Social Worker's Practice Guide to Education

for Children and Youth in Foster Care

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24 to 72 Hours (Placement or Placement Change)

OUTCOMES	TASKS AND ACTIONS
Basic education information collected	*Task:* **The following education information should be documented on the FamLink Education Pages):** • Name and location of current school or early learning program, grade level, teacher's name, education evaluations, and Individual Education Plan (IEP), Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or 504 plan. *Task:* **The placement coordinator or the assigned social worker must attempt to place child/youth in the same school district or as close as possible whenever practical and in the best interest of the child (RCW 74.13.550).**
Child/youth enrolled in school	*Task:* **If the child/youth will remain in his/her current school.** • Notify the school of the child's/youth's placement in out-of-home care and arrange for immediate transportation, if necessary. • Work with school, caregivers, and volunteers to develop a sustainable transportation plan. • See that the child/youth has necessary items he/she may need to continue going to school (e.g. clothes, supplies, glasses, etc.). • Provide the school a copy of the Shelter Care Order. **OR** *Task:* **If the child/youth needs to be enrolled in a new school.** • Notify the child's/youth's school of origin that he/she has been placed in foster care (attendance call). • Arrange for the child/youth to be enrolled in a new school within three school days of placement. • If special education or 504 was indicated in the FamLink Education Pages, make sure the new school is aware of status. If no information was indicated in the FamLink Education Pages, confirm with the child's/youth's school of origin any special education or 504 involvement. • Contact the new school regarding any immediate safety issues and/or service needs the child/youth may have. • For high school students meet with school counselor to review classes and credit needed for graduation. • See that the child/youth has necessary items to continue going to school (e.g. clothes school supplies, glasses, etc.). • Provide the school a copy of the Shelter Care Order.
Supported and timely transition for children and youth moving to another foster home that requires a school change	*Task:* **Early Planning for school transition with the child's current school.** • Attempt to schedule move at a natural break in the school year (end of a quarter, school breaks, summer). • Whenever possible work with the child's school to allow them to remain in their current school until a natural break in the school year. • Allow for closure by communicating with child/youth, school staff about upcoming move. • Work with school for credit accrual even if the youth will not be there until the end of grading period. • When a child in special education or has a 504 plan is changing schools request a copy of the most recent IEP or 504 plan and that it be transferred to the new school as soon as possible. • Whenever possible see to it that child has an opportunity to visit the new school prior to enrollment. • Provide new caregivers with updated school information.

72 Hours to 45 Days

OUTCOMES	TASKS AND ACTIONS	
Child Health and Education screening report completed	*Task:*	*Review the Child Health and Education screening report. If any critical issues or concerns are identified before the completion of the screening process, the screening specialist is responsible for bringing them to the attention of the social worker.*
First Shared Planning Meeting convened	*Task:*	*Review and address education issues.* • At the first shared planning meeting review any critical issues or concerns identified by the Child Health and Education screening specialist. • Address education recommendations in the child's/ youth's report to the court. • Discuss and assign/review education related roles and responsibilities. • Discuss child's visitation plan and other appointments, attempt to schedule during non-school hours. • Contact child's/youth's school to arrange a meeting with school or early learning program teacher. Parents, caregivers, CASA volunteers, and other service providers should be invited, as appropriate.
Child (birth to 3) enrolled in early intervention services, if appropriate	*Task:*	*If a child has been identified as having a developmental delay and has been referred to the Early Support for Infants and Toddlers Program (ESITP), collaborate with the Family Resources Coordinator and the child's caregivers to enroll the child in appropriate services.* • Participate in the development and implementation of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), along with the child's parents and caregivers, as appropriate, as part of the IFSP Team, to ensure coordination between the IFSP and ISSP processes. The IFSP meeting is to be held within 45 days after the referral to ESITP. • Participate, as appropriate, in IFSP reviews throughout the child's participation in early intervention services. • Participate, as appropriate, in the transition planning process when children exit out of early intervention services at age 3, and if eligible, move into early childhood special education services through the local school district.
Child (ages 3 to 5) enrolled in early learning or early special education program	*Task:*	*Refer the child and family to community-based early learning and development programs such as Head Start, ECEAP, or community early learning programs.* • If applicable, review the IEP. • Review the Child Health and Education screening report and FamLink Education Pages. If concerns are identified, refer the child for further evaluation and assessment to the school district where the child is enrolled. • Participate, as appropriate, in the development and implementation of the IEP throughout the child's placement in pre-school special education services. • Assist with transition planning for children moving from special education services into kindergarten.

Ongoing Education Documentation and Planning

OUTCOMES	TASKS AND ACTIONS
Education information is documented and regularly updated	***Task:*** ***Document education related information.*** • FamLink Education Pages and the child/youth's case files are regularly updated and complete. • Document education meeting in case notes. • Case file contains school records and reports. • Education planning is documented in the FamLink Education Pages. The child's/youth's FamLink Education Pages identify the specific strengths and needs of the child/youth and is regularly updated. Additional services or needs of the child/youth are identified. Attach the most resent report card or transcript and the Education Plan to the report to the court. • If an Education Advocate is involved be sure to document involvement and include all pertinent information provided.
School planning meeting held with the child's school (Recommended within the first 60 days of new placement)	***Task:*** ***Work with caregivers and child/youth school to schedule a meeting to address general education issues.*** • If applicable, review IEP/IFSP/504. • If education or academic concerns were noted in the Child Health and Education screening report, request the school complete a thorough assessment and provide appropriate intervention and support services. • Review roles and responsibilities as assigned at the shared planning meeting. • Discuss any physical, emotional, or behavioral health issues that impair the child's/youth's ability to learn, interact appropriately, or attend school regularly. • Review child's/youth's progress. Discuss any attendance or discipline issues. • Identify any needed supports or services (e.g. tutoring, evaluations, therapy). • Identify any extra curricular or after school activities the child/youth currently does or wants to participate in.
Ongoing Shared Planning Meetings convened	***Task:*** ***Review and address education issues.*** • Address education recommendations in the child's/ youth's FamLink Education Pages. • Discuss and assign/review education related roles and responsibilities. • Discuss child's visitation plan and other appointments, attempt to schedule during non-school hours. • Contact child's/youth's school to arrange a meeting with school or early learning program teacher. Parents, caregivers, CASA volunteers, and other service providers should be invited, as appropriate.
Child/youth is prepared to progress to the next grade level	***Task:*** ***Support the child/youth to make sure he/she is prepared to progress to the next grade level.*** • Work with caregivers to monitor the child's/youth's academic progress and test scores. • Advocate with the school system for appropriate services to address any academic delays.
Youth is prepared for high school graduation and higher education or training (9th through 12th grades)	***Task:*** ***Support the youth to make sure he/she is on track for high school graduation.*** • Work with the youth to identify graduation requirements and monitor progress in meeting those requirements (refer to class credit requirements). • Ensure the IEP team focuses on transition planning for youth in special education. • Contact the regional Independent Living program manager for additional resources and information to help support education progress and planning.

Ongoing Education Planning

OUTCOMES	TASKS AND ACTIONS
All children and youth returning home and moving to a new school	*Task:* **Planning for Transition with the new school.** • Prepare child/youth's parent(s) to take on educational responsibilities (e.g. communication with the child's school, creating a proper study environment at home, understanding the IEP). • Let the new school know with as much notice as possible that the child is coming. • Whenever possible see to it that child has an opportunity to visit the new school prior to enrollment. • Verify that the most recent IEP or 504 plan has transferred to the new school. If not provide them with your copy.
Youth has completed all necessary applications for post-secondary education opportunities (usually 11th and 12th grades)	*Task:* **Actively involve youth in post-high school planning, including options for post-secondary education and training.** • If ACT or SAT tests are needed, work with youth to register for exams and complete process for requesting waiver for testing fees. • Work with youth, parents and caregivers to complete applications for college, training programs, Education and Training Voucher program and other post-secondary opportunities. • Work with youth, parents and caregivers to apply for financial aid and scholarships. • Work with youth to develop a plan for housing, employment, mentoring, and other needed resources to make a successful transition from high school to post-secondary education or training.
All youth exiting care at 18 or older have the necessary information and documentation for successful transition to post-secondary education or training	*Task:* **Assist youth in obtaining the following documents and information prior to exiting care.** • Birth certificate • WA state identification • Social security card • Proof of citizenship or residency status • A letter confirming foster care status (see sample letter in appendix page.) • Any additional documentation of disabilities including: IEP, 504 and most recent copy of special education evaluation IDEA mandates all youth graduating with an IEP have written description of their disability. • Copies of Health and Education history/information • If applicable, information on obtaining or continuing health coverage

Introduction

introduction

Educational achievement is a critical component of overall child wellbeing. For children and youth in foster care studies have shown they do not fare as well as their peers in school. In 2001 the Washington State Institute for Public Policy conducted the study Educational Attainment of Foster Youth: Achievement and Graduation Outcomes for Children in State Care. In comparison to other students, this study found that foster children and youth:

• Score 15 to 20% lower on achievement tests.

• Are 57% more likely not to graduate form high school.

• repeat a grade, change schools or enroll in special education at twice the rate of their peers.

Again in 2009, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy studied achievement and graduation outcomes for children and youth in foster care and found they had not improved. Compared to their peers, children and youth in foster care were:

More likely to be a racial or ethnic minority (37% to 45% versus 28%)

More likely to have a reported disability (28% to 42% versus 10%)

More likely to attend three or more schools in a school year (12% versus 1%)

Less likely to be in the same school during the entire school year (49% to 61% versus 88%)

More likely to be behind at least one grade level (10% to 14% versus 5%)

Less likely to graduate (OSPI reports 52% compared to 85%)

Education advocacy means supporting a student to be successful in school. Many people can be an education advocate for a child: a parent, a teacher, a foster or relative caregiver, a social worker, or a CASA volunteer. For dependent children and youth placed in out-of-home care by the Children's Administration, it is important that the child's social worker define what parts or roles in advocacy a person involved in the student's life will play.

This guide is intended to be a resource for Children's Administration social workers to increase their collaboration with schools and to increase education stability and achievement for children and youth in out-of-home care. This guide contains general education information. It is recommended that social workers refer to the TeamChild manual, *Make a Difference in a Child's Life: A Manual for Helping Children and Youth Get What They Need in School* for more detailed information on legal matters, special education, discipline and truancy issues. The guide is available for download at http://www.teamchild.org/resources.html.

While this guide references social workers working with dependent children and youth in out-of-home care, the information presented can be applied across programs to children and youth both in in-home and out-of-home placements.

Roles and Responsibilities

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Social Workers

When it comes to education planning, it is the social worker's role to make sure that a child's/youth's educational needs are met. This includes planning, service delivery, progress monitoring and record maintenance. Social workers are expected to clearly define and explain roles and responsibilities among caregivers, parents and others involved in a child's or youth's life.

The social worker may delegate responsibility for the child's education to another adult. Depending on circumstances this may include- the child's or youth's parent, caregiver, CASA volunteer, or another service provider or specialist. However, the social worker has the ultimate responsibility to ensure that the child's well-being needs are met, including education.

Please note: that the person responsible for representing a student who is eligible for special education services is subject to specific rules, which are discussed later in this guide in the Special Education section.

Ways social workers can support education advocacy:

- Provide children with enrollment continuity by placing them in the same school district whenever possible and, when a school change is inevitable, enrolling them in a new school within 3 days
- Provide school with a copy of the Shelter Care Order
- Engage the child/youth in academic planning and education decision making
- Develop education goals and outcomes in consultation with Child Health and Education Track (CHET) screening specialists, caregivers, parents, educators and other pertinent individuals
- Develop the child/youth's educational planning in the FamLink Educataion Pages
- Attend school planning, 504 plan, IFSP or Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings. Communicating regularly with all parties involved in child's education planning

- Make sure children from birth to 5 years of age are referred to an appropriate early learning program (e.g. Early Support for Infants and Toddlers Program (ESITP), Early Head Start, Head Start, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), Medicaid Treatment Child Care (MTCC)), and/ or to school districts for children aged 3 and above, for a special education referral if the child appears to have learning, social or developmental challenges that might benefit from specially designed instruction
- Plan for post-secondary education and training with older youth
- Address barriers to educational access (e.g., fees, fines, lost books, eye glasses, hearing aids, transportation, interpreters, etc.)
- Gather education documentation for the child/youth's case file
- Coordinate and following up with all elements of the child's/youth's education plan
- Update assigned responsibilities when there is a change in placement
- If youth is 16 or older and has an IEP, making sure the IEP involves transition planning and coordinate school based IEP's with Children's Administration required Living Learning Plans
- Notify the school in writing of any changes in the duration or delegation of authority
- When changing placement, making sure the new caregiver has pertinent education documentation, such as the IEP or 504 Plan
- When a child is returning home, work with caregivers and parents/relatives to prepare for educational transition. This includes meeting with the school, consistency in a stable school work environment, adequate resources and maintaining expectations of success

Child or Youth

It is important for children and youth in out-of-home care to be in charge of their education plans. They need to be consulted, and they need to know that their education belongs to them and is their responsibility. By middle school (grades 6 through 8), youth should be participating in their own education planning.

Ways youth may be engaged in their own education planning:
- Monitor their own academic progress (Many schools have online access to a student's grades and missing assignments, updated weekly)
- Attend school regularly and enrolling in the proper classes to meet graduation requirements
- Complete all homework assignments and preparing for tests
- For youth receiving Special Education services, actively participating in their IEP meetings
- Participate in services that will help to make up for lost credits or will provide help for a youth who needs to catch up

Youth Participation

Decision making is a learned life skill. If youth learn a step-by-step decision making process early in life, these steps can become habit over time. Adolescence is a critical decision making time in a person's life.

Ways youth can participate in decision making:
- Attend all education meetings, including IEPs, starting at age 8 or 9, or as developmentally appropriate
- Identify their own strengths as well as what they need to work on
- Plan for post-secondary education or training, learning about careers and developing interests in community and volunteer activities
- Get involved in school activities such as sports, drama, art, music or after school programs – this will increase their connections to school, peers and community

Parents and Caregivers

Parents

There are great advantages to having a parent participate in education planning when it is possible. It allows parents to be involved in their child's life in a safe and supported way.

When a child is in out of home care, parents can still attend school meetings, IEP meetings and parent/teacher conferences. Parents can also keep up with what their children learn by asking them about their school day, what they study in class and helping them with their homework during visits.

Caregivers

Caregivers play a key role in the day-to-day day academic success of children in their care. If the social worker determines that the caregiver will serve as primary person responsible for the child's academic progress, the social worker must prepare the caregiver for that role. This could include familiarizing caregivers with the education rights of children/youth in foster care, developing a communication plan for sharing information on the child's/youth's educational status, and providing a method or process for monitoring the child's/youth's progress with the caregiver.

Social workers should also include education as a topic at regular meetings with caregivers, and teach caregivers how to understand report cards and attendance records.

Ways caregivers can support education:

- Ensure the child attends school on a regular basis
- Communicate regularly with the school and the social worker
- Participate in school activities (i.e., homework, parent teacher meetings, extra curricular activities) as outlined in the education plan
- Make sure the child has appropriate school supplies, clothing and equipment
- Attend school planning meeting and assuming responsibilities as agreed upon in the FamLink Education Pages
- Identify and communicating educational needs that come up in the course of homework or parent-teacher conferences
- Make sure that the social worker receives copies of all school and student information such as grades, transcripts, IEPs, etc.
- Create an environment that supports education (i.e., regular homework time, reading to younger children, visits to the library, etc)

Schools

The school's primary role is to provide appropriate academic instruction and a supportive learning environment that will promote educational success for all children and youth in out-of-home care.

In Washington State much of education is locally controlled. Within your area there are many different school districts; each interpreting their legal obligations a little differently and using different forms, curricula, and high school graduation requirements.

It is important for local offices and social workers to develop relationships with their local schools to facilitate easy and open communication. Inviting school personnel to be part of community boards or other team committees can introduce and help to familiarize them with the foster care system.

School District Agreements

As of 2009, it is expected Children's Administration have a working agreement with each school district in Washington State outlining how to support children and youth in out-of-home care. Social workers should check to see what provisions regarding communication, collaboration, training and transportation are outlined in any existing agreements between their regional office and local school districts.

Ways schools can support education:

- Protect the child's/youth's confidentially regarding his/her status as a foster child
- Engage the child's/youth's caregiver and social worker in the education system
- Recognize there may be multiple caregivers and professionals in a student's life
- Assist high school students with transition services, and planning for and applying for post-secondary programs and scholarships
- Report suspected abuse and/or neglect that jeopardize the child's safety, health and well-being
- Convene an academic planning or IEP meeting for students

Education Advocacy Program

Sometimes your best efforts at resolving education issues may not be enough. The Education Advocacy Program is available statewide to assist children and youth, social workers and caregivers with difficult education issues. Education Advocacy Coordinators (EAC) are stationed in each region to provide advocacy interventions for eligible children and youth, who have been identified as having unmet educational needs.

What education issues does the education advocacy program address?

Education issues addressed by the program include but are not limited to:

• Access to additional school services

• Reduction of school discipline

• Increase in attendance

• Enrollment/school continuity

• Ensuring academic and grade progression

• Credit transition & retrieval

• Increasing self-advocacy

What types of advocacy will be offered?

Direct Advocacy – for educational cases requiring more intensive advocacy, the EA Coordinator will directly intervene to resolve the situation. Examples include: school enrollment or placement crisis, school discipline issues, accessing services such as Special Education.

Consultation – providing the caregivers, youth or social workers with the advocacy steps, strategies and tools to address the situation themselves with support from the EA Coordinator. Examples include school communication conflicts, accessing services such as 504 plans, attendance issues.

Information and Referral – when a situation can be resolved by providing educational information, local resources or referrals to the appropriate agency or service. The EA Coordinator(s) in each region will have access to necessary information to assist youth. Examples include resources on alternative education programs, community tutoring services, and special education laws.

Who is eligible for the program?

Any child or youth who is placed in out-of-home care is eligible for the program.

Who can make a referral for education advocacy?

All referrals need to be initiated by the child/youth's social worker or by CHET screeners.

In addition to direct support, the EA Coordinators also provide local training to social workers, caregivers, and community providers.

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs)/Guardians ad Litem

CASA volunteers and/or Guardian ad Litems may by appointed by the court to represent the best interests of the child in dependency matters. They are also invested in ensuring that the child is successful in school and that his/her educational needs are being met.

CASA volunteers routinely contact school personnel to understand how the child is progressing and to identify any areas of concern. CASA volunteers frequently attend IEP meetings and other meetings directly related to the educational needs of the child. The CASA volunteer's role is to advocate for the child and to inform the court of services that the child needs, including educational services.

It is important to partner with the child's CASA and/or Guardian ad Litem to ensure that all the child's needs are identified and addressed.

Early Learning (Birth to Five)

Children in out of home care, with few exceptions, should participate in some type of early learning program, especially between the critical ages of three to five.

It is important for the social worker to connect and coordinate with the service providers in these programs in order to assure that children are ready to enter kindergarten.

Why is early learning important?

Children are born ready to learn. Research has shown that from 0 to 5 years, the brain develops faster than at any other time during an individual's life. Early learning programs have been shown to increase this learning process by helping children progress developmentally, socially, and cognitively in their language and math abilities. Kindergarten teachers report that children who attend early learning/preschool are more prepared for school than their classmates who did not. It is important that children in care have every opportunity to learn, and are as ready for school as possible.

Children raised in safe, stimulating environments are more independent, more creative, and more willing to take growth-producing risks. Early learning starts at birth and happens not only in center-based early learning programs, but also in high-quality child care settings, informal learning environments such as play groups or family friend and neighbor care, and at home with caregivers. For this reason it is crucial that all adults involved in a child's life-including caregivers and social workers-understand the impact they have on a child's development, and put measures in place that best support the child's learning needs.

What types of early learning services are available?

Both Head Start and Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP) prioritize children in foster care, and offer free part-day early learning programs for children in out of home placements. Other high-quality early learning programs throughout Washington State accept child-care

subsidies and/or offer sliding scale tuitions. One important point to remember: the quality of the early learning program matters. Look for:

- Small classroom sizes
- Low teacher-to-child ratios, and how much individual attention each child receives
- Family centered, encouraging participation from parents/caregivers, as they play a crucial part in the child's development
- The teacher's education and qualifications
- Currently licensed and accredited programs, or programs that follow accreditation standards
- Maintained and age-appropriate facilities

For more information on early learning programs and services, visit the Washington State Department of Early Learning website: http://www.del.wa.gov

What if I have concerns about a child's development?

Birth to Three
When a CHET Screening Specialist identifies a developmental concern for a child aged birth to three, the Specialist will make a referral to the Family Resources Coordinator (FRC) with the social workers must make a referral to ESITP within 2 days when a developmental concern for a child birth to three is noted after the CHET screening process has been completed.

Ages Three to Five
When developmental concerns are identified for children aged three to five, the child should be referred to the local school district for further evaluation. To do so, please contact WithinReach/FamLink Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588.

Kindergarten Readiness
Kindergarten readiness means children entering kindergarten meet minimum eligibility criteria that will allow him/her to participate in a kindergarten classroom at a social/emotional and cognitive level within the normal range of other students in the same class.

Why is kindergarten readiness important?
Kindergarten is the foundation of a successful education experience. If a child is not doing well in kindergarten, it is an indicator that he/she will likely have problems in subsequent school years if early concerns are not addressed. Children who do poorly in early elementary grades usually fall behind and stay behind unless interventions take place.

How do I know if a child is kindergarten ready?
Children will sometimes not excel in all areas that are reviewed for "readiness". However, a child should have the following general attributes and an ability to perform many of the tasks on the following Kindergarten Check List.

Kindergarten Check List

Language & Communication

Recognizes their name and a few written words

Understands that written words have meaning and that reading will unlock the meaning

Scribbles and pretends to read and write

Uses symbols, signs and pictures as a way to communicate

Listens and takes turns speaking. Asks questions and makes comments about a story or a conversation

Follows simple verbal instructions

Can tell about events or an experience in a logical sequence

Can connect a story to their life experiences

Has an increasing vocabulary

Initiates conversation with peers and adults

What if a child is not ready?

If a five-year-old child is not "ready" for kindergarten, the social worker should consult with the school to see if a special education evaluation or delayed entry into kindergarten would be appropriate. During the intervening year, kindergarten readiness activities should be intensively incorporated into the child's child care or home routine on a daily basis so that he/she will be "ready" the following year. Delaying entry into school is usually preferable to setting the child up for frustration and failure in a classroom situation that could lead to aversion to school.

When should I have a child professionally assessed for kindergarten readiness?

All children placed in out of home care for thirty days or longer are assessed as a part of the CHET screening process for physical, developmental, educational and emotional status. Education concerns are addressed within these standards. If a child seems delayed in any of those areas, he/she should be referred to a birth-to-three Family Resource Coordinator or if over three, to a school district for a referral for evaluation. If it is determined that the child should be assessed, these services are provided at no cost.

More information on school readiness and early learning benchmarks can be found at: http://www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/Benchmarks.aspx

Spatial Relationships	Social Readiness	Math Skills	Patterns & Relationships
Can identify colors and shapes	Curious and motivated to learn	Can count to 10 by rote	Pays attention to repeating sounds in language such as words that begin with 'B' or rhyming sounds
Can sort and classify objects by colors and shapes	Is learning name, address and phone number	Can begin to recognize numbers	Begins to understand the concepts of time such as "today", "yesterday", "tomorrow"
Can complete a simple puzzle	Can spend short periods of time away from family	Begins to understand that numbers represent quantity	Can move self in time to different patterns of beat and rhythm
Can build with blocks	Has basic problem solving skills (Bird feeder is empty, so we should put more seed in)	Can begin to count objects while understanding the representational meaning of "one block, two blocks, three blocks…"	
	Enjoys being with other children		
	Is learning to finish tasks and is helpful with family chores		
	Is learning to share and wait his/her turn		
	Respects adult leadership		
	Is learning self control		

K-12 Education

k-12 education

Placement Changes and Educational Stability

The school setting is often the most stabilizing environment for children and youth in out-of-home care. On-going relationships with teachers and peers provide the needed social and emotional support that will help them stay in school. Children should remain in their current school unless it is determined that issues of safety or other circumstances would prevent it. Movement between schools should preferably take place at logical breaks in the school year such as at the end of a marking period, semester or school year.

Decisions about school placement should be made collaboratively by the placement coordinator, social worker, the new caregiver and school personnel. *"It is the policy of the state of WA that, whenever practical and in the best interest of the child, children placed into foster care shall remain enrolled in the schools they were attending at the time they entered foster care." RCW 74.13.550.*

The Children's Administration is committed to placing children and youth within, or close to, their school of origin.

When making placement decisions, the parties involved in making that determination should consider the following:

• The student's academic, social and emotional needs

• Safety or other risk factors

• Schedule/credit concerns for high school students (i.e., block vs. regular schedule)

• Therapeutic services/relationships

• The previous mobility of the student as well as potential plans for reunification

• Travel distance and length of bus ride, given child's age/developmental level

• Ability for continued participation in before or after school activities/clubs

• Input from the student, if age appropriate

Transitions

When a child/youth transitions from foster home to foster home, it is important to try to keep them at the same school whenever possible, especially if you are not sure that it is going to be permanent. A school change, if necessary, can be made at the end of the school year or at least at a natural school break such as grading-period end or vacation. If a youth does have to move, make sure enrollment is immediate, providing the new school with any missing documentation such as immunizations or IEP. Don't assume that they will get those records from the old school in a timely way.

For children and youth receiving special education services it is important for parents/guardians to understand the IEP process. An IEP follows a child/youth, so a new school must honor an existing IEP from another school. When returning a child or youth home, make sure the parent/ guardians have a copy of the IEP and encourage them to meet with the school to better understand the IEP and how they can participate in their child/youth's education.

When a child is transitioning back into the birth home, adoptive home or guardianship placement it is important that parents/guardians get to know their children's school, teachers and daily school routines. Maintaining consistent school habits, such as arriving on time, attending after-school programs and having a regular homework time and place, will help students succeed in school when they move home. Parents/guardians should talk to teachers to better understand the strengths and needs of their children, so they can help them at home, such as reading to them, listening as they read or just being there for homework help.

School Enrollment and Registration

In order to facilitate a successful school transition when a move is unavoidable, it is helpful for social workers provide the child/youth's school with a letter from Children's Administration that contains the following:

• The caregivers name, home address and telephone number,

• Name of the person who has authority to sign for field trips, absences, etc.

• A request that the social worker be listed as second parent to receive report cards and testing scores etc.

Every school district has a different method for enrolling students, but each district does have rules and procedures for

registration. It is helpful for social workers to find out early what the enrollment process is for the school districts in your jurisdiction.

The following is a list of information needed for school enrollment. (See the McKinney-Vento section below regarding exemptions for foster children in certain placements.):

■ Certification of child's name:
   • Birth certificate, baptismal certificate or a passport

■ Proof of Immunization: A list of required immunizations for school-aged children can be found at the Department of Health's website: http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/immunize/default.htm

■ Child's IEP, IFSP or 504 Plan

■ Name, place and address of the child's/youth's previous school

■ Report card and attendance record from previous school with school identification number

■ Knowledge of child's/youth's previous class placement: special education, general education, gifted class

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

This is a federal law which allows homeless youth to stay in their original school when they have to move and provides the transportation to make it happen. It also allows homeless youth to enroll in new schools quickly without having all their required paperwork, such as school records or immunizations.

Children and youth in foster care are considered homeless under this law when they are living in certain temporary placement such as:

• Short-term foster/relative or group homes,

• Receiving homes,

• Respite care in some situations,

• Crisis Residential Centers and Shelters.

If you have a youth that qualifies under this law, contact the Homeless Liaison at the school or district level. The name and contact information for local Homeless Liaisons are available at:
http://www.k12.wa.us/HomelessEd/pubdocs/HomelessLiaisonContactList.doc

For more information on McKinney-Vento refer to Child Welfare League of America at http://www.cwla.org/programs/

housing/mckinneyvento.htm and the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty at http://www.k12.wa.us/HomelessEd/pubdocs/PolicyBrief.doc

Academic Planning Meetings

School planning meetings are a helpful way for social workers, educators, children/youth and others involved in a young person's life to work together. It is recommended that these meetings be held within the first 60 days after a child/youth is placed in out-of-home care. This is a collaborative meeting, initiated by the social worker, to make sure that the child/youth is on track academically, and if he/she is being offered and provided the appropriate services to fit individual needs.

Strategies for social workers to support school planning meetings:

- Work in coordination with the child/youth's school to schedule the meeting. School personnel and the social worker may want to invite individuals involved in the child's/youth's life (e.g., child/youth, parents, caregivers, community providers, CASA volunteers, etc.) The social worker determines if and when it is appropriate for the parents and caregiver to attend the same meeting.

- Work with school personnel to develop an agenda for the meeting. This may include:
  - discussion about general education issues and development of yearly academic goals
  - requests for special education evaluations
  - services or supports the child/youth may currently need to receive (e.g., tutoring, evaluations, therapy or extracurricular activities, etc.)
  - identification of education requirements that need to be met in order for the child to be promoted to the next grade level or to reach high school graduation on time

- Review portions of the shelter care order with school personnel and facilitate a discussion about individual roles and participation.

- Make sure Children's Administration is listed as the secondary contact and will receive all correspondence (i.e., report cards, truancy notices, staffings, etc.).

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

As a general rule, Children's Administration records and information are confidential. (See RCW 13.50.100.) In many instances, Children's Administration may share information about children in shelter care and dependency status in order to meet the child's needs.

Even if the law gives social workers authority to share information, many situations require staff to use good judgment about what information should be shared, how and when to share it, and with whom. Foster children and their families are dealing with very sensitive issues, and only information relevant to education planning and safety for other students should be shared. Once released, information is included in a student's school file and is difficult to retrieve. Social workers should regularly consult with their supervisors if they are unsure about whether and how to share information. Social workers should make sure that caregivers understand what they can and cannot share.

For more detailed information please refer to *A Field Guide for Information Sharing, Helping Foster Children Achieve Educational Stability and Success*. The guide is available for download at http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/publications/22-1210.pdf

School Discipline and Student's Rights

Washington courts have required that the legislature define what level of "basic education" will be provided to all students and to fund schools to provide this basic level of education. A school district cannot take away a student's right to education without providing him or her with an opportunity to dispute the removal from school. School districts must have a very good reason to justify a permanent or indefinite removal of a student from school.

When a student is removed from school, an administrator (Principal or VP) must:

- Tell the student that he or she will be suspended or expelled
- Give reasons for the suspension/expulsion and explain which rule was broken
- Give the student a chance to tell his or her side of the story

The student has the right to:

- Make up the missed work if the suspension will have a substantial effect on grades or prevent the student from getting credit from the course
- Kindergarten to 4th graders cannot be short-term suspended for a total of more than 10 days in a term

- 5th graders and above cannot be short-term suspension for more than 15 days in a semester or 10 days in a trimester

For more detailed, comprehensive information please refer to the TeamChild Educational Advocacy Manual at www.teamchild.org and Washington Pave at www.washingtonpave.org

Truancy

Schools are required to take certain steps in response to unexcused absences:

1. After a single unexcused absence, the school must notify the parents.

2. After two unexcused absences, the school must schedule a conference with the parent and child to discuss the absences.

3. After five unexcused absences, a school may file a petition with superior court, enter into a written agreement with the family, or refer the family to a community truancy board.

4. After seven unexcused absences in a month or ten in a year, the school must file a truancy petition in superior court against the child, parent, or both.

a. Once a petition is filed, a preliminary hearing is held. In this hearing, evidence is heard from the parents, student, and the school district. If the truancy charge is found to be true, the court will order the child to attend school with minimum attendance requirements, obtain a drug and alcohol assessments, or other orders of compliance.

b. A student may be sent to an Attendance Workshop, if appropriate. Parents and students will also enter into an agreement to attend school regularly. If the agreement is broken, the family will be called to court to complete the truancy process.

If a student or parent violates the court order, they may be found in contempt. The family will be represented by a public attorney for this portion of the court proceedings. If a student is found in contempt, they can be ordered to write a report, complete community service hours, or spend time in secure detention. Parents found in contempt can be fined not more than $25 per day of absence.

High School Graduation Requirements

Beginning in the 2009-2010 school year, the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) was replaced by the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE). If a student has previously passed the WASL in a specific content area (e.g., reading), the student is not required to take the HSPE.

Requirements to graduate from high school are set by The Washington State Board of Education (www.sbe.wa.gov). However, local school districts have the authority to set graduation requirements in addition to state minimums. Contact the individual school district where the youth attends school to see if there are additional graduation requirements, or visit http://k12.wa.us/GraduationRequirements/Requirement-CAA-CIA.aspx

Class Credit Requirements in high school 2009-2012
English – 3 credits
Math – 2 credits
Social studies – 2.5 credits
Electives – 5.5 credits
Health and fitness – 2 credits
Science – 2 credits
Occupational education – 1 credit
Visual/performing arts – 1 credit

Class Credit Requirements in high school 2013 and beyond
English – 3 credits
Math – 3 credits
Social studies – 2.5 credits
Electives – 5.5 credits
Health and fitness – 2 credits
Science – 2 credits
Occupational education – 1 credit
Visual/performing arts – 1 credit

Certificate of Academic Achievement

The Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) Options is available for students who have strong skills but don't test well or just need another way to show what they know. Students can use the CAA options after taking the high school WASL/HSPE once, or if they transfer to a Washington public school in the 11th or 12th grade. There are specific requirements for these options and each option is designed to be as challenging as the WASL or HSPE.

The three CAA Options are:

- Submitting a "collection of evidence" consisting of student work showing they meet grade-level academic standards.

- AP/College Admission test scores: A student earns scores at or above a state-designated level on the SAT, ACT and Advanced Placement exams. See also http://k12.wa.us/Assessment/CAAoptions/default/aspx

- An HSPE/Grades Comparison: Comparing a student's grades in specified math or English/language arts classes with the grades for students who passed the test. (This option is only available to students in 12th grade with an overall cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of at least 3.2 on a 4.0 grading scale).

Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA)

The CIA is available for students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) who are unable to take the High School WASL/HSPE (with or without accommodations). As 10th graders, students in special education programs only earn a CIA by passing the WASL/HSPE-Modified (the High School WASL/HSPE with the passing score adjusted to Level 2) or Washington Alternate Assessment System Portfolio. In grades 11 and 12, students who have not yet earned a CIA may also use the Developmentally Appropriate Proficiency Exam (DAPE, formerly DAW), which allows students to take the HSPE at a grade level that best matches their abilities. To pass the DAW, students must earn Proficient (Level 3) on each test taken. Any testing accommodations used must be consistent with the student's IEP. Students with 504 Plans are not eligible to earn a CIA.

Students receiving special education services must pass state-approved special education reading, writing and math alternate assessments. (For more information you can review the handout "How Students in Special Education participate in State Testing at: http://www.k12.wa.us/Resources/pub-docs/SpecialEdTesting.pdf

Transfer Students and Special Cases

Guidelines have been established for students who have special, unavoidable circumstances (e.g., an extended illness, death of immediate family member, etc. See also http://k12.wa.us/Assessment/WaiverAppeals/SpecialCircumstances.aspx) or who transfer to a Washington public school during their 11th or 12th grade year (See also http://k12.wa.us/Assessment/WaiverAppeals/TransferWaiver.aspx). For transfer students, the process considers whether students have passed a high school assessment in their former state. In addition, these transfer students may access the CAA Options without first taking the WASL/HSPE.

The appeal process ONLY applies to the state's testing requirement for graduation. Students with special circumstances and those who move into the state during their 11th or 12th grade year need to ask their local school district how they can fulfill the other statewide graduation requirements.

The Washington State Board of Education has adopted and the state legislature has affirmed new public high school graduation requirements that take effect in 2008. Individual school districts may set graduation requirements beyond these state minimums. Contact the individual school district where the youth attends school to see if there are more expansive graduation requirements.

Culminating Project

Students must design and complete a project on a topic of their choice, and present their project to other students, teachers, parents and/or community members. This requirement offers students an opportunity to apply their learning in a "real world" way. Individual school districts set parameters for how students accomplish these projects.

"High School and Beyond" Plan

Students must outline how they plan to meet their high school graduation requirements and how they will spend their first year out of high school. Creating a plan will help students start thinking about their futures and focus on the courses they need to best prepare them for their career interests, no matter what direction they plan to take.

For more comprehensive information on graduation requirements you can download a copy of Graduation Requirements Handbook published by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction at: http://www.k12.wa.us/GraduationRequirements/FAQ.aspx

General Education Diploma (GED)

For some students, completing high school in a traditional classroom setting is not possible. For these youth, obtaining a GED may be the best option. Youth who obtain a GED may well be qualified to continue on to community college or even a university, depending on their personal circumstances.

Students should be counseled that obtaining a GED requires motivation, attendance, homework and tests, just like high school. Whenever possible, students should be encouraged complete their high school education. A high school diploma translates into the workplace more easily than a GED. Social workers and students should work together with the school to make an orderly transition from high school into a GED program.

Special Education

Birth to Three

Whenever there is a concern about a child's developmental progress a referral needs to be made to the Family Resources Coordinator (FRC) with the Early Support for Infants and Toddlers Program (ESITP). If a delay is suspected during the screening process, the CHET screener will make the referral. It is the social worker's responsibility to follow up on this referral or to make the referral if the concern has been noted after the screening process is complete.

To make a referral for an evaluation call WithinReach/Family Health hotline at 1-800-322-2588.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

Early intervention services are provided to eligible children and families through an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

An IFSP meeting must be held by the early intervention team and a plan developed within 45 calendar days after a referral has been received. The IFSP is an ongoing process that meets the changing needs of the child and family. It is reviewed at least every six months and rewritten on a yearly basis.

An IFSP includes but is not limited to:
- Present levels of functioning (i.e., what the child is doing now)
- Early Intervention services needed (e.g., how often, how long, where they will happen and who will pay for them)
- A written justification statement if services are not provided in a natural environment, (i.e., settings where children without disabilities are found)
- Timelines of when services begin and end, and when the plan is reviewed
- Other services needed that are not funded by ESITP and who can help find these services
- A transition plan prior to age three to preschool special education services

What to Expect at an IFSP Meeting

This is a collaborative meeting that seeks to coordinate needed services across health, education and social services systems. The Family Resource Coordinator is responsible for coordinating the IFSP meeting, and development and implementation of the IFSP. Participants at the IFSP meeting(s) should include:

- Parent(s) of the child, if appropriate
- Caregiver(s) of the child
- Family Resource Coordinator responsible for implementing the IFSP
- Other family members, an advocate, or person outside the family as requested by the family
- Persons directly involved in conducting the evaluation and assessments, or if unable to attend, arrangements should be made for sharing the information through other means
- Other service provider(s), as appropriate, to the child and family

Together the IFSP team will develop the plan and identify services needed to enhance the child's development. The plan is reviewed every six months and rewritten annually or more often if conditions warrant.

For more information on ESITP refer to http://www.del.wa.gov/ESITP/ or call WithinReach/Family Health hotline at 1-800-322-2588.

Ages Three to Five:

Preschool Special Education Services

When the child is transitioning from ESITP services, it is helpful for social workers to:

- Participate in the development and implementation of the IEP throughout the child's placement in preschool special education services
- Assist with transition planning for children entering into kindergarten, out of three-to-five special education services
- As appropriate, share resources and/or refer the child and family to community based early learning and care programs such as Head Start, ECEAP and other community early learning programs

Ages Three to Eighteen:

Requesting an Education Assessment

When developmental concerns, such as learning delays, emotional/behavioral challenges or health issues, are identified for children ages 3 to 5, refer the child for further evaluation and assessment to the school district where the child is enrolled (Childfind is the name of this services) or contact WithinReach/Family Health hotline at 1-800-322-2588 for more information.

When education concerns are noted for school age children, a written referral must be made to the child's/youth's school, documenting the concerns and requesting the school district evaluate the student for services under both IDEA and Section 504. Caregivers and social workers can make these referrals, but remember: it is not a formal referral unless it is in writing (there is a sample referral letter in the Teamchild Manual).

When a school decides to evaluate and gets consent they have 60 school days to evaluate the student. When they have finished, they will bring everyone back together to discuss the results. If a youth does not qualify for Special Education, he/she may still qualify for a 504 Plan which can provide some great support in the classroom. However, if the child transfers to a new school district, the new school must finish the evaluation from the previous school if it is incomplete within the original timeframes. With a youth who has already qualified, the new school can either adopt the existing IEP or create their own, but they cannot interrupt the delivery of services to the student.

It is important to note that just because a youth has a disability; it does not automatically qualify him or her for Special Education. The disability must interfere with learning.

For more information on evaluations refer to the TeamChild Educational Advocacy Manual at www.teamchild.org.

Individual Education Program (IEP)

When a youth qualifies for Special Education services, the youth will have an Individualized Education Plan, or an IEP. The IEP is a document that describes the specific services and accommodations that a child will receive.

An IEP should be tailored to a child and his or her educational needs, and it should include creative strategies for delivering services. IEP'S are reviewed once a year. IEP re-evaluations are to be done every three years. An IEP can be reviewed at any time if revisions are needed.

Who can be "Parent" under Special Education law (IDEA)?

IDEA defines a parent as:

1. a natural, adoptive or foster parent of a child. (Under voluntary placements, the natural or adoptive parent would be the parent.)

2. a guardian (but not the State if the child is a ward of the State)

3. an individual acting in the place of a natural or adoptive parent (including a grandparent, stepparent, or other relative with who the child lives, or an individual who is legally responsible for the child's welfare; or

4. an individual who is assigned to be a surrogate parent by the school district.

In most cases, the "parent" is going to be the foster parent or relative caregiver. However, if there is a birth parent still involved in the youth's life, then they may be considered parent before a foster or relative caregiver. Social workers cannot act as a "parent" under the IDEA, but they should participate as a IEP team member.

Who is on the IEP team?

The IEP Team is made up of people who can help design the student's education program including parent, regular and special education teachers, school psychologist (for the initial meeting) and other school staff who provide services to the student. The student should be part of the IEP team when he or she is old enough to understand the process. The student and the parent can invite outside people to join the team, too, such as a mental health counselor, CASA/GAL or mentor. The social worker should be a part of the team, as well.

An IEP meeting should:

• The first meeting should occur within 30 calendar days of the completion of the evaluation. During the meeting, results of evaluations and testing will be shared. There is the possibility the results may have been shared at a prior meeting. Results may be from any or all of the disciplines represented.

• IEP review meetings are held once a year

• Be held at a mutually agreed upon time and place, usually the school, but could be a telephone conference call or home visit.

• Sharing the student's strengths is an especially important role. It is appropriate to share knowledge of what the child is like and what works with them. Any ideas about goals or questions about goals should be shared with the team.

• Decisions will be made about the student's placement and how services will be delivered: in a full time (self-contained) program, in a resource room for a specified period of time, or in an in-class model. Children with disabilities have the right to be educated in the least restrictive environment. This means that an IEP Team must consider educating and providing services to a student in the same setting as students without disabilities for academic, non-academic, and extracurricular activities.

• The finished IEP should describe what the student needs, what the school will provide and the anticipated outcomes.

An IEP should include:

• A statement of the student' current levels of educational performance – how the student is doing (e.g., academic skill level in math, reading, or other areas of concern).

• Specific education goals for both general and special education classes.

• Documentation of how progress will be measured and reported.

• Descriptions of all of the services, assistive technology, accommodations and modifications to be provided and dates when services will begin.

• Any modifications the student will have for taking state or district achievement tests.

• For students 16 and older the IEP should include transition planning.

IEP and Behavioral Issues

The IEP should include a behavior intervention plan if behavior problems exist. For a student whose behavior gets in the way of his/her learning or that of other students, the IEP should provide goals for improving behavior and strategies for addressing the problem. It is important to remember that a student's behavior may be related to his or

her disability. The IEP should anticipate behavior problems and create effective ways to respond to those problems before they occur. A Functional Behavior Assessment is done by the IEP team to create the Behavior Intervention Plan – any youth with and IEP and behavior problems should have these. If not, the IEP is not complete and can be challenged.

Discipline and Special Education

Students receiving Special Education services (including 504, see below) are entitled to additional protections around discipline. If a behavior that triggers a long term suspension or an expulsion is related to the student's disability, then that student cannot be disciplined. In these situations, the school must convene a Manifestation Determination Meeting within 10 school days of the date of removal. The IEP team and school administration make up this meeting. The team must answer the question: Did the student's disability have something to do with the behavior being punished?

If the youth must serve a long term suspension or expulsion, the school must provide educational services on the 11th day a youth is out of school and continue until the youth returns to class.

Additionally, if a student receives a pattern of short term suspensions that add up to 10 days, a Manifestation Determination Meeting must be held to address whether or not the IEP is sufficient, whether additional services are needed or if the school placement needs to change.

For more information on discipline refer to the TeamChild Educational Advocacy Manual at www.teamchild.org

504 Accommodation Plan

Children who have disabilities but do not qualify under the IDEA may still be entitled to a 504 Accommodation Plan if they have a disability that "substantially limits a major life activity". Some examples of a major life activity are learning, walking, seeing and hearing. For example, a youth may have ADHD and not qualify for an IEP but would qualify for a 504 Plan.

Depending upon the student's needs, the school may be required to provide the following: accommodations in academic, non-academic and extra curricular activities,

adaptive equipment or assistive technology devices such as keyboards or communication devices, assistance with health related needs such as wheelchair access, or other related services and accommodations.

For youth with ADHD, their 504 Plan may have accommodations that include extra time on tests, being able to break up big homework assignments into shorter assignments, use of a keyboard instead of handwriting everything and other accommodations that might increase her ability to focus during the day.

Decision Making with Youth in Special Education

The ability to make effective choices and decisions is one of the most important competencies or all students, especially those with learning disabilities. Some students with learning disabilities face unique barriers to becoming self-determined.

Many persons with learning disabilities face difficulties with organizational and planning abilities, decision making, and motivation. These skills are fundamental to making effective decisions and choices. For example, being able to examine an array of options, before choosing or deciding on one is critical to decision making. Planning and motivation are critical to acting on a choice or decision once it has been made.

Learning disabilities are generally hidden disabilities, and because in our culture having a disability is often viewed as stigmatizing, many students with learning disabilities do not acknowledge their disabilities. To obtain needed help and resources, youth must disclose their needs related to their disabilities. This concept is important for school and becomes more important in the workplace. If students choose to disclose their hidden learning disabilities, they must then deal with the perceptions and misperceptions that others may have about them. Educational advocates and others can support students through this process.

For more information on decision making with special education students refer to:
http://www.ericdigests.org/2004-2/self.html

For special education information refer to OPSI Special education publications at: http://www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/publications.aspx

Note: This guide contains a general overview of special education. For more detailed, comprehensive information please refer to:

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, www.k12.wa.us, TeamChild Educational Advocacy Manual at www.teamchild.org and Washington State Pave at www.washingtonpave.org

Preparation for Post-Secondary Education and Training

Youth in foster care need a solid educational foundation for a successful future. Only 40% of youth exiting foster care do so with a high school diploma or a GED. Social workers need to hold higher expectations for youth. Research has shown that when youth in foster care do not complete some type of post-secondary degree, they are more likely than the general population to be homeless, on public assistance, in prison and earn less over a lifetime. For all youth in out-of-home care, completion of high school and access to post-secondary educational opportunities such as college or vocational training are critical to their success as adults.

Youth in foster care need support and encouragement from teachers, caregivers, caseworkers and other caring adults. They also need information and assistance in obtaining necessary funds and financial aid to pay for post-secondary education and training. Foster youth should be encouraged to work closely with their high school counselor and their independent living coordinator while they are in high school.

There are many educational resources and supports available to assist foster youth in their pursuit of post-secondary education and training. Adolescent social workers should contact their regional Independent Living (IL) program manager for more comprehensive and detailed information to assist youth in preparing for post-secondary education and training.

Pre-High School

Ways social workers can assist youth to begin thinking about future education plans before entering high school:

• Work with youth and caregivers to develop strong study skills

• Help youth investigate options and determine which schools or programs will help them further their academic and career interests and open doors to many future options

- Be aware of funding opportunities such as Educational Vocational Training (EVT), the Governors' scholarship, Passport for Foster Youth Promise Scholarship, Education and Training Vouchers, and financial aid grants

- Find mentors who will support youths' positive goals and help them with questions about plans for their future

- Encourage youth to participate in extra curricular activities in order to develop interests and strengths outside of school and family

- Refer youth to the websites: www.independence.wa.gov and www.GearUp.wa.gov

High School

Ways youth in high school can begin to prepare for post-secondary education and training opportunities:

- Take challenging classes in English, mathematics, science, history, geography, a foreign language, government, civics, economics and the arts

- Meet with career or guidance counselors to discuss colleges or vocational programs and requirements. Also, carefully monitoring a student's high school credit accrual to ensure on time graduation

- Explore career options and talking with adults in a variety of professions to determine what they like and dislike about their jobs and what kind of education is needed for each kind of job

- Become involved in extracurricular (before or after school) activities that interest youth and enable them to explore career interests

- Take the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test/ National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/ NMSQT) in the 10th grade. (fee waivers available)

- Explore careers through volunteering and internships

Ways youth can actively plan for post-secondary education and training opportunities:

- Meet regularly with a guidance counselor to discuss future options

- For youth receiving Special Education, make sure that the transition plans required in the IEP describe specific ways the school will help the student plan for the future

- Request information and an application for admission from colleges or vocational programs

- Ask about special admissions requirements, financial aid and deadlines

- Attend college fairs and visiting colleges

- Identify people to ask for recommendations (e.g., teachers, counselors, social workers)

- Investigate financial aid opportunities from federal, state, local and private sources (Call the Student Aid Hotline at the U.S. Department of Education [1-800-4FED-AID] for a student guide to Federal financial aid)

- Investigate scholarships provided by corporations, labor unions, professional associations, religious organizations and credit unions

- Register for and take the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), the ACT, SAT Subject Tests, or any other exams required for college admission (fee waivers available)

Actions youth should take early in their senior year to apply for post-secondary education and training opportunities:

- Complete all necessary financial aid forms. (Youth should complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid [FAFSA] available at http://www.fafsa.ed.gov, each year in January)

- Request letters of recommendations early in the year

- Prepare applications for colleges or vocational programs.

Postsecondary Education and Youth with Disabilities

While the IDEA (Special Education law) ends in 12th grade, youth with disabilities still have the right to accommodations to support them when they go on to most post-secondary programs. 504 Plans do not end in 12th grade, so this law and the Americans with Disabilities Act provide legal protections for youth.

Upon graduation, schools must provide to a youth with an IEP an exit summary which describes their disability and their needs. This document, or a 504 Plan, can be taken to the post-secondary school to set up a plan full of accommodations for the student to succeed. Each school has a different go-to person, but usually they can be found in the Student Services Department.

The big change from high school to post-secondary is that it becomes the students' responsibility to alert the schools to their needs and to ensure that each of their teachers receives the information.

Colleges and universities can also help students with additional needs find resources and support to get through college. The following web sites offer additional information:

- Financial Aid for Students with Disabilities
  www.finaid.org/otheraid/disabled.phtml

- Resource Guide for Persons with Disabilities
  www.dcu.org/streetwise/ability/ed-financial.html

- College Funding Strategies for Students with Disabilities
  www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Academics select Postsecondary for Students

Additional Programs

There are many programs that offer youth opportunities to prepare for post-secondary education and training while they are still in high school such as:

GEAR UP – Focuses on low-income students in underserved communities who will likely be the first person in their family to go to college. There are a total of 86 school districts in Washington state who currently offer this program. These school districts start work with young people in middle school, guiding them through the early years of college preparation. The GEAR UP programs ensure students have access to the people and the information needed to graduate from high school and go to college. To find out if GEAR UP is a program available in your student's school contact the school counselor. For more information about GEAR UP visit www.GearUp.wa.gov.

Upward Bound – Provides fundamental support to participants in their preparation for college entrance. The program provides opportunities for participants to succeed in pre-college performance and ultimately in higher education pursuits. Serves high school students from low income families, students from families in which neither caregiver holds a bachelors degree, and low income, first generation military veterans who are preparing to enter post-secondary education. The goal of Upward Bound is to increase the rates at which participants enroll in and graduate from institutions of post-secondary education.

(http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/HEP/trio/upbound.html)

Running Start – Gives high school juniors and seniors a running start on college level classes. A junior or senior enrolls in college level classes while enrolled in high school and the classes count twice, once towards fulfillment of high school graduation requirements and again for college credit. High schools and community colleges collaborate to provide Running Start classes to youth tuition free. Students interested in this should talk with their high school counselor.

Advanced Placement (AP) – Gives youth the chance to try college level work in high school and to gain valuable skills and study habits for college. Credits earned through the advance placement process are transferable to college. (http://www.collegeboard.com/ap/students/)

Job Corps – A comprehensive employment and training program for at-risk youth operated on a national basis offering career development services to men and women, ages 16 to 24. The program is designed to equip youth with knowledge, skills, abilities, and support needed for long-term success in the workforce. The program involves a continuum of experiences and services which are personalized to each youth's needs. (http://jobcorps.doleta.gov/)

Supplemental Educational Transition Planning (SETuP) Program – This program provides outreach, which is designed to encourage foster care youth between the ages of 14 and 18 to prepare for postsecondary education. Children's Administration administers SETuP, which in turn contracts with six community-based non-profit organizations stationed in each of the DSHS regions. Contractors provide foster youth with information about postsecondary opportunities and financing and promote educational aspiration and preparation. Children's Administration has a contracted service provider in each region. For questions about this program or how to refer a youth to this program, please call the program manager at 360-902-8487.

Paying for College

Foster youth are eligible for many types of financial aid. There are state financial aid programs, federal financial aid programs, college and university financial aid programs and scholarships from different sources. Foster youth may also be eligible for:

Federal Pell Grants: Federal grants of money for low-income students, the federal government requires you "earn" your financial aid award in direct proportion to the number of days you attend. If a student decides to withdraw it is important they check with their Financial Aid office **before** they withdraw so they understand any repayment obligation they may incur.

Federal loans: Money that must be paid back after students graduate from college.

Fee waivers: Community Colleges may offer programs that waive the cost of classes for low-income students.

Scholarships: Grants of money from different sources that youth must find and apply for that don't need to be paid back.

Institution Specific Monies: Some community colleges and public four year universities may offer financial aid program that provide grants and stipends that do not need to be paid back.

Federal Aid, US Department of Education

The Student Guide provides information on student financial aid programs offered by the U.S. Department of Education. Financial aid includes primarily grants, loans, and work-study opportunities. The Student Guide is available electronically (English and Spanish) at www.studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/index.html. Contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243).

To apply for many federal and state student aid programs, students must complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The application is available electronically (English and Spanish) at fafsa.ed.gov or call the Federal Student Aid Information Center 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243).

WA State Need Grant

The State Need Grant program helps the state's lowest-income undergraduate students pursue degrees, hone their skills, or retrain for new careers. Students can use the grants at public two- and four-year colleges and universities and many accredited independent colleges, universities and career schools in Washington. In 2006 the Legislature included the requirement a priority be given to serve former foster youth dependent in Washington

state. For more information contact the Higher Education Coordinating Board at 360-753-7800.

State Work Study

Undergraduate and graduate students with financial need earn money for college through part-time work while gaining experience whenever possible in jobs related to their academic and career interests. In 2006 the Legislature included a requirement a priority be given to serve former foster youth dependent in Washington state.

College Bound Scholarship

Washington State Foster youth who are 7th or 8th grade students must sign a pledge by June 30th of their 8th grade year to be eligible. Students must graduate from a Washington state high school or home school with a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher, demonstrate good citizenship in their school and community, and stay crime free. For more information about College Bound visit http://www.hecb.wa.gov/Paying/waaidprgm/CollegeBoundScholarship.asp

The Governors' Scholarship was established to assist Washington youth who will emancipate from the state or federally recognized foster, group or kinship care to enroll in and complete degrees or certificates at eligible colleges in Washington. Scholarship applications and other useful information can be found at the College Success Foundation web site: http://www.collegesuccessfoundation.org/gs/index.htm

The National Foster Parent Association offers scholarships for college or university studies, vocational/job training and correspondence courses, including the GED. For more information visit: http://www.nfpainc.org/content/index.asp?page=YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP&nmenu=4

Passport for Foster Youth Promise Scholarship Program
This scholarship, administered by the Board, provides students with the financial resources necessary to succeed in higher educatio. The scholarship is designed to ensure the student's financial needs are met and reduce reliance on student loans. When Passport is combined with other state, federal, and institutional assistance, the total funds should be sufficient to cover all the student's educational and living expenses, with only a minimal self-help expectation. Scholarship applications and other useful informa-

tion can be found at www.hecb.wa.gov/paying/waaid-prgm/Passport.asp. For questions regarding this scholarship, contact the program manager at 360-753-7846.

Other Support Programs

Independent Living (IL) Program – For youth between the ages of 15 and 21 who are in or have aged out of the foster care system. Typical support services include assistance in accessing safe and stable housing, employment training, placement and retention services, and support toward the attainment of either a high school diploma or General Education Development (GED) diploma.

Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program – The ETV program helps eligible current and former foster youth pay the cost of a certificate, program or degree at an accredited college. ETV awards (up to $5,000) are unique to each student and are based on the college's cost of attendance (COA). ETV awards cannot exceed the COA so not all students will receive the the full $5,000 award. Youth who receive ETV prior to their 21st birthday can continue to receive ETV until age 23. For more information or to apply please visit www.independence.wa.gov, you can also email: etvwash@dshs.wa.gov or call 1-877-433-8388.

Foster Care to 21 Program – This program allows youth who were Washington State dependents to remain in foster care after they graduate from high school or their GED program to attend a college or vocational program until age 21. The program provides youth with a foster care placement, medical coverage and other agreed upon support services. Youth can apply to the program up to 6 months after leaving foster care. Current and former foster youth will need to complete the Foster Care to 21 program application, which can be found at http://ca.dshs.wa.gov/intranet/programs/adolfc21.asp or www.independence.wa.gov. For more information please contact the program manager at 360-902-8487.

Glossary of Education Terms

education terms

Accommodations

The modification of programs in ways that permit students with disabilities to participate in educational programs that received Federal funding. Accommodations are also part of the 504 Plan. See also assistive technology services.

Becca Bill

Washington State law regarding truancy and the truancy petition process that a school must follow regarding repeated absences by a student. The school is obligated to inform the caregiver in writing regarding absences and the school shall schedule a conference with the caregiver and take steps to reduce absences. If school-based interventions don't work, then the school refers the matter to Truancy Court. (http://www.metrokc.gov/proatty/Truancy/trupeti.htm)

Child Find

Procedure to ensure that all children with disabilities residing in the State or local school district, including children with disabilities attending private schools, regardless of the severity of their disability, and who are in need of special education or related services are identified, located, and evaluated.

Behavioral Intervention Plan

A supportive plan to address behavior that may be getting in the way of a special education student's success at school.

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

A concept in special education law that describes the right of a special education student to special education and other supportive services at no cost. Students with disabilities are entitled to FAPE under the IDEA and Section 504.

Family Resources Coordinator (FRC)
an individual who assists an eligible child and his/her family in gaining access to the early intervention services and other resources identified in the IFSP.

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)
A functional behavioral assessment must be conducted for those students needing positive behavioral interventions and/or a behavior intervention plan as part of a student's IEP. In the case of disciplinary action an FBA must be conducted if a behavior intervention plan does not already exist.

GED – General Education Development
A certificate or credential earned by passing a series of tests published by the American Council on Education that is recognized by many as equivalent to a high school diploma. However, a GED does have some limitations as related to work situations, the military and other organizations.

Individual with Disability Education Act (IDEA)
A pow-education for all children with disabilities. Part B of the law speaks to special education services for children age three through high school. Part C speaks to early intervention programs for infants and toddlers from birth through age two and their families.

IEP – Individual Education Program
A written plan for a special education student that describes the student's present levels of performance, annual goals and short term objectives, specific special education and related services, dates for beginning and duration of services, and how the IEP will be evaluated.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)
The written plan for providing early intervention services to eligible children and families that 1) is developed jointly by the family and appropriate professionals, (2) is based on a multidisciplinary evaluation and assessment, (3) has a family directed statement of resources, priorities and concerns if the family wishes; and (4) includes services necessary to enhance the development of the child and the capacity of the family to meet the child's developmental needs.

Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP)
The DSHS program responsible for the implementation of a statewide system of early intervention services through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, (IDEA) Part C (formerly Part H), and early intervention services section.

Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES)
A placement of up to 45 days for special education students who a) bring weapons to school, b) bring drugs to school, or c) are determined to be dangerous by an administrative law judge. The IAES must be developed with so that students can make appropriate progress on their IEP's and in the general curriculum.

Learning Disabilities (Specific Learning Disabilities)
as used in the IDEA 34 CFR 300.7(c) defines a learning disability as a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, spell or do mathematical calculations.

- The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

- The term does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. (http://www.LD.org)

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
Placement of a student with disabilities in a setting that allows maximum contact with students who do not have disabilities, while appropriately meeting the special education needs of the student. Federal law requires that a child be placed in the "least restrictive environment."

PASS Packet-Portable Assisted Study Sequence Packets
A high school course a student can complete to make up credit deficiencies and earn a high school or gradate equivalency diploma (GED) available in nearly 30 states funded through a Title I Migrant Education grant by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Washington State, offers 43 high school courses that are fully accredited. For information telephone 1-888-727-7123 or email: pass@semy.org.

Portfolio
A systematic collection of personal, academic, and vocational information about a youth: personal-identification card, social security information, medical records, immunization information, copy of birth certificate, Medicaid card, list of relatives, and academic-list of school attended, education records, report cards, transcripts, co-curricular activities, IEP or 504 Plan, and special recognitions.

Reasonable Accommodation
The modification of programs in ways that permit students with disabilities to participate more fully. Section 504 requires school districts to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities.

504 Plans-Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
This civil rights act prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities and requires federally funded schools to provide equal access to their programs and services. The law requires that children with disabilities be educated with non-disabled students to the maximum extent appropriate to the student's educational needs. The Plan includes a summary of evaluation data, documentation of eligibility determination, and description of accommodations and placements. Note: a student does not have to need or qualify for special education in order to be eligible for Section 504 or to have a 504 Plan.

Surrogate Parent
Individual assigned by the school district or an early intervention service provider to act in the place of a parent in special education settings when a student's parent is unavailable or no longer has parental rights.

Transition Plan/Individual Transition Plan
Required as part of the IEP for ages 16 and up. It is the part of the student's IEP that incorporates transition services. It may also include a statement of interagency responsibilities or linkages in the IEP before the student leaves the school setting. A coordinated set of activities designed with an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, and integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.

References and Additional Resources

College Success Foundation
www.collegesuccessfoundation.org

Seattle Public Schools (2003). Guidelines for Entering Kindergarten, Seattle, WA: Seattle Public School District.

Kent School District (2005). Preparing for Kindergarten. Kent, WA: Kent School District.

ERIC Digest, Decision Making with Youth in Special Education and other education articles
www.ericdigests.org

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
www.k12.wa.us

TeamChild®
www.teamchild.org

Treehouse
www.treehouseforkids.org

Casey Family Programs
www.casey.org

Washington State Court Appointed Special Advocates
www.washingtonstatecasa.org

Child Welfare League of America
www.cwla.org/programs/housing/mckinneyvento.htm

National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty Policy Brief
www.k12.wa.us/HomelessEd/pubdocs/PolicyBrief.doc

Washington PAVE (Parents Are Vital in Education)
www.washingtonpave.org

Washington Protection and Advocacy System
www.wpasrights.org/publications/surrogate_parents_for_special_education.htm