

March 2022, Vol. 2

FOSTERING CONNECTIONS

Building a Network of People to Support Foster Youth

Ensure School Stability and Timely Enrollment

In multiple national studies, placement stability results in better graduation outcomes, with one study finding that youth who had even one fewer change in living arrangement per year were almost twice as likely to graduate from high school before leaving foster care.

School enrollment delays can occur when a child changes schools upon first entering foster care, or when the child's living arrangement changes while in foster care. These delays can negatively impact attendance and have other harmful effects, such as students having to repeat courses previously taken, schools failing to address the special education needs of students, and students being enrolled in inappropriate classes. Federal law now requires immediate enrollment even without typically required records and creates state and local education agency points of contact to address barriers students in foster care face, including enrollment barriers.

Promote Regular School Attendance

Studies show that children who enter foster care have often missed many school days and that once in foster care, children and youth often have higher school absence rates than their non-foster care peers. The extent to which children experience absences from school appears to be influenced by the child's age, their pre-foster care experiences, and their experiences while in care. Children who have early placement stability show less absenteeism than other children in foster care.

Children and youth in foster care experience school suspensions and expulsions at higher rates than their non-foster care peers.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Christy Hendricks at christy.hendricks@mt.gov or 406.444.0794

Meet Children's Special Education Needs

Research also suggests children in foster care who are in special education tend to change schools more, are placed in more restrictive educational settings, and have poorer quality education plans than their non-foster care peers in special education.

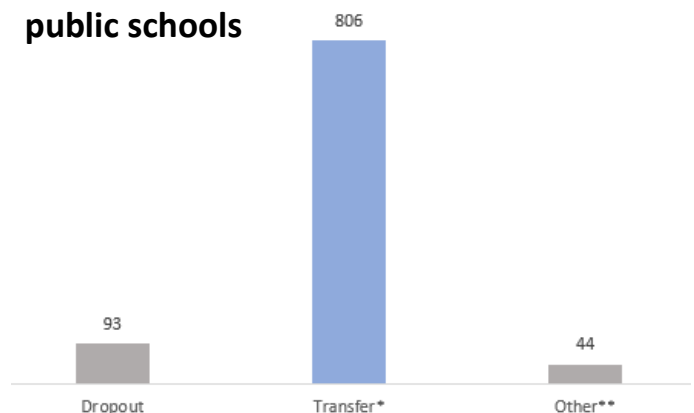
Support Students to Succeed in and Graduate High School

Researchers have found that youth in foster care are less likely to complete high school than their non-foster care peers, including peers who are homeless. Evidence suggests that young people in foster care are less likely to graduate high school if they experience repeated changes in their foster care living arrangements and their school placements.

Support Transitions, Persistence, and Completion of Postsecondary Education

Research shows college enrollment is more likely when young people have had fewer foster care living arrangement moves and they are allowed to remain in care until age and/or receive campus support, including coaching or mentoring services.

SY 2020-2021: Reasons attributed to the unenrollment of a foster student from MT public schools



*Transfers include enrollment to another public school, home school, private school, or an out-of-state school.
**Other includes change in grade, required medical care/treatment, or were under age for compulsory school attendance.

DPHHS Spotlight – Child and Family Services Division

By Brandi Loch, CFSD Program Planning Supervisor

Montana Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP)

CFCIP is a part of the Child and Family Services Division of the Department of Public Health and Human Services.

Youth in foster care face unique and difficult challenges as they turn eighteen and leave the foster care system. Studies indicate that they are less likely to finish high school and become self-supporting. They are also more likely to be homeless or to become parents at a young age. The CFCIP strives to assist youth in the foster care system by offering benefits to eligible youth in order to avoid these circumstances.

The services offered by the CFCIP are intended to help Montana foster youth get the life skills they need to make a successful transition into adulthood. By assisting youth in achieving self-sufficiency and obtaining future goals, the MCFCIP enables youth in the foster care system create a healthy lifestyle and a successful future.

Eligibility

To be eligible for the CFCIP, a youth must be:

- Between the ages of 14-21, currently in foster care, likely to "age out" of the foster care system, has aged out of the foster care system or has achieved guardianship or adoption after the age of 16.

Services Offered

Educational/Vocational Assistance
Education and Training Vouchers
Life skills assessments and instruction
Mentors
Other College Resources for Foster Youth
Transitional living plans
Youth Advisory Board

For more information regarding the CFCIP, please contact Elizabeth Bruchez at EBruchez@mt.gov or 406.366.0983

Professional Development



Annual Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN) Conference – Hybrid offering
April 12-14, 2022 [Click Here to Register](#)

Design to Grow: Cultivating Communities of Well-Being – Virtual Symposium
March 1-2, 2022 [Click Here to Register](#)

Resources

[OPI Foster Care Website](#)
[GEMS Data – Foster Care Dashboard](#)
[CFSD \(mt.gov\)](#)
[Effects of Placement & School Stability](#)
[ABA Foster Care National Datasheet 2022](#)
[MT Kindship Interactive Map](#)