# Foster Care Education Program

## Legislative Intent and Goals

The goal of the Foster Care Education Program is to ensure that students who met the definition of out-of-home placement in Colorado get their educational needs met through compliance with Federal and State statue designed to promote educational stability:

- The Foster Care Success Act requires the Foster Care Education Program to work towards three goals to improve educational attainment for students in out-of-placement which include: the identification of students in out-of-home placement enrolled in Colorado Schools, tracking outcomes related to student success and educational attainment, and strengthening local service delivery to support educational attainment.
- References: Program webpage https://ed.cde.state.co.us/studentsupport/fostercare-index, Every Student Succeeds Act, C.R.S. 22-32-138, House Bill 18-1306, House Bill 22-1374, & House Bill 23-1089.

## Purpose and Needs Statement

Students in out-of-home placement in Colorado face significant educational instability and poor academic outcomes due to frequent placement and school changes. These disruptions lead to:

- Gaps in learning
- Delayed enrollment
- And lost credits

Data shows that students in out-of-home placement have lower graduation rates, higher absenteeism and greater risk of disciplinary action than their peers.

Barriers such as inconsistent coordination between systems, delays in records transfer, and transportation challenges contribute to these gaps. The goal of the Foster Care Education Program is to improve school stability and educational outcomes for students in out-of-home placement by meeting the Every Student Succeeds Act requirements.

Without these supports, students in out-of-home placement are likely to experience lower academic achievement and engagement and reduced long-term opportunities.

## Summary of Outcomes

This data is from the Foster Care Success Act Annual Evaluation Report (2024-25)

**Academic progress is holding steady:** Students in foster care showed a slight decrease (down 0.8 percentage points) in course completion with a rate of 68.2% of courses passed or completed out of those attempted. This is a marked improvement over rates in 2021-22 when CDE first started tracking this.

**Graduation gains but large gaps remain:** The four-year graduation rate increased to 44.8%, a 4.4 percentage point increase and the four-year completion rate increased to 49.5%, a 3.1 percentage point increase over the 2023-24 school year, but both remain below the statewide rates of 85.6% and 86.9% respectively.

**Decreased engagement:** Attendance decreased by 0.7 percentage points to 85.7% in 2024-25, while truancy and dropout rates increased by (0.7 and 1.0 percentage points respectively), indicating a continued need for a focus on increased student engagement among students in out-of-home placement.

**Post-secondary transition remains low but is increasing:** About 31.5% of students in out-of-home placement transitioned to college, career, or military pathways in 2023-24, an increase of 5.4 percentage points over the year prior. This is still below the statewide average of 53.8% across the last three years.

**Persistent but improving mobility challenges:** School stability remains a major issue; with students in out-of-home placement changing schools far more frequently than the students in the general student population. However, the number of students in out-of-home placement staying in one school increased in the 2024-25 school year and the number attending three or more schools decreased.

**Systems improvements underway:** The Foster Care Education Program continues to focus on increased identification of students, expanded training for liaisons and case workers, and strong data-sharing and local support systems to improve service delivery.

## Successful Practices for Supporting Students in Foster Care

- Ensure educational stability;
- Prioritize school of origin and minimize school changes; provide transportation and immediate enrollment when moves occur.
- Strengthening cross-system collaboration.
- Coordinate across schools, child welfare, and care givers through clear roles (e.g., child welfare education liaisons) and consistent communication.
- Provide a dedicated point of contact.
- Assign a trusted adult to monitor progress, support navigation, and ensure continuity across placements.
- Integrate academic and social emotional supports and implement proven program modules.
- Use trauma-informed practices alongside tutoring, mentoring, and enrichment opportunities.
- Use data to drive action;
- Track, attendance, grades, and engagement to identify needs early and intervene quickly.
- Individualized supports;
- Tailor services to student's needs, including specialized plans; and coordinated team-based decision-making.
- Leverage evidence-based approaches (e.g., intensive case management, regular student check-ins, and cross-system coordination).
- Remove barriers to access;
- Ensure immediate enrollment, waive fees, and connect students to meals, transportation, and academic supports.

## Resources

- Foster Care Education Program Webpage

- Every Student Succeeds Act, Colorado Revised Statue 22-32-138, House Bill 18-1306, House Bill 22-1374, and House Bill 23-1089

## Contact Information

For more information, contact:

**Paula Gumina**

Highly Mobile Student Programs Manager,

Office of Student supports

Email: Gumina_p@cde.state.co.us

Phone: 303.551.3851

**Jamie Burciaga**

State Coordinator for Foster Care Education,

Office of Student Supports

Email: Burciaga_j@cde.state.co.us

Phone: 303.518.5938