



UNIVERSITY of
DENVER

COLORADO EVALUATION
AND ACTION LAB

Postsecondary Participation of Youth Formerly in Foster Care

Youth who experience foster care and earn a high school credential have already beaten the odds, but some of these young people may still experience unique barriers to postsecondary participation. In Colorado, only 34% of foster youth earn a high school credential with their class. When given more time, approximately half of former foster youth earn a high school credential by age 21. Only one in four of these youth enter postsecondary education immediately after graduating from high school. The purpose of this mixed methods study is to describe how experiences during middle school, high school, and the transition to adulthood influence the participation of former foster youth in postsecondary education.

Thirty former foster youth will be invited to describe their journey during high school and beyond and the experiences that shaped their postsecondary participation. Ten years of administrative records from Colorado Department of Education, Colorado Department of Human Services, and Colorado Department of Higher Education will be used to describe the relationships between academic achievement, school moves, and child welfare placement changes during middle school and high school and the likelihood of entering postsecondary education within three years of earning a high school credential, as well as the amount of time it takes these students to enter postsecondary education. Information on programs of study and institutions attended will also be generated. The goal of this research is to inform policy solutions for youth currently or formerly in foster care who aspire to pursue postsecondary education.

Researchers:

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