY16	\$123,000	\$123,000
FY15	\$123,000	\$116,454
FY14	\$123,000	\$123,000
FY13	\$128,000	\$108,004

6. **Number of beneficiaries (e.g., school districts, schools, students, educators, other) history:**

Fiscal Year	Number of Districts
FY21	295
FY20	295
FY19	295

7. **Programmatic changes since inception (if any):**

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) reauthorized federal education law in 2015, with provisions ensuring school stability for students in foster care. This legislation required school districts to designate a point of contact to ensure students in foster care receive services specified in the new provisions. Districts are also required to collaborate with child welfare agencies to implement clear written procedures related to transportation. OSPI and DCYF updated the Regional Education Agreement, which each school district signs, to reflect these requirements. The agreement addresses enrollment, record transfers, transportation, and joint education planning.

In addition, state legislation enacted in 2016 (HB 1999) mandated that administration of the Graduation Success Demonstration Sites and Education Advocacy programs serving foster youth be transferred from the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (priorly known as the Department of Social and Health Services) to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. The transition has allowed OSPI to facilitate better working relationships with school districts, and better communication with the providers.

In 2021, the state legislature passed SB 5184, requiring all districts to designate a foster care building point of contact in every school. This agency request legislation was based on feedback from districts and community partners.

With the closure of schools in March 2020, much of OSPI's work has moved to a virtual environment, which has increased training opportunities for districts. During the 2020–21 school year, OSPI provided monthly liaison forums and monthly "office hours" for school district liaisons. In addition, OSPI provided regional trainings for DCYF staff, school districts, and community partners to increase awareness of federal and state requirements and improve collaboration between schools and child welfare.

8. **Evaluations of program/major findings:**

In 2013, the graduation rate for students in foster care in Washington was 36.5%. As federal and state legislation has been implemented, that rate has grown to 50.4% in 2020. Efforts to improve outcomes include strategies to support educational stability and immediate access. Programs such as Graduation Success, which provide intensive, individual support, show promising results with increased graduation rates.

9. **Major challenges faced by the program:**

As COVID shuttered schools, and all work went online, there were many challenges for students in foster care. School districts and our partners at Treehouse worked diligently to ensure students had the tools needed to be successful at accessing school, including devices, internet hotspots, homework packets, and meals. Many foster parents struggled with facilitating remote school which made resources like Treehouse and Boys & Girls Clubs invaluable.

One consistent challenge is that DCYF caseworkers often lack awareness of their legal obligations under state and federal law. Districts report that students are frequently moved to new foster care placements with no communication to schools, often resulting in students missing school.

Also, as school districts strive to comply with the requirements under ESSA and state law, the need for technical assistance has grown. Providing regular online training

and professional development opportunities to school districts has been an effective way to address this challenge. As the program grows, there is a need for additional support in the foster care education office at OSPI.

10. **Future opportunities:**

With the new building point of contact legislation, there is an improved framework of support for students in foster care. With both state and federal legislation focused on improving the educational outcomes of youth in foster care, an array of strategies to support these students has been implemented. Improved educational stability, coordinated interagency collaboration, and individual student services pave the way for Washington to be a leader in the nation with respect to dependent youth graduating from high school, enrolling in postsecondary education, and completing postsecondary education.

11. **Statutory and/or budget language:**

ESSB 5092 Sec. 1501 (1)(i) - \$123,000 of the general fund--state appropriation for fiscal year 2020 and \$123,000 of the general fund--state appropriation for fiscal year 2021 are provided solely for implementation of chapter 163, Laws of 2012 (Foster Care Outcomes). OSPI shall annually report each December on the implementation of the state's plan of cross-system collaboration to promote educational stability and improve education outcomes of foster youth.

12. **Other relevant information:**

N/A

13. **Schools/districts receiving assistance:**

See [OSPI's 2021 Grantee List](#).

14. **Program Contact Information:**

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