

SCHOOL DISTRICT FOSTER CARE LIAISON 101:

GUIDANCE FOR TEXAS SCHOOL DISTRICT FOSTER CARE LIAISONS



Presenters



- Kelly Kravitz

Texas Education Agency, Foster Care Education & Policy Coordinator

- Tiffany Roper

Supreme Court Children's Commission, Assistant Director

- Kristine Mohajer

Department of Family and Protective Services,
Education Program Specialist

Workshop Goals

- Foster Care Overview
 - Education Outcomes
 - What is foster care?
 - Where do youth in foster care live?
 - Department of Family & Protective Services (DFPS) Introduction & Education Specialists
- Education Impacts of Foster Care
- Federal Policy & State Efforts
 - Supreme Court Children's Commission – Education Committee
 - Texas Education Code
- School District Foster Care Liaison(s)
- Education Service Center (ESC) & DFPS Regional Maps
- Next Steps
- Resources – Where to go for more information.

Nationally:

408,000 youth in care in 2010

28,000 youth aged out of care in 2010

65% of alumni from care had > 6 school changes

Youth completing a bachelor's degree 2-3%

Texas:

36,441 Texas children experienced foster care in 2011.

23.1% (highest percentage) of children in care are 14-17.

1,410 young people exited from care in 2011.

On average each of these youth moved 8 times.

Education Outcomes - Foster Care in Texas

- **Fact:** Students in foster care lag behind the general student population in high school completion. National studies show great disparity between graduation outcomes of students in foster care in comparison to the general student population.

- **Fact:** High School Graduation Program, 2009:
 - Minimum 48.8% foster care vs. 17.3% general population
 - Recommended 49.3% foster care vs. 70.7% general population
 - Distinguished 1.9% foster care vs. 12.1% of general population

- **Fact:** Students in foster care are almost three times more likely (31%) to receive special education services compared to students in the general population (10%). (PEIMS 2011)

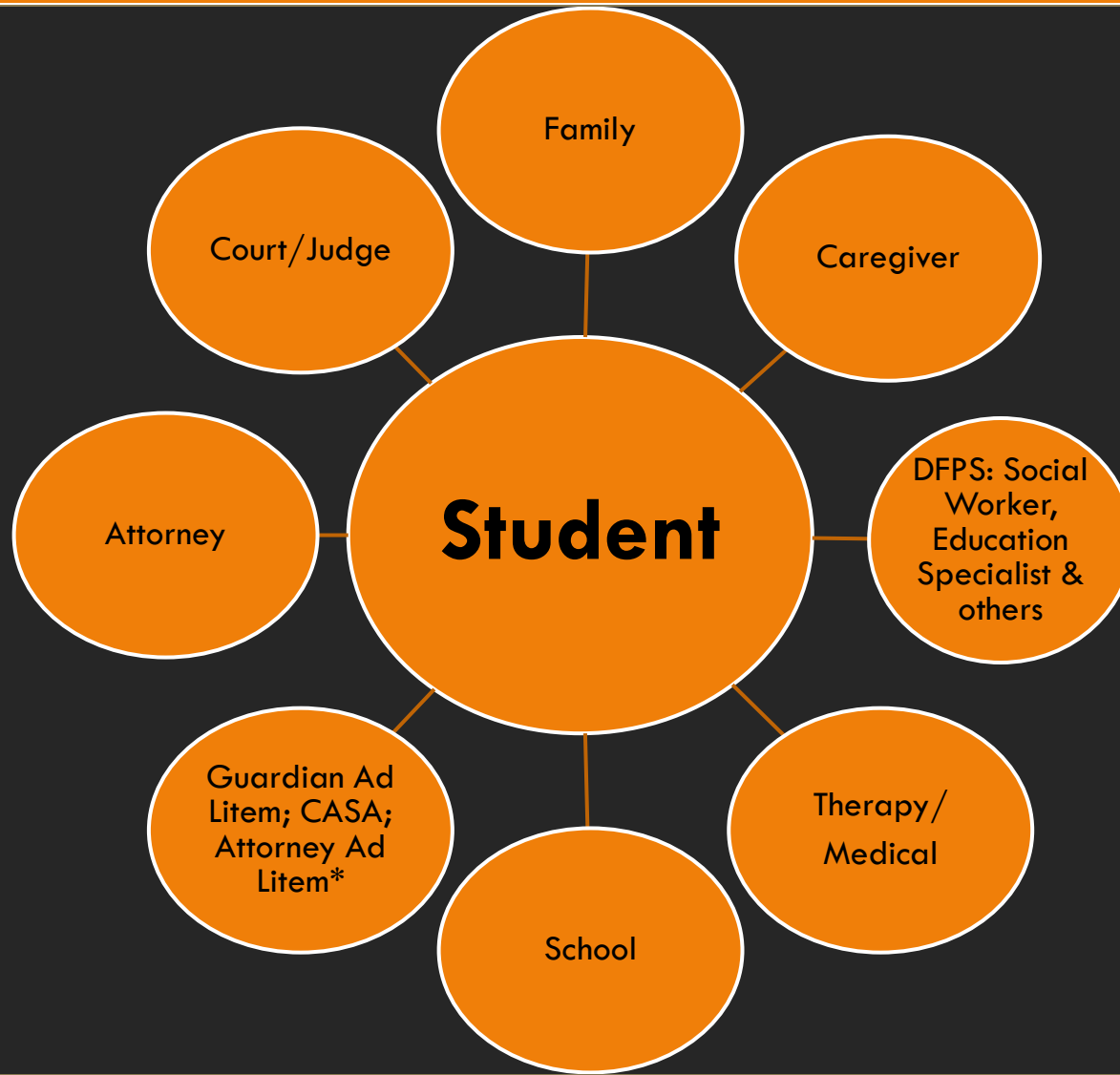
What is foster care?

- ❑ A youth/child enters the foster care system when there are confirmed allegations of abuse and/or neglect. Child Protective Services petitions the court to remove the children from their home.
- ❑ Foster Care is a term used to describe a child/youth whom Child Protective Services has taken legal control over via a court proceeding.
- ❑ Foster Care is also known as 'conservatorship' or 'substitute care' and is the temporary placement of youth outside of their own home because they have been abused or neglected.
- ❑ Foster care is meant to be a temporary situation for a child until a permanent living arrangement can be obtained.

Where do youth in foster care live?

- **Relatives:** A child's biological family member.
- **Fictive Kin:** Family friends - 'like' family.
- **Foster Home:** A home licensed by the state to provide a temporary home for children whose birth parents are unable to care for them. 'Caregivers' known as 'foster parents' are given a stipend for providing room, board and transportation for children living in their home.
- **Emergency Shelter:** A shelter facility that houses youth for up to 90 days, while awaiting a longer-term foster placement.
- **Residential Treatment Centers (RTC):** Residential Treatment Centers are regulated by DFPS to provide placements and services to youth who require specialized services.

Foster Care: Who Are the Players?



Department of Family & Protective Services (DFPS) Introduction:

□ **Purpose:**

- In Texas, the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), through its Child Protective Services (CPS) and child care licensing divisions, investigates allegations of child abuse and neglect, provides services to children and families, and monitors our state foster care system. CPS also manages community-based programs that prevent delinquency, abuse, neglect and exploitation of Texas children.

□ **The Child Protective Services (CPS) staff is responsible for:**

- Providing services to children and families in their own homes;
- Placing children in foster care;
- Providing services to help youth in foster care make the transition to adulthood; and
- Placing children in adoptive homes.

Every day, about 10,000 DFPS employees in more than 300 offices across the state protect the physical safety and emotional well-being of the most vulnerable citizens of Texas and overseen by Regional, Division administrators and front-line social workers.

Department of Family & Protective Services (DFPS) - Regional Education Specialists:

- Each DFPS region has at least one Education Specialist (Regions 3 and 6 have 2 Education Specialists). There is an Education Specialist at the CPS State Office.
- Act as liaisons to local school districts, CPS staff, community agencies,
- Serve as regional subject matter experts for school-related issues,
- Provide training to internal and external stakeholders,
- Attend school-student meetings to support children/youth in substitute care, Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD), school manifestation hearings, transition planning, Circles of Support, and court hearings as needed.

Foster Care Impacts Education

- Stability (multiple school & home placements)
- Separation/Loss family
- Trauma impacts learning
- Special Education
- Lost credits
- Delays in enrollment & records transfer
- Missed school days for appointments
- Stigmatization
- Socialization
- Lower scores on standardized tests
- Loss of important educational, social, cultural connections.

For every school move - students in foster care lose 4-6 months of emotional growth & academic preparation.

(Advocates for Children of New York, Inc. 2000)

High Mobility - Foster Care impacts the education experience:

- ❑ Significant problems with transferring information and documentation between education and child welfare systems.
- ❑ Records are sometimes lost or misplaced, causing youth to lose credits and/or repeat classes. Records may not transfer in a complete and timely manner.
- ❑ Youth may not be appropriately withdrawn from school, resulting in lowering of youth's grades.
- ❑ Youth may sit out of school for days/weeks at a time, or are placed in inappropriate classes.

By 6th grade, students who had changed schools 4 or more times lost about 1 year of educational growth (Courtney et al, 2004).

Education at Age 26

Alumni of Foster Care vs. **National Sample**

No high school diploma or GED		
20%	vs.	6%
2-year college degree		
4%	vs.	10%
4-year college degree		
3%	vs.	24%
One or more year of graduate school		
1%	vs.	13%

"Outcomes of Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 26"

http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/Midwest%20Evaluation_Report_4_10_12.pdf

Employment and Earning at Age 26

Alumni of Foster Care vs. **National Sample**

Currently employed		
46%	vs.	80%
Mean income		
\$13,989	vs.	\$32,312
Home ownership		
9%	vs.	30%
Economic hardship		
45%	Vs.	18%

Source: Courtney et al, 2011

Federal Policy

- Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, 2008
 - ▣ Emphasizes the importance of school stability, maintaining school of origin and the need for coordination between child welfare and education agencies.
 - ▣ Assurance that the placement take into account appropriateness of current education setting & proximity to the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement (school of origin).
 - ▣ If not in the best interest – state & local education agency provide immediate and appropriate enrollment in new school with ALL of the education records of the child provided to new school.

Texas Courts: Students in Foster Care

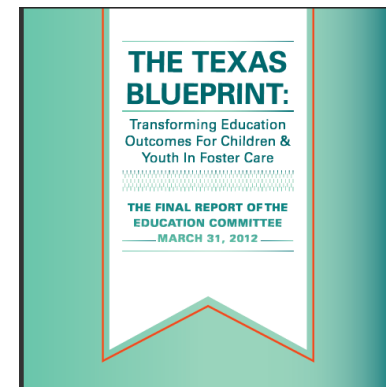
Supreme Court - Children's Commission

- Established by Supreme Court of Texas order in November 2007 and chaired by Justice Eva Guzman
- **Mission:** To strengthen courts for children, youth and families in the Texas child-protection system and thereby improve the safety, permanency, and well-being of children
- 24 members, including judges, legislators, agency leaders, private foundations, family and corporate lawyers
- 40+ members on multi-disciplinary Collaborative Council that serves in advisory role
- Federally funded and supported by dedicated staff
- **What the Commission does:**
 - Administer the federal Court Improvement Program grant
 - Serve as a facilitator of collaboration for state leaders in the executive, judicial and legislative branches

Supreme Court Children's Commission: Education Committee



- May 20, 2010 Supreme Court of Texas signed order establishing Education Committee of Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families.
- Focused on improving educational outcomes of foster children and youth.
- Coordinated effort of numerous agencies and systems involved with child protection and education including -100 stakeholders.
- Charged to look at challenges, identify judicial practices and cross-disciplinary training needs, improve collaboration, and make recommendations regarding education.
- Seek to improve collaboration, communication & practice through partnerships with DFPS, TEA, and stakeholders in education and child protection community.
- Over 100 recommendations and strategies identified related to: School readiness, School Stability & Transitions, School Experience, Supports & Advocacy, Post Secondary Education.




Children's Commission Education Committee

Members

✓ Three Judges	✓ Texas Education Agency (TEA)	✓ Texas Association of School Boards (TASB)	✓ Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA)
✓ State Bar of Texas School Law Section	✓ Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)		✓ Texas CASA
✓ Parent and Children's Attorneys		✓ Former Foster Youth	✓ Casey Family Programs

8 Guiding Principles

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- # 1: Children and Youth in Care Remain in the Same School When Feasible
 - # 2: Children and Youth in Care Experience Seamless Transitions between Schools
 - # 3: Young Children in Care Receive Services and Interventions to Be Ready to Learn (0-5)
 - # 4: Children and Youth in Care Have the Opportunity and Support to Fully Participate in All Developmentally Appropriate Activities and All Aspects of the Education Experience
 - # 5: Children and Youth in Care Have Supports to Prevent School Dropout, Truancy, and Disciplinary Actions and Reengage in the Education Experience
 - # 6: Children and Youth in Care Are Involved and empowered and prepared to self-advocate in all aspects of their education
 - # 7: Children and Youth in Care have Consistent Adult Support to advocate for and make education decisions
 - # 8: Children and Youth in Care Have Support to Enter into and Complete Postsecondary Education

Texas Education Code -

Recognizes students in foster care:

- ✓ Immediate school enrollment - TEC 25.002
- ✓ Timely Records transfer - TEC 25.002(2)
- ✓ Students grades 9-12 are entitled to finish high school where they were enrolled at the time of placement - TEC 25.001 (g)
- ✓ Free eligibility for PRE-K - TEC 29.153
- ✓ Accelerated Instruction (At-risk indicators and Compensatory Education) - TEC 29.081
- ✓ TEA to assist the transition from one school to another of students in foster care - TEC 25.007
- ✓ School District Foster Care Liaisons - TEC 33.904.

TEA Mandate

Texas Education Code - Section 25.007 requires TEA to assist the transition from one school to another of students in foster care by:

- Ensuring that school records for a student in foster care are transferred to the student's new school not later than the 10th day after the date the student begins enrollment at the school;
- Developing systems to ease transition of a student in foster care during the first two weeks of enrollment at a new school;
- Developing procedures for awarding credit for course work, including electives, completed by a student in foster care while enrolled at another school;
- Promoting practices that facilitate access by a student in foster care to extracurricular programs, summer programs, credit transfer services, electronic courses provided under the Texas Virtual School Network, and after-school tutoring programs at nominal or no cost;

TEC Section 25.007 continued:

- Establishing procedures to lessen the adverse impact of the movement of a student in foster care to a new school;
- Entering into a memorandum of understanding with DFPS regarding the exchange of information as appropriate to facilitate the transition of students in foster care from one school to another;
- Encouraging school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to provide services for a student in foster care in transition when applying for admission to post-secondary study and when seeking sources of funding for postsecondary study;
- Requiring school districts, campuses, and open-enrollment charter schools to accept a referral for special education services made for a student in foster care by a school previously attended by the student; and
- Providing other assistance as identified by TEA.

School District Foster Care Liaison:

81st Legislative Session – Texas Legislature passed H.B. 826

“Each School District shall appoint at least one employee to act as a liaison officer to facilitate the enrollment in or transfer to a public school of a child in the district who in the conservatorship of the state. (section 33:904)”

The foster care liaisons were to be designated by school districts by December 1, 2011

**SO I AM MY DISTRICT'S
FOSTER CARE LIAISON,
NOW WHAT?**



Building infrastructure and capacity within your district to support students in foster care:

- ✓ **Conduct Needs Assessment**
- ✓ **Learn the laws & policies**
- ✓ **Promote awareness**
- ✓ **Establish systems and streamlined processes.**
- ✓ **Build relationships with community partners.**
- ✓ **Learn about foster care.**
- ✓ **Become the point person for foster care & related matters.**

Facilitating Enrollment & Transfers:

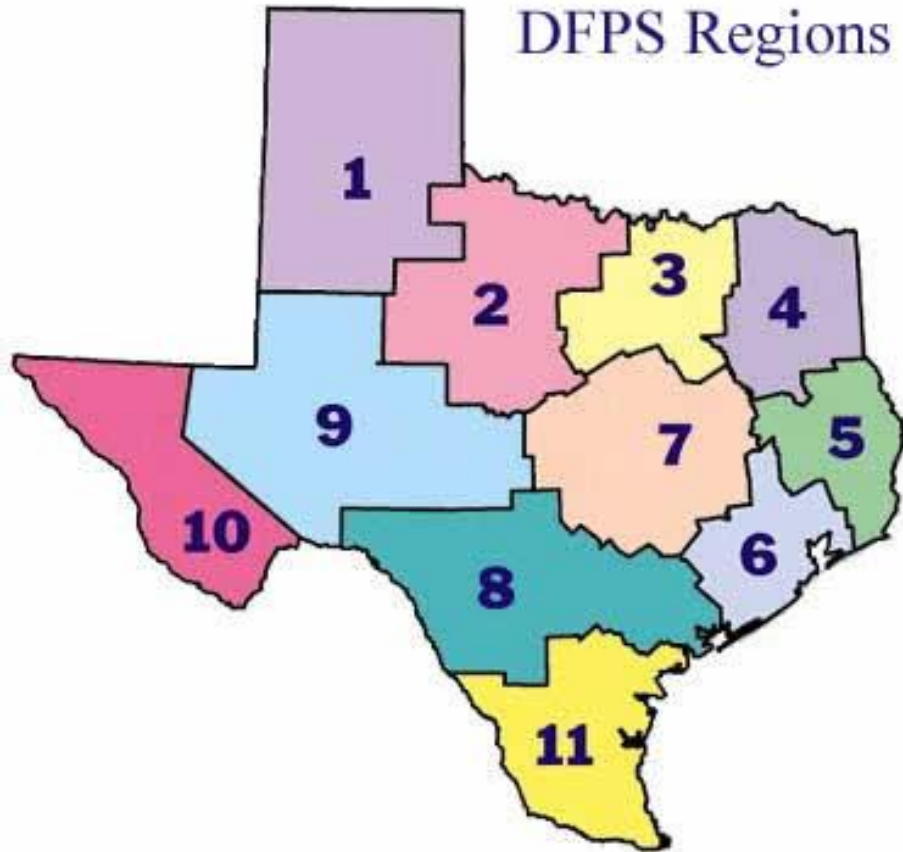
- ❖ Notify campus leaders and administrators about your appointment in the district.
- ❖ Communicate with campus staff about enrollment and records transfers laws/policies for students in foster care. (immediate enrollment, etc)
- ❖ Identify and assess current enrollment process for students in foster care.
- ❖ Establish local process for tracking students in foster care.
- ❖ Identify communication process with campus registrars and special education departments.

Providing Additional Supports:

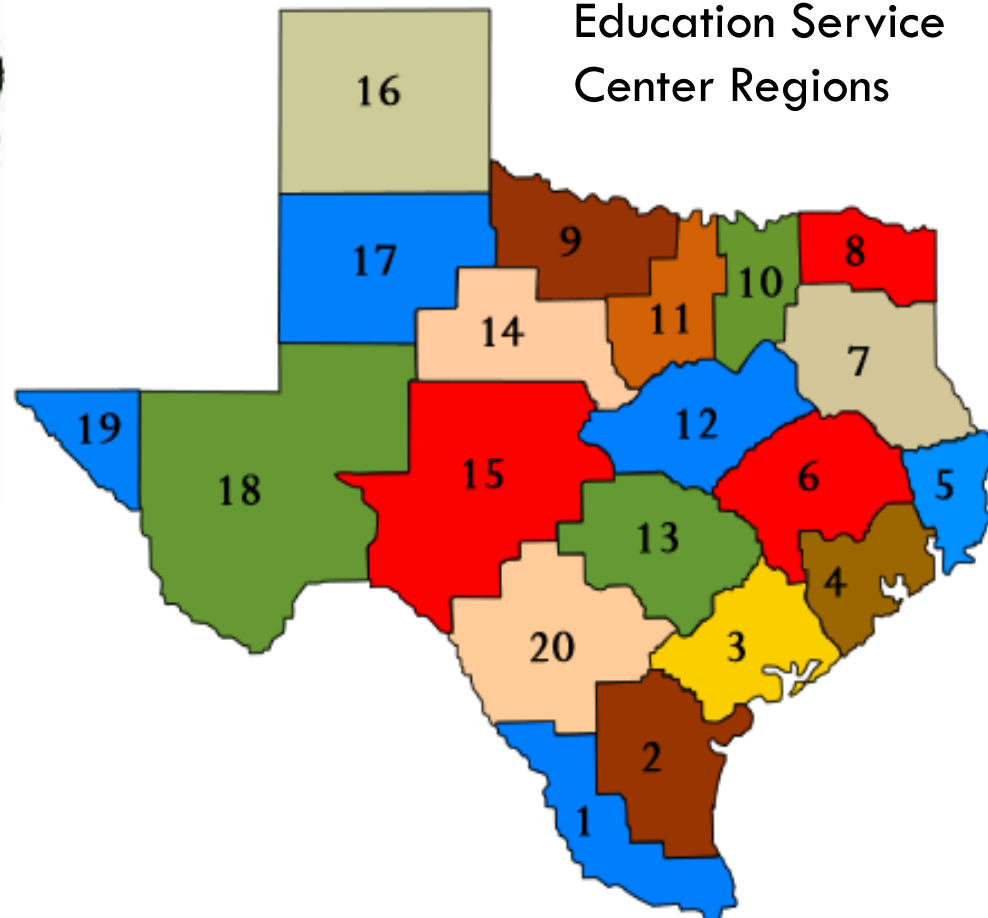
- ❖ Facilitate smooth transfers by following-up on enrollment, withdrawal and records transfer with sending and receiving schools.
- ❖ Assist with school of origin decisions and promote policies within district that align with federal and state laws.
- ❖ Identify student supports, fee-waivers, free lunch, and additional supports for students and processes for communicating to students and caregivers.
- ❖ Track student progress, grades, promotion, credits, etc.
- ❖ Promote post-secondary readiness and familiarize district with college and transition supports available for students in foster care.
- ❖ Build relationships with CPS Regional Education Specialist, caseworkers, foster parents, local judge— Identify barriers & cross-system training needs.
- ❖ Identify Residential Treatment Centers & Emergency Shelters in school/district zone(s).
- ❖ Foster Care Expert: Assist with district personnel trainings on sensitivity, identifying and reporting child abuse, trauma and education, CPS 101 etc. Provide education related information when appropriate.

DFPS & ESC REGIONS

DFPS Regions



Education Service Center Regions



Next Steps:

- Sign-up for TEA Foster Care Education Listserv
<http://miller.tea.state.tx.us/list/>
- Take the 'School District Foster Care Liaison' survey
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Fostercareliaisons>
- Next Webinar – **CPS & Courts 101** coming in November.
- TEA distribute names of School District Foster Care Liaisons – Feb. 2013
- Document processes and practices established – share with TEA ideas, challenges, etc.
- Foster Care & Education Resource Guide – Spring 2013
- For more information, challenges, questions, feedback, contact:
Kelly Kravitz, TEA Foster Care Education & Policy Coordinator,
fostercareliaison@tea.state.tx.us; kelly.kravitz@tea.state.tx.us; 512-463-9235

Resources

****The Texas Blueprint: Transforming Education Outcomes For Children & Youth in Foster Care****

<http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/PDF/TheTexasBlueprint.pdf>

Education is the Lifeline for Youth in Foster Care

<http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/pdf/EducationalOutcomesFactSheet.pdf>

****It's My Life: Post Secondary Education & Training Guide****

<http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/pdf/EducationalOutcomesFactSheet.pdf>

When Working Together Works: Academic Success for Students in Out-of-Home Care

<http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/wwwtw.pdf>

Making it Work: Child Welfare and Education Agencies Collaborating to Ensure School Stability for Children in Foster Care

http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publications/center_on_children_and_the_law/education/issue_brief_collaboration2012.authcheckdam.pdf

Meeting the Education Requirements of Fostering Connections

http://www.financeproject.org/publications/FCWG_EducationLessonsLearned.pdf

****Access Granted: Texas Foster Care Handbook for Youth:****

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Documents/Child_Protection/pdf/foster-care-handbook.pdf

****Guidebook****

Resources continued:

- **Learn about Foster Care System, Culture of Foster Care & Impact on Education:**

- **Endless Dreams – Casey Family Programs**

- <http://www.casey.org/Resources/Initiatives/EndlessDreams/>

- **Compassionate Schools: The Heart of Learning, Compassion, Resiliency & Academic Success**

- <http://www.k12.wa.us/CompassionateSchools/HeartofLearning.aspx>

- **Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators**

- <http://nctsn.org/resources/audiences/school-personnel/trauma-toolkit>

- **Websites for more Info:**

- **Texas Reach: Higher Education Supports & Network**

- <http://www.texasreach.org/colleges--universities.html>

- **Texas Youth Connection:**

- <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/education/prep.asp>

- ****Texas Foster Youth - Justice Project:****

- <http://www.texasfosteryouth.org/downloads/agingout2012.pdf>

Thank you!

Tiffany Roper, Children's Commission

tiffany.roper@txcourts.gov

(512) 463-3182

[Kristine Mohajer, DFPS](#)

Kristine.mohajer@dfps.state.tx.us

(512) 438-3148

Kelly Kravitz, TEA

Kelly.kravitz@tea.state.tx.us

(512) 463-9235