



Foster Care Success Act Annual Evaluation Report (2024-25)

Submitted to:

Colorado State Board of Education
Colorado House Education Committee
Colorado Senate Education Committee

This report was prepared in accordance with Colorado's Foster Care Success Act, H.B. 22-1374, by the following staff from the Colorado Department of Education's Office of Student Support:

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Executive Summary

The Foster Care Success Act (House Bill 22-1374) provides funds to both the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to improve the educational attainment of students in out-of-home placement.

The Act requires CDE to identify specific goals for its Foster Care Education Program (FCEP) to achieve this aim, as well as to report to the Colorado State Board of Education, the Colorado General Assembly and the public on annual improvement in the educational attainment of youth in foster care. The goals to be specified by CDE fall into three categories: 1) Identification of students in out-of-home placement enrolled in Colorado schools; 2) Tracking outcomes related to student success and educational attainment; and 3) Local service delivery to support educational attainment.

Activities to Increase the Identification of Students in Out-of-Home Placement Enrolled in Colorado Schools

In addition to tracking the number of identified students, CDE focuses on improving training for Colorado Child Welfare Education Liaisons (CWELs) and Colorado County Caseworkers (CCCs) to support identification efforts and ensure compliance with state and federal requirements. CDE developed and updated eight training modules on educational rights for students in foster care. To date, 128 of 184 CWELs (69.6%) have completed all modules and CDE continues outreach to encourage completion.

CDE also expanded support through annual back-to-school training, training for new CWELs, and three regional trainings for professionals serving highly mobile students. In partnership with CDHS, CDE continues refining a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to improve data sharing and meets regularly with CDHS to address discrepancies and streamline data transfers.

To help districts identify students in out-of-home placement, CDE works with its data services team to train CWELs and CCCs on accessing relevant reports. Resources include annual trainings, video tutorials, presentations and individualized support from the Foster Care Education Coordinator.

Tracking Student Success and Educational Attainment Outcomes

This is the fourth year CDE has reported educational outcomes for students in out-of-home placement. In October 2024, CDE identified 2,429 students eligible for foster care services, one of the highest counts in the past five years.

Student outcomes in 2024-25 were mixed. Course pass rates in grades 6-12 declined slightly (0.8 percentage points) and grade advancement decreased by 2.6 percentage points. However, graduation and completion rates improved. The four-year graduation rate reached 44.8%, a 4.4 percentage point increase from 2023-24 and the highest rate in four years and the completion rate reached 49.5%, although both remain below statewide rates (85.6% graduation and 86.9% completion).

Student mobility also improved, with more students remaining in a single school and fewer attending three or more schools. Attendance, truancy, and dropout measures worsened compared with 2023-24,

but the percentage of students who re-enrolled after dropping out increased by 13 percentage points and exceeded the statewide rate.

Among students who graduated or completed school in 2023-24, 31.5% successfully matriculated to higher education, career and technical education, military service or other postsecondary programs. This exceeded the previous three years but remained below the statewide three-year average of 53.8%.

Because the population of students in out-of-home placement is relatively small, annual rates can fluctuate substantially. Given declines in attendance and engagement measures, supporting school engagement remains a key priority.

Local Service Delivery to Support Educational Attainment

CDE continues to increase awareness of effective practices for supporting students in out-of-home placement through onboarding, annual trainings and publicly available guidance. In partnership with CDHS, CDE also provides open office hours to help local education agencies and counties implement educational rights protections, address transportation requirements under ESSA, improve collaboration and use foster care identification reports.

To strengthen support, CDE and CDHS monitor disputes between local education agencies and county human services offices. During 2024-25, dispute tracking was incorporated into a broader risk assessment system for highly mobile youth, helping identify districts needing additional technical assistance. The agencies are also developing a formal dispute-resolution process to ensure timely response and support.

Introduction

CDE's Foster Care Education Program

The Foster Care Education Program (FCEP) at the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) supports students in out-of-home placement and was created by the Foster Care Success Act. "Foster care" is defined by § 19-1-103(66), C.R.S. as "the placement of a child or youth into the legal custody or legal authority of a county department of human or social services for physical placement of the child or youth in a kinship care placement; supervised independent living placement, as defined in section 19-7-302; or certified or licensed facility, or the physical placement of a juvenile committed to the custody of the state department of human services into a community placement." Importantly, due to the way the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), the agency with jurisdiction over the foster care program in Colorado and with whom CDE has a data sharing agreement, collect data, this report includes not just students in legally defined foster care, but all types of out-of-home placement. This includes, but is not limited to, students in detention centers, foster family home care, group center care and home care, homeless youth shelters, hospital care, kinship care, kinship foster care, non-licensed secure residential centers, psychiatric care including at residential treatment facilities, qualified residential treatment programs, residential child care facility shelter care, therapeutic and treatment foster homes and trial home visits. Youth who are considered runaways and whom CDHS is unable to locate may also be included.

Where possible, CDE works with Colorado public school districts and other local education agencies (LEAs) to ensure that the federal and state educational rights of students in out-of-home placement are met. In some instances (e.g., in youth correctional facilities and detention centers, which youth can be placed in for part or all of a school year), CDE has no jurisdiction over students' educational experiences. Students enrolled in public school who have been identified as foster care have the right to remain in their school of origin when there is a change in placement. Additionally, these students have the right to immediate enrollment if moving schools is determined to be in their best interest, as well as receiving free meals and having school fees waived. CDE ensures that each school district in Colorado has a designated Child Welfare Education Liaison (CWEL). CWELs serve as the single point of contact to help facilitate school stability and seamless transfers for students in an out-of-home placement. CWELs also coordinate with county child welfare agencies in providing, arranging and funding transportation to the school of origin or facilitating school transfers. More information on CWELs and CDE's FCEP can be found at: <https://ed.cde.state.co.us/studentssupport/fostercare-index>.

Key to this work is supporting the school stability of students in out-of-home foster care placement. Overall, students who experience (or are at risk of experiencing) multiple school moves during their K-12 education outside of regular grade promotion are at-risk for not reaching their educational potential. This includes, and is not limited to, youth in out-of-home placement and is linked to several negative consequences such as stress, lower test scores, four to six months of education loss with each move, loss of credits/coursework and loss of peer groups and relationships with trusted adults (see [end notes 1 to 6](#) for sources).

Colorado data trends show that students in out-of-home placement continue to experience lower graduation, completion and attendance rates as well as higher dropout, truancy, chronic absentee and

mobility rates than their peers. Given this, identification of and provision of support to students in out-of-home placement is crucial. The state agencies concerned with health and education are working to improve internal processes surrounding students in out-of-home placements to ensure that they are given every opportunity to succeed.

The Foster Care Success Act

In 2022, the Colorado General Assembly passed House Bill 22-1374, the Foster Care Success Act. This law addresses identification and outcomes of students in out-of-home placement through improved tracking and process improvements at the state level. Outcomes to be examined each year include identification of students in out-of-home placement enrolled in Colorado schools and student success and educational attainment. Process improvements outlined by the law include strengthening local service delivery to support educational attainment. On an annual basis CDE will provide LEA personnel and CWELs with professional development opportunities that will include training for CWELs and Colorado County Caseworkers (CCCs) to be renewed once every two years after the initial training.

Goals Developed for the FCEP at CDE

The Foster Care Success Act required CDE to identify specific goals for the FCEP to improve the educational attainment of students in out-of-home placement, as well as to report to the Colorado State Board of Education, the Colorado General Assembly and the public on annual improvement in the educational attainment of youth in out-of-home placement. The goals to be specified fall into three categories: 1) identification of students in out-of-home placement enrolled in Colorado schools, 2) tracking outcomes related to student success and educational attainment; and 3) strengthening local service delivery to support educational attainment.

Reporting Requirements

The authorizing legislation requires reporting of the outcomes outlined above to the State Board of Education and the Colorado Legislature each year. This report is intended to meet the statutory reporting requirements outlined in House Bill 22-1374 through the analysis of state and student-level information annually submitted to CDE and CDHS by schools, districts and county offices. See [Appendix: Helpful Definitions](#) for a list of commonly used terms throughout the report.

Identification of Students in Out-of-Home Placement Enrolled in Colorado Schools

In addition to tracking the number of students in out-of-home placement identified each year, CDE has set goals concerning process improvements for assuring mandated training of CWELs and CCCs to assist in identifying and ensuring the educational rights and legal requirements of children and youth in out-of-home placement, as specified in the federal "Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008", P.L. 110-351, as amended; the federal "Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965" (ESEA), 20 U.S.C. sec. 6301 et seq., as amended; and Colorado House Bill 22-1374.

Mandated Training of CWELs and CCCs

In line with the goal of training CWELs and CCCs in the identification and educational rights of children in foster care, the Educational Rights for Students in Foster Care training was created. To date, there are eight modules that were created by CDE in collaboration with CDHS and are hosted on CDHS's Welfare Training Center page. These modules address topics such as the educational rights of students in out-of-home placement, the roles and responsibilities of CWELs and CCCs and information about best interest determinations. In the 2024-25 school year, these modules underwent major revision including input from stakeholders in the education of youth in foster care. Stakeholders included state employees in CDHS and CDE in diverse units, including highly mobile youth specialists in the Office of Student Support as well as employees in the Exceptional Student Services Unit. Revisions, guided by stakeholders and learnings gleaned from the nature of disputes over the last two school years (i.e., 2023-24 and 2024-25), included a focus on the intersectionality of special education, low-income status and youth in foster care. In addition, modules now include relevant nonregulatory guidance released by the United States Department of Education and CDHS in the early 2024.

Per House Bill 22-1374, participation in this training is mandatory for new CWELs and CCCs and it must be taken once every two years after the initial training. In line with this, the foster care education program state coordinator for CDE has been closely tracking the completion of these legislatively mandated modules and sends regular reminders (through email and via phone calls) to new CWELs and those CWELs who have not yet completed the training. To date (as of May 1, 2026), 128 CWELs (69.6 percent of the 184 CWELs in school districts across the state) have completed all eight Educational Rights for Students in Foster Care modules. Of those, 42 CWELs (22.8 percent) will be renewing their training in the next year. Just 56 CWELs (30.4 percent) have not yet taken the training. Included in the list of CWELs who have not completed the training are new CWELs and CWELs who were not reported by the district as the CWEL. CDE's Foster Care Education Coordinator is in continued contact with these CWELs to encourage their completion of the modules.

Additional Resources for CWELs and CCCs

In addition to a statewide back-to-school training and the legislatively mandated training modules, CDE hosts a voluntary statewide spring training for all CWELs containing information on new legislation, the educational rights of students in out-of-home placement and other relevant topics (e.g., working with highly mobile students). All CWELs also receive a recorded copy of each meeting, the slide decks used in presentations and any additional materials that were disseminated during the meeting. Moreover, CWELs are invited to all trainings in which CDE's FCEP partners with other programs and offices in the department.

The 2024-25 school year included three regional trainings for professionals working with highly mobile students, including students in out-of-home placement. Trainings, which have taken place in the East Central Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), Summit County and Western Slope regions focused on a high level overview of the basics of foster care education and McKinney Vento (education for students experiencing homelessness) and provided the opportunity to share resources and promising practices, engage in conversations about the challenges and successes of serving these two populations and time to strengthen new and existing partnerships. Locations were chosen based on a

number of factors related to working with highly mobile youth, including the percentage of identified highly mobile youth and the number and nature of disputes related to foster care in each region.

In addition, CDE's Foster Care Education Coordinator hosted the first in-person regional training for child welfare school district professionals, which included Special Education directors, CWELs, CCCs, case workers, transportation directors, facility school professionals, and any other professional who works with youth in out-of-home placement. The training, which occurred in the summer of 2026, was hosted in collaboration with CDHS in response to a need from field. The training included 40 professionals working with students in out-of-home placement and focused on meeting federal and state provisions for youth in foster care to work toward school stability and educational attainment. Feedback from participants indicated that the training was well received and appreciated. Feedback about future topics of interest are being used to plan a second training on the Western Slope in February 2027.

Increased Identification of Students in Out-of-Home-Placement

In service of a more complete identification of students in out-of-home placement, CDE is creating an updated Data Service Agreement between CDE and CDHS designed to make monthly data sharing between the agencies as accurate as possible. Data sharing has continued to improve in the past year through a series of regular meetings between the agencies to address discrepancies in identification.

Increased Ability and Timeliness in Local Level CWEL Access to Data Pipeline Data

Once students in out-of-home placement have been identified by CDE, it is critical that CWELs can access and act on that data. To facilitate this process, CDE's FCEP staff are working with the CDE data services team to provide in-depth training to CWELs and LEA data managers so that they can identify students in out-of-home placement in their districts as identified through the data sharing agreement with CDHS.

To align with this goal, FCEP staff, in partnership with the CDE's Data Services Team, offered a back-to-school training on September 25, 2025 for CWELs. During the training CDE's Data Services Unit members went over the process for collaborating with LEA data managers on accessing foster care data. This training is offered annually. In addition, new CWELs attended a second voluntary training on September 30, 2025 designed to cover state updates and an overview of Federal and State provisions for students who meet the definition of out-of-home placement to work towards supporting educational stability. This second training, designed specifically for CWELs new to the role, will continue to be offered annually.

Further, CDE's FCEP staff and Data Services Unit created an asynchronous tutorial on how to access foster care data on demand. FCEP and Data Services staff work together to ensure that new and existing CWELs have timely access to district data and understand how to manage and use it appropriately. New CWELs receive training resources and are encouraged to contact CDE's foster care

coordinator with questions, while Data Services staff support timely responses and participate in the annual back-to-school training to answer questions and strengthen relationships with CWELs.

Tracking Access to Available Resources

During the 2024-25 school year, FCEP staff continued advancing efforts to develop a system for tracking district CWEL and CCC participation in trainings. During the 2025-2026 school year, CWELs are including their district information when registering for webinars. In addition, CDE and CDHS created a pre- and post-test for the mandatory Educational Rights for Students in Foster Care training modules to assess each CWEL's understanding and ability to apply the information. The modules do appear to be making an impact as demonstrated through transportation funding. Although Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) mandated that school districts and departments of human and social services collaborate to create a transportation plan for students in out-of-home care, the legislation provided no funding to support these efforts. To address this, Colorado passed into law House Bill 18-1306 to support these efforts and provide funding. Regardless of these funds' availability, school districts and county departments of human and social services are required to meet educational transportation needs of qualifying students because ESSA is a federal mandate. For the last two fiscal years (i.e., 2023-24 and 2024-25) this funding has been fully expended, indicating increased usage and, consequently, more students remaining in their school of origin. The funding source is expected to be fully expended this fiscal year.

Tracking Outcomes Related to Student Success and Educational Attainment (2019-20 through 2024-25)

Per the Foster Care Success Act, at a minimum, this report must contain the following data for each of the preceding three school years for students in out-of-home placement and enrolled in a public school:

- The number of students in out-of-home placement and number of students in the general state student population;
- The total number and proportion of students in out-of-home placement compared to the general student population who were enrolled in one school, two schools, three schools or more than three schools during each school year;
- The rates of attendance and habitual truancy, as defined in section 22-33-102 (3.5), C.R.S., for students in out-of-home placement compared to the general student population;
- The dropout rates of students in out-of-home placement compared to the general state student population by individual grade level for grades seven through 12;
- The number and percentage of students in out-of-home placement who re-enrolled in school after dropping out compared to the general state student population;
- The number and percentage of students in out-of-home placement who graduated or completed high school in four years compared to the general state student population; and

- The number and percentage of students in out-of-home placement who took more than four years to graduate or complete high school compared to the general state student population.
- The number and percentage of core content area classes that students in grades six through 12 in out-of-home placement complete during each school year;
- The percentage of students in out-of-home placement who advance to the next grade level after each school year;
- The percentage of students in out-of-home placement who graduated or completed high school in more than four years;
- The percentage of students in out-of-home placement who engage in postsecondary and workforce readiness pathways as described in section 22-11-204(4). C.R.S. 22-7-1009 allows local school boards, BOCES and Charter School Institute (CSI) to choose to add an endorsement to a high school diploma to indicate that a student has achieved postsecondary and workforce readiness or that the student has demonstrated exemplary postsecondary and workforce readiness. To date, no diploma granting body in Colorado has opted to include such an endorsement on its diplomas and so CDE does not have any data to report in this category. Given this, CDE instead reports on the number of graduating students in out-of-home placement who entered postsecondary education.

Each of these points are addressed below in the context of the baseline data reported in CDE’s 2021-22 Foster Care Success Act Annual Evaluation Report and other historical data where available.

Students Identified

Over the course of the past six years, an average of 1,834 students in out-of-home placement have been identified each year as eligible for educational services in Colorado at the time enrollment is counted in October. This number increases throughout the year as more students are identified. The rate of identification has varied from year to year, with 2024-25 having one of the highest amounts students in out-of-home placement identified in the past five years. See **Table 1** for the numbers of students in the state student population and the number identified as being in out-of-home placement.

AN AVERAGE OF
1,834
STUDENTS
IDENTIFIED EACH

Table 1: State Student Population and Students Identified as Being in Out-of-Home Placement

School Year	State Student Population	Identified as Out-of-Home Placement
2019-20	913,223	2,057
2020-21	883,199	944
2021-22	886,517	709

School Year	State Student Population	Identified as Out-of-Home Placement
2022-23	882,933	2,384
2023-24	881,464	2,478
2024-25	881,065	2,429

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting. Student counts here will be lower than counts in later tables due to the timing of this collection.

In the 2024-25 school year, the total number of students identified as being in out-of-home placement throughout the year was 3,714. Of these students, the majority (N = 3,093; 83.3 percent of students in out-of-home placement) attended a traditional school setting under the oversight of CDE. A small percent (N = 621; 16.7 percent of students in out-of-home placement) attended a non-traditional setting. Non-traditional settings (which can overlap; e.g., a school that is an online charter school) include both those settings under the oversight of CDE, such as online schools (N = 204), alternative education campuses (AECs; N = 332), and charter schools (N = 328), as well those not in CDE's jurisdiction such as detention centers (N = 128). Importantly, students can move in and out of both traditional and non-traditional settings and may attend more than one type each year, including other settings that CDE does not have data on, such as hospital-based settings and facility schools. Given the complexity of these data, we report only this overview for the 2024-25 school year but will plan to report major student engagement metrics such as graduation, attendance and dropout by setting in the coming years.

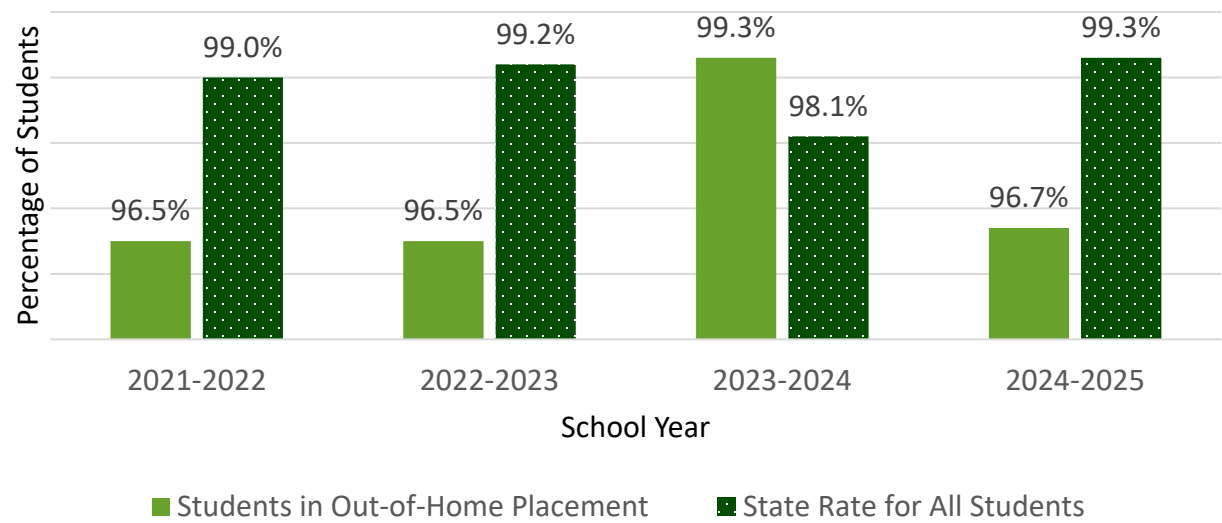
Course Completion

In the 2024-25 school year, students in grades six through 12 in out-of-home placement collectively took a total of 12,157 language, math, science and social studies courses. Of these courses, 8,287 courses were passed or completed, a 68.2 percent completion rate. This is 0.8 percentage points lower than last year's completion rate of 69.0 percent but 2.6 percentage points higher than the 2021-22 school year (65.6 percent), which was the first year CDE began tracking this data.

Successful Grade-Level Transitions

The authorizing legislation requires annual reporting of successful grade-level transitions for students in out-of-home placement and the state student population. Data shows that students in out-of-home placement successfully advanced to the next grade-level at a rate 2.6 percentage points lower than both the state rate and their own rate from the previous year. The four-year average of students in out-of-home placement (97.3 percent) is 1.6 percentage points lower than the four-year average for the state (98.9 percent). *See **Chart 1** for the percentage of students in Colorado and in out-of-home placement who advanced to the next grade level in the past four years.*

Chart 1: Percentage of Students in Colorado and in Out-of-Home Placement Advancing to the Next Grade Level



Note: Data obtained in collaboration with CDHS from school and district reporting.

Four-Year and Extended Graduation and Completion Rates

Graduation and completion rates for students in out-of-home placement have historically been much lower than these rates for the state student population in Colorado. Four-year graduation rates for students in out-of-home placement are rising, reaching 44.8 percent in the 2024-25 school year, a 4.4 percentage point increase over the previous year and a 14.8 percentage point increase over the 2021-2022 school year. Four-year completion rates also rose in comparison to previous years, and, in line with historical data, show that many students in out-of-home placement take advantage of alternatives to graduation to complete their education. See **Table 2** for the number of graduates and completers in the state student population and students in out-of-home placement and **Chart 2** for the four-year graduation and completion rates of the state student population and students in out-of-home placement over the past four years.

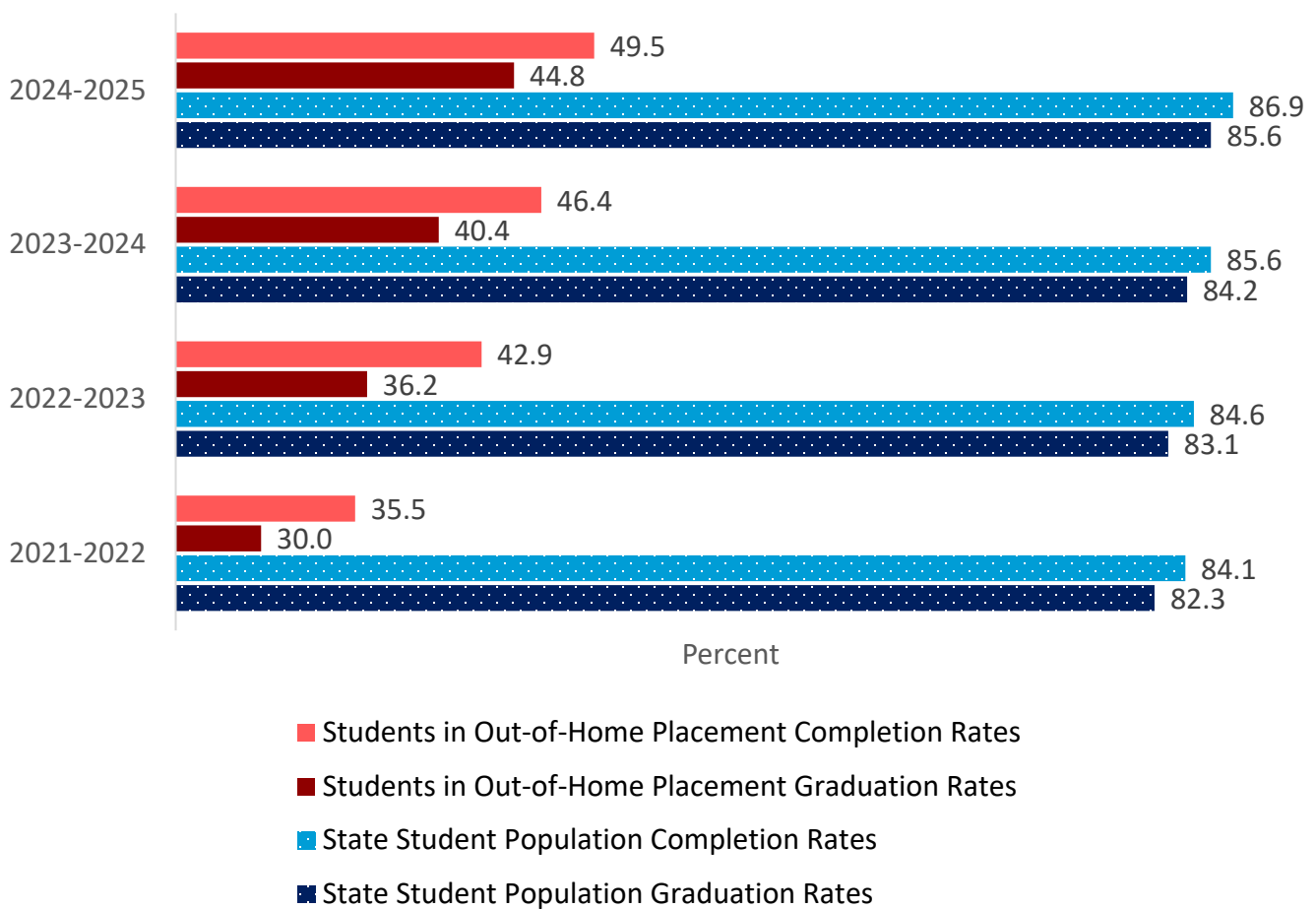
Table 2: Four-Year Graduates and Completers Among the State Student Population and Students in Out-of-Home Placement

School Year	State Graduates	State Completers	Out-of-Home Placement Graduates	Out-of-Home Placement Completers
2021-22	56,284	57,456	180	213
2022-23	56,812	57,840	173	205

School Year	State Graduates	State Completers	Out-of-Home Placement Graduates	Out-of-Home Placement Completers
2023-24	58,318	59,336	195	224
2024-25	60,387	61,299	228	252

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with CDHS from school and district reporting.

Chart 2: Graduation Rates for Students in Colorado and Students in Out-of-Home Placement



Note: Data obtained in collaboration with CDHS from school and district reporting.

Moreover, when given more time, many students in out-of-home placement continue their education, graduating or completing in five, six or seven years. These extended graduation rates show that a higher percentage of students in out-of-home placement utilize the extra years needed to complete their education than the percentage of the state's overall student population utilizing the extra time. See **Tables 3 and 4** for extended-year graduation and completion rates for the state student population and students in out-of-home placement. See **Table 5 and Chart 3** for the number and percentage of

students in the state student population and students in out-of-home placement graduating or completing their educations in more than four years.

Table 3: Extended-Year Graduation and Completion Rates for the State Student Population

Class of	4-Year Graduation	4-Year Completion	5-Year Graduation	5-Year Completion	6-Year Graduation	6-Year Completion	7-Year Graduation	7-Year Completion
2021	81.7	83.2	85.7	87.7	86.7	88.9	87.1	89.6
2022	82.3	84.1	86.1	88.3	87.1	89.5	87.6	90.1
2023	83.1	84.6	86.8	88.8	87.8	90.0	Available in 2025-26	Available in 2025-26
2024	84.2	85.6	87.7	89.7	Available in 2025-26	Available in 2025-26	Available in 2026-27	Available in 2026-27
2025	85.6	86.9	Available in 2025-26	Available in 2025-26	Available in 2026-27	Available in 2026-27	Available in 2027-28	Available in 2027-28

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with CDHS from school and district reporting. Bolded values are from the 2024-25 school year.

Table 4: Extended-Year Graduation and Completion Rates for Students in Out-of-Home Placement

Class of	4-Year Graduation	4-Year Completion	5-Year Graduation	5-Year Completion	6-Year Graduation	6-Year Completion	7-Year Graduation	7-Year Completion
2021	30.5	38.8	36.5	45.6	39.1	50.0	39.4	50.7
2022	30.0	35.5	35.9	43.0	38.9	46.8	39.4	48.1
2023	36.2	42.9	42.8	50.6	44.5	53.9	Available in 2025-26	Available in 2025-26
2024	40.4	46.4	45.5	52.3	Available in 2025-26	Available in 2025-26	Available in 2026-27	Available in 2026-27
2025	44.8	49.5	Available in 2025-26	Available in 2025-26	Available in 2026-27	Available in 2026-27	Available in 2027-28	Available in 2027-28

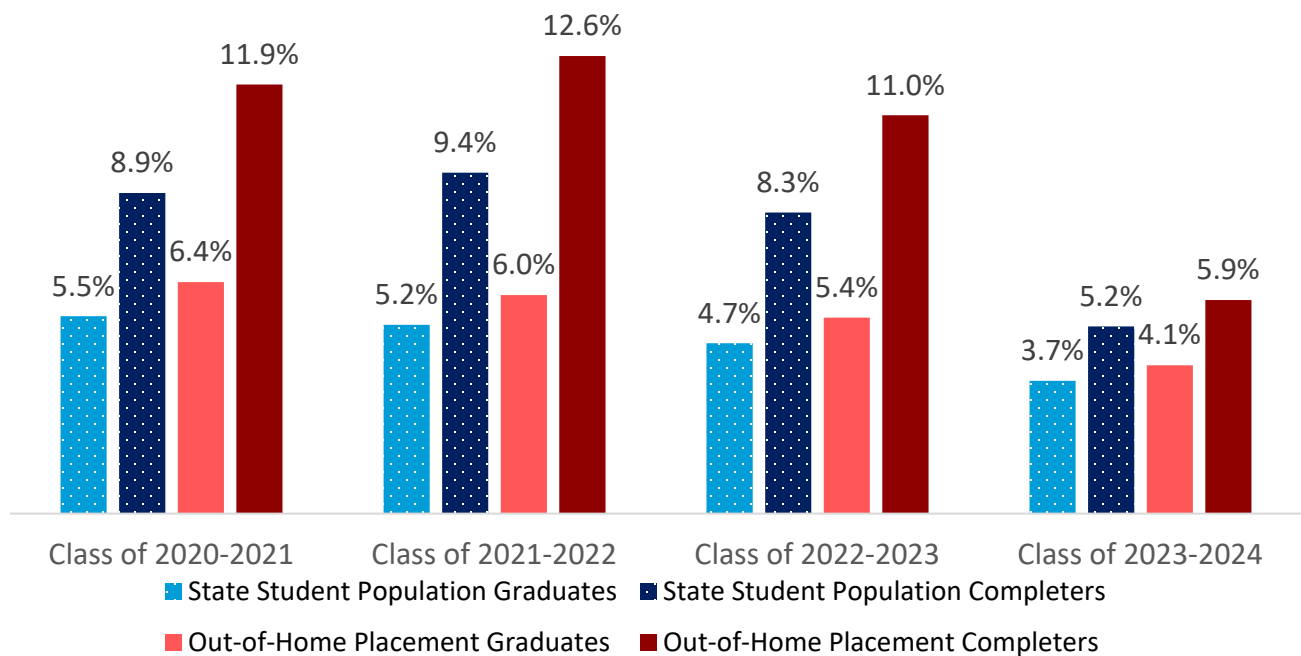
Note: Data obtained in collaboration with CDHS from school and district reporting. Bolded values are from the 2024-25 school year.

Table 5: Graduates and Completers Taking More Than Four Years Among the State Student Population and Students in Out-of-Home Placement

Anticipated Year of Graduation	Graduates / Completers Included in Count	State Graduates	State Completers	Out-of-Home Placement Graduates	Out-of-Home Placement Completers
2020-21	5, 6, and 7-year	3,469	4,106	65	87
2021-22	5, 6, and 7-year	3,369	3,926	64	85
2022-23	5 and 6-year	3,085	3,566	50	65
2023-24	5-year	2,460	2,756	35	40

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with CDHS from school and district reporting. Counts include all students from each AYG (anticipated year of graduation, or the year students are expected to graduate) cohort who took more than four years to graduate. For those students expected to graduate in 2023-24, this only includes students who graduated in five years. For students in earlier cohorts, this also includes students who graduated in six or seven years.

Chart 3: Percentage of Students in the General Population and in Out-of-Home Placement Graduating and Completing in More Than Four Years



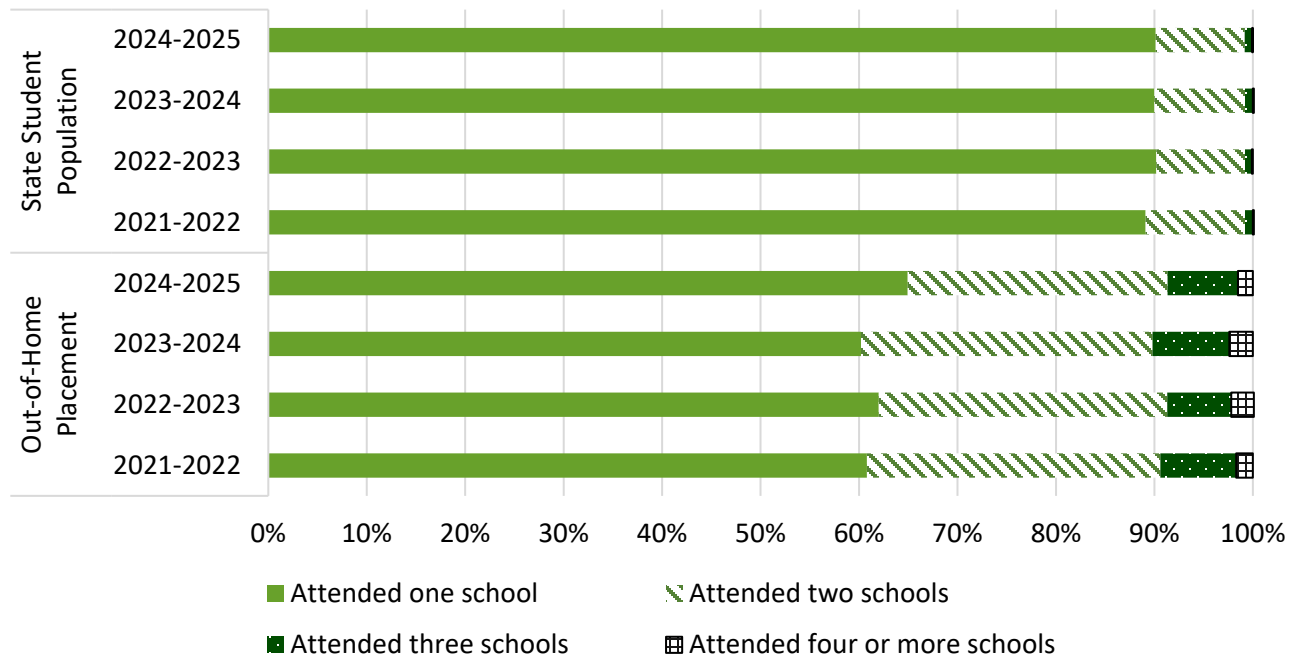
Note: Data obtained in collaboration with CDHS from school and district reporting. Graduates and completers from the classes of 2020-21 and 2021-22 include students who graduated or completed in five, six and seven years. Graduates and completers from the class of 2022-23 include students who graduated or completed in five and six years. Graduates and completers from the class of 2023-24

include students who graduated or completed in five years. The classes of 2022-23 and 2023-24 do not yet have six and seven year rates available as they are not yet six or seven years out from their expected graduation years.

Student Mobility

Students in out-of-home placement are more likely to change schools throughout the year, putting them at increased risk for disengagement. Across the last four years in Colorado, students in out-of-home placement have had much higher mobility rates than the state student population. The number of students in out-of-home placement staying in one school increased in the 2024-25, as did the number attending one school in the state student population, although by a much smaller percentage point change. The number of students in out-of-home placement attending three or more schools decreased, whereas this number in the state student population remained the same. **Chart 4** shows the percentages (and **Tables 6 and 7** show the numbers) of students attending single and multiple schools in Colorado and in out-of-home placement over the last four years.

Chart 4: Percentages of Students Attending Single and Multiple Schools: State Rates and Rates for Students in Out-of-Home-Placement



Note: Data obtained in collaboration with CDHS from school and district reporting.

Table 6: Number of Students in the State Student Population Attending Single and Multiple Schools

School Year	Total Students	Attend One School	Attend Two Schools	Attend Three Schools	Attend Four+ Schools
2024-25	933,338	841,261	84,318	7,079	680
2023-24	939,299	845,247	85,957	7,338	757
2022-23	935,703	844,025	84,301	6,746	631
2021-22	944,160	840,959	95,109	7,463	629

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with CDHS from school and district reporting. Student counts here are higher than student counts in Table 1 because it includes all students enrolled in a Colorado school in 2024-25, including those who left before October 1 (the date of the enrollment count) or entered a Colorado school at any point in the year.

Table 7: Number of Students in Out-of-Home Placement Attending Single and Multiple Schools

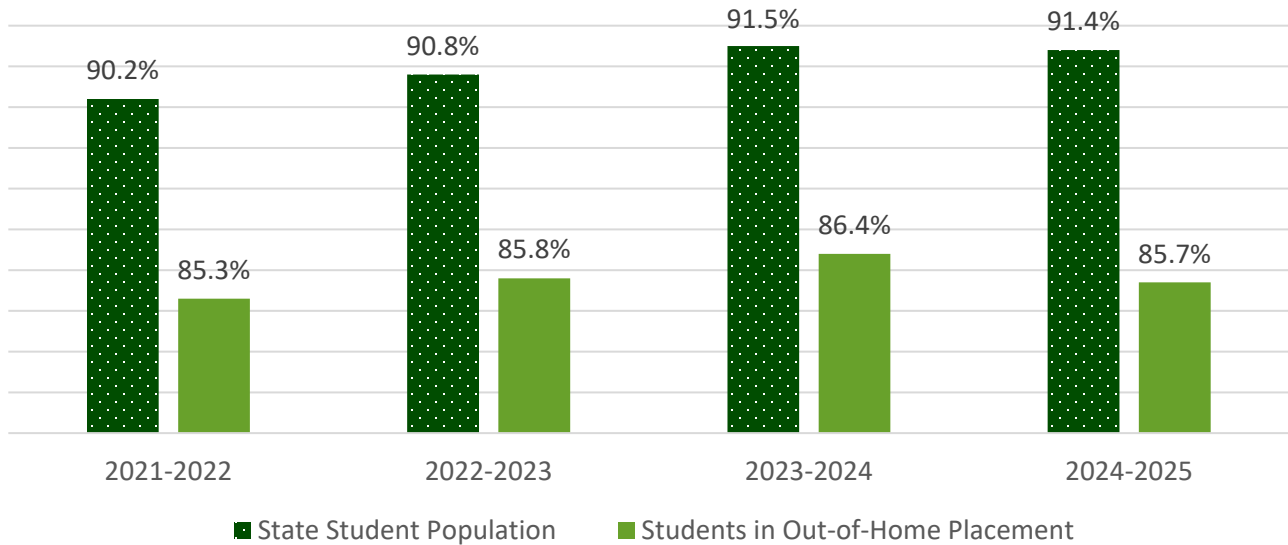
School Year	Total Students	Attend One School	Attend Two Schools	Attend Three Schools	Attend Four+ Schools
2024-25	3,714	2,412	980	266	56
2023-24	3,723	2,240	1,101	291	91
2022-23	3,807	2,359	1,115	247	86
2021-22	3,738	2,273	1,114	289	62

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with CDHS from school and district reporting. Student counts here are higher than student counts in Table 1 because it includes all students enrolled in a Colorado school in 2024-25, including those who left before October 1 (the date of the enrollment count) or entered a Colorado school at any point in the year.

Attendance

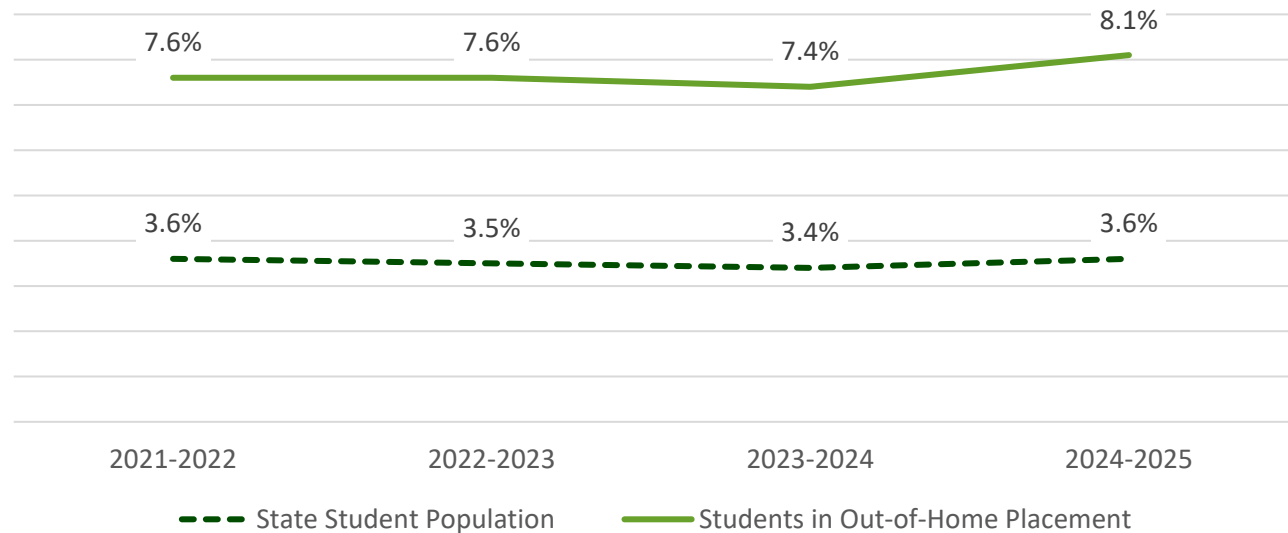
In Colorado, students in out-of-home placement have lower attendance and higher truancy rates than their peers in the state student population. In the 2024-25 school year, the state and students in out-of-home placement saw less favorable rates in both than were seen in 2023-24. **Charts 5 and 6** show the attendance and truancy rates for students in the state student population and students in out-of-home placement over the last four years.

Chart 5: Average Attendance Rates for Students in Colorado and Students in Out-of-Home Placement



Note: Data obtained in collaboration with CDHS from school and district reporting. The attendance rate of a student is the proportion of possible school days that they attended. For the state, this rate is the number of school days attended over all possible school days for all students.

Chart 6: Truancy Rates for Students in Colorado and Students in Out-of-Home Placement



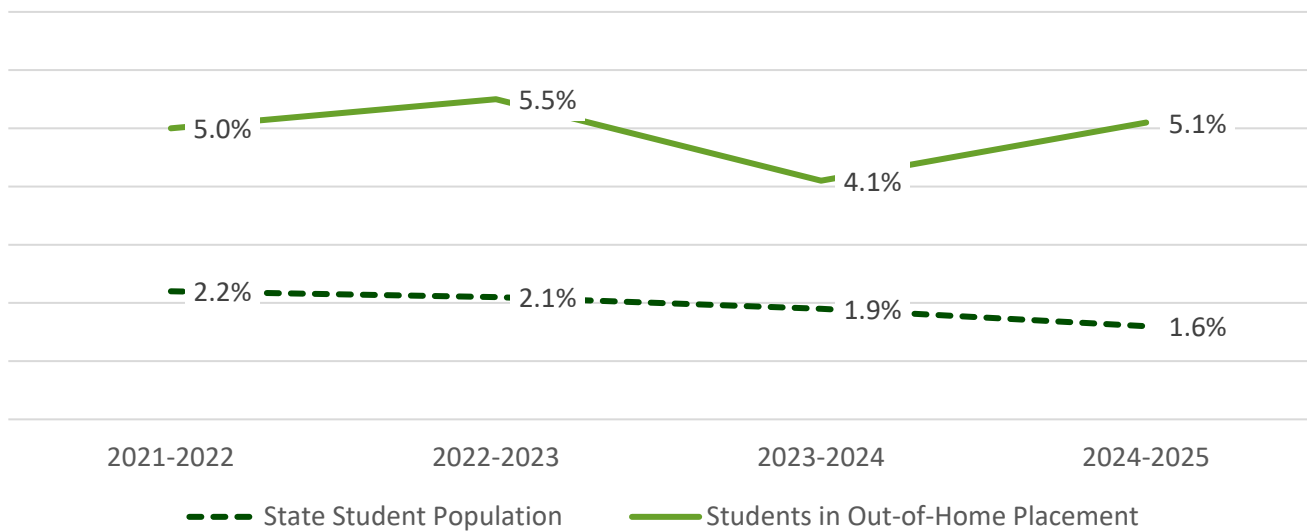
Note: Data obtained in collaboration with CDHS from school and district reporting. The truancy rate of a student is the proportion of possible school days for which they had an unexcused absence. For the state, this rate is the number of unexcused absences over all possible school days for all students.

Dropout Prevention

In Colorado, students in out-of-home placement have higher dropout rates than their peers in the state student population. In the 2024-25 school year, students in out-of-home placement increased

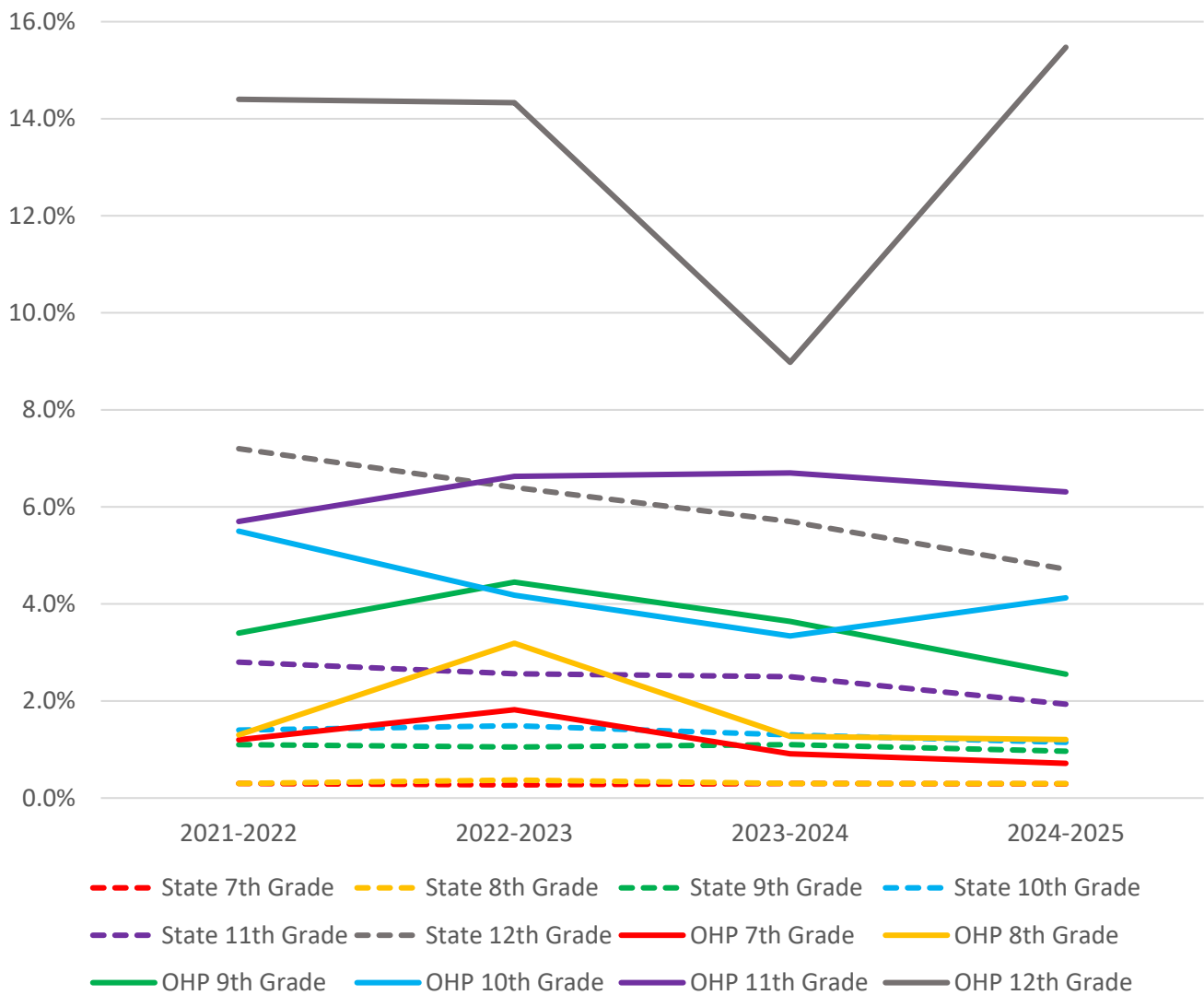
their dropout rate by 1.0 percentage point, whereas the state rate decreased by 0.3 percentage points. **Chart 7** shows the dropout rates for students in the state student population and students in out-of-home placement over the last four years. **Chart 8** shows the dropout rates for students in the state student population and in out-of-home placement broken down by grade over the last four years. **Table 8** shows the percentages displayed in Chart 8. Please note that for students in out-of-home placement these rates are computed over small numbers of students and as such are expected to naturally vary by several percentage points year-to-year.

Chart 7: Dropout Rates for Students in Colorado and Students in Out-of-Home Placement



Note: Data obtained in collaboration with CDHS from school and district reporting.

Chart 8: Dropout Rates by Grade for the General Student Population and Students in Out-of-Home Placement



Note: State = state student population; OHP = students in out-of-home placement. Data obtained in collaboration with CDHS from school and district reporting.

Table 8: Dropout Rates by Grade for the General Student Population and Students in Out-of-Home Placement

Grade Level	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
State 7th Grade	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
State 8th Grade	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%
State 9th Grade	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.0%
State 10th Grade	1.4%	1.5%	1.3%	1.1%

Grade Level	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
State 11th Grade	2.8%	2.6%	2.5%	1.9%
State 12th Grade	7.2%	6.4%	5.7%	4.7%
OHP 7th Grade	1.2%	1.8%	0.9%	0.7%
OHP 8th Grade	1.3%	3.2%	1.3%	1.2%
OHP 9th Grade	3.4%	4.5%	3.6%	2.6%
OHP 10th Grade	5.5%	4.2%	3.3%	4.1%
OHP 11th Grade	5.7%	6.6%	6.7%	6.3%
OHP 12th Grade	14.4%	14.3%	9.0%	15.5%

Note: State = state student population; OHP = students in out-of-home placement. Data obtained in collaboration with CDHS from school and district reporting.

Engagement and Re-enrollment

Two keys to ensuring positive educational outcomes for all of Colorado's students in out-of-home placement are engaging students in the educational process and re-enrolling students who have left.

Postsecondary and workforce readiness pathways can help engage students and support progress toward graduation by connecting them with options such as certificate programs, apprenticeships, work-based learning, college, military service and career training. Although state law permits diploma endorsements recognizing postsecondary and workforce readiness, CDE does not currently collect statewide participation data, and no diploma-granting body has reported offering such an endorsement.

CDE does track the number of students who go on to postsecondary education. Historically, the number of students in out-of-home placement going on to postsecondary is low. Of those students in out-of-home placement who graduated or completed their education in 2023-24, 31.5 percent successfully matriculated (i.e., went into two- or four-year higher education institutions or postsecondary programs, enlisted in the military or entered career and technical education programs). This is higher than the previous three years (26.1 percent in 2022-23, 25.2 percent in 2021-22 and 30.4 percent in 2020-21) and lower than the three-year statewide average of 53.8 percent (for those students anticipated to graduate in 2022, 2023, and 2024). The number and percentage of students in out-of-home placement going on to postsecondary is not currently available for the 2024-25 school year as this information is not yet available. The department will continue to provide resources for districts to encourage students in out-of-home placement to engage in postsecondary workforce readiness pathways to promote the attainment of higher education among this group of students. In

addition to CDE’s efforts in this regard, the Colorado Department of Higher Education offers [FosterEd](#), a program that helps pay for attendance at a public institution of higher education in Colorado for students in foster care.

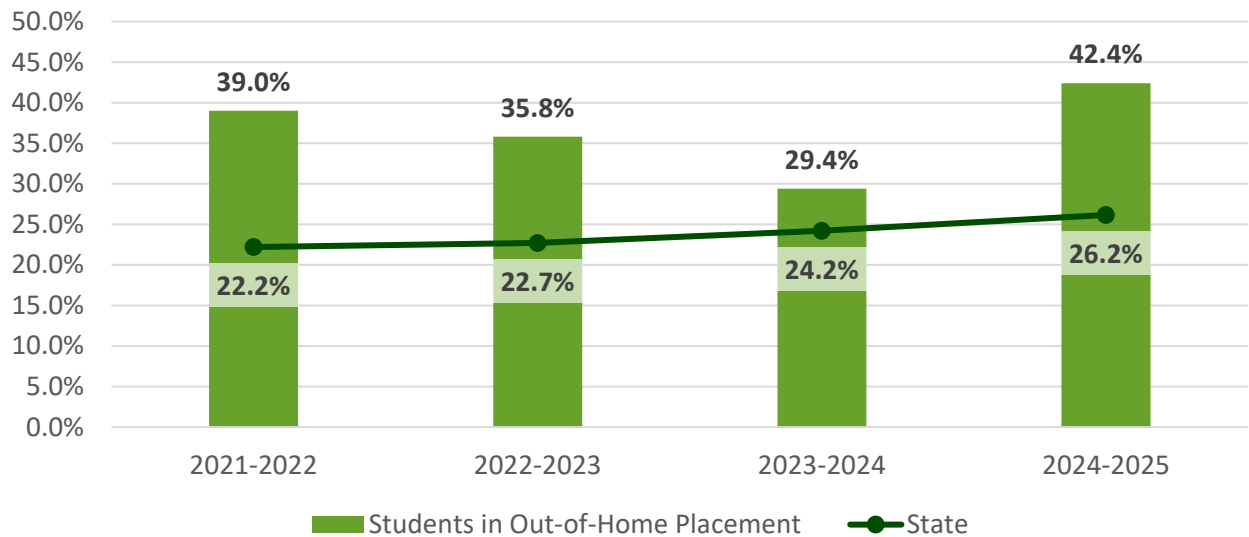
Part of re-engaging students in school is re-enrolling them after they are dropped out. Each year, just under a quarter of all the students statewide who dropped out the previous year re-enroll, with an average over the last four years of 23.8 percent of students statewide who have dropped out of school re-enrolling in the following year. The percentage of foster students who re-enroll after dropping out is more than 10 percentage points higher, with an average of 36.7 percent over the last four years. In the 2024-25 school year, the percentage of students who re-engaged after dropping out increased by 2.0 percentage points, but the percentage of students in out-of-home placement who did the same increased by 13.0 percentage points, largely driven by the low number of dropouts in 2023-24. *See **Table 9** for the number (and **Chart 9** for the percentage) of students in the state student population and students in out-of-home placement who re-engaged after dropping out over the last four years.*

Table 9: Students Who Re-Enrolled After Dropping Out

School Year	State Student Population	Students in Out-of-Home Placement
2021-22	1826	30
2022-23	2385	38
2023-24	2336	37
2024-25	2338	39

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with CDHS from school and district reporting.

Chart 9: Percentage of Students in the General Population and Students in Out-of-Home Placement who Re-engaged After Dropping Out the Year Prior



Note: Data obtained in collaboration with CDHS from school and district reporting.

Please note that the number of students in out-of-home-placement who drop out is relatively small, making large jumps in percentages from year to year more common.

Local Service Delivery to Support Educational Attainment

CDE is committed to increasing knowledge in schools about best practices for supporting the educational attainment of students in out-of-home placement.

Orientation Materials, Annual Training, Office Hours, and Additional Information

CDE's Foster Care Education Program State Coordinator has continued to use and refine the process for onboarding new CWELs which includes:

- a [Change of CWEL request form](#);
- an updated and comprehensive [New CWEL Information at a glance guidance document](#); and
- a [new CWEL guidance document](#)
- the most recent [back-to-school memo](#)
- [CWEL learning management platform](#) account creation instructions

CDE's FCEP State Coordinator sends a welcome email to all new CWELs that includes the above-mentioned documents and provides an opportunity to connect about any questions.

In addition to the information reported above, the annual back-to-school training for all CWELs includes in-depth information on the following:

- Updates from CDE about the state of Foster Care in Colorado; and

- An overview of educational rights for students in out-of-home placement.

In the fall of 2024-25, CDE partnered with CDHS to host open office hours to help LEAs and counties develop, understand and implement educational rights for students in out-of-home placement. In addition to being an open forum for questions about supporting the educational attainment of students in out-of-home placement, topics included:

- Promising practices for working with counties
- ESSA transportation
- Using the Cognos report for foster student identification in your district

Based on participation patterns in the fall, CDE shifted from office hours to a spring webinar focused on chronic absenteeism and promising practices for tiered interventions. The Foster Care Education Coordinator remains available for meetings, phone calls and other forms of technical assistance as needed.

CDE aims to improve the coordination of services between LEAs and county agencies, including the types of services provided to students in out-of-home placement. CDE provides technical assistance to LEAs regarding this topic via webinars and informational manuals published on the CDE website. These materials are still in development pending guidance from the United States Department of Education and will be reported on in full next year.

In addition, CDE is working with the Foster Care Education Coordinator to continuously improve FCEP. Per House Bill 18-1306 the specific duties of the Department of Education Foster Care Education Coordinator are as follows:

- Provide training and professional development to address needs associated with implementation of state and federal mandates relating to foster care education;
- Collect and disseminate child welfare education information on CDE's website;
- Coordinate with CDHS and other agencies as necessary;
- Provide technical assistance to education providers for removing barriers to graduation;
- Serve as the point of contact to review compliance of local education providers; and
- Act as a liaison in coordination with CDHS to review complaints related to disputes over transportation agreements between LEAs, the state charter school institute and county departments.

Dispute Resolution

CDE's FCEP created a dispute log to track trend data around the types of disputes that occur between LEAs and county human service offices. This was intended to inform areas of needed technical assistance and further training. The dispute log was discontinued in the 2024-25 school year. Instead, disputes are recorded in a risk assessment spreadsheet covering work with all highly mobile youth so that districts and regions in need of greater technical assistance or support can be easily identified. In

addition, CDE and CDHS are working on a formal process for disputes to ensure that they are quickly resolved and that additional support is provided as needed.

Conclusion

Colorado data trends show that students in out-of-home placement showed improvements in some key achievement metrics, such as graduation, mobility and re-engagement, but also experienced challenges in others, such as attendance, truancy and dropout. Importantly, students in out-of-home placement continue to have less favorable outcomes overall than their peers. In addition to lower graduation, completion and attendance rates and higher truancy and dropout rates, students in out-of-home placement are more likely to change schools throughout the year, putting them at increased risk for disengagement. Given this, identification of and provision of support to students in out-of-home placement is crucial. CDE and CDHE continue to work on improving internal processes and meeting improvement goals regarding these students to ensure that they are given every opportunity to succeed.

Endnotes

- ¹ Clemens, E. V., Klopfenstein, K., Lalonde, T. L., & Tis, M. (2018). The effects of placement and school stability on academic growth trajectories of students in foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 87, 86-94.
- ² Clemens, E. V., Lalonde, T. L., & Sheesley, A. P. (2016). The relationship between school mobility and students in foster care earning a high school credential. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 68, 193-201.
- ³ Free, J. L., Križ, K., & Konecnik, J. (2014). Harvesting hardships: Educators' views on the challenges of migrant students and their consequences on education. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 47, 187-197.
- ⁴ Gasper, J., DeLuca, S., & Estacion, A. (2012). Switching schools: Revisiting the relationship between school mobility and high school dropout. *American Educational Research Journal*, 49(3), 487-519. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4279956/pdf/nihms622720.pdf>
- ⁵ Oregon Child Integrated Dataset. (2024). *Student Mobility and High School Graduation*. Retrieved from https://www.ocid-cebp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Brief_Student-Mobility-and-High-School-Graduation_2024-04-05.pdf
- ⁶ Colorado Department of Education (2019). Retrieved from <https://ed.cde.state.co.us/fs/resource-manager/view/46504e39-9967-4cf0-b9b8-1ab76c200f58>.

Appendix

Helpful Definitions

Highly mobile students: Means children or youth who at any time during the academic year were homeless, as defined in section 22-1-102.5, C.R.S.; were in non-certified kinship care, as defined in section 19-1-103, C.R.S.; were students in out-of-home placement, as defined in section 22-32-138(1)(h), C.R.S.; or were migrant children, as defined in section 22-23-103, C.R.S.

Kinship: According to section 19-1-103, C.R.S., there are two types of kinship placement. The definitions are as follows:

- (71.3) "Kin", for purposes of a "kinship foster care home" or for purposes of "noncertified kinship care", may be a relative of the child, a person ascribed by the family as having a family-like relationship with the child, or a person that has a prior significant relationship with the child. These relationships take into account cultural values and continuity of significant relationships with the child.
- (78.7) "Noncertified kinship care" means a child is being cared for by a relative or kin who has a significant relationship with the child in circumstances when there is a safety concern by a county department and where the relative or kin has not met the foster care certification requirements for a kinship foster care home or has chosen not to pursue that certification process.

Student in out-of-home placement: Refers to PreK-12 students who experience any type of "foster care", as defined by §19-1-103(66) C.R.S.