



Fostering Opportunities

AN INITIATIVE OF:



Fostering Opportunities Program Manual *Middle and High School Version*

Elysia V. Clemens, PhD, LPC

Deputy Director, Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab

Alison P. Sheesley, PhD, LPC

Staff Researcher, Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab

**In partnership with Jeffco Public Schools
and Jefferson County Human Services**



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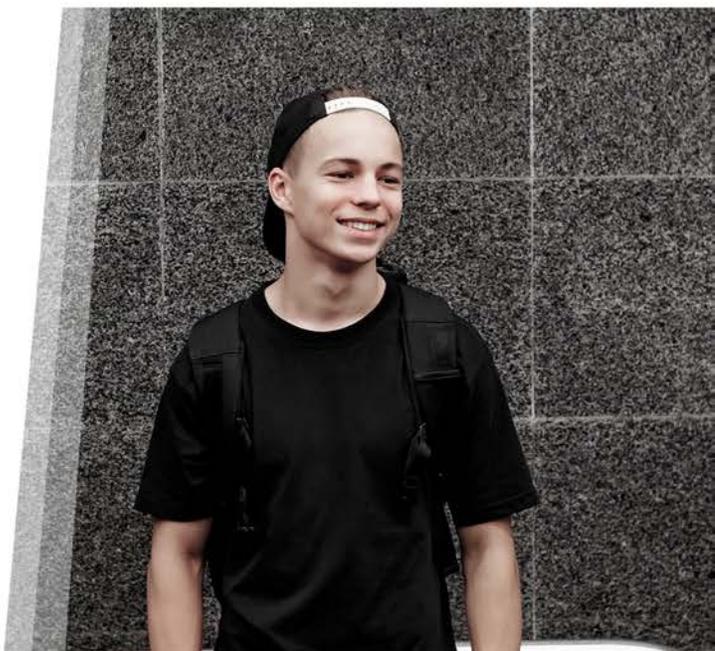


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Note on Gender-Inclusive Language

The Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab affirms our commitment to the use of gender-inclusive language. We are committed to honoring the unique gender identity of each participant in the Fostering Opportunities program. Throughout this Program Manual, we follow the guidance of the *Associated Press Stylebook* and the *Chicago Manual of Style* and use the gender-neutral, singular “they” when appropriate.

Section 1: Introduction to Fostering Opportunities

Fostering Opportunities is an innovative student engagement program for middle school and high school students who have experienced foster care. The goal of the program is to help youth who have experienced foster care be successful in school and ultimately earn a high school credential.

The program is:

- Delivered by one or more education agencies working in close partnership with local child welfare agencies.
- Designed to be responsive to changes in participating students' schools, living situations, caregivers, eligibility for services, and child welfare case statuses.
- Designed to consider the network of people and systems (within and beyond education and child welfare) that are important to students' attendance, behavior, course completion, and engagement in school.
- Designed to provide continuity in supports and services for as long as students need a dedicated mentor and advocate to be successful in school.

Education agencies take the lead on service delivery because eligibility for the program continues beyond the closure of child welfare cases. Students with a history of foster care often need trauma-informed educational support and mentoring throughout their entire K-12 educational experience.

“Only one in four Colorado students who experience foster care during high school graduate with their class. Far more students have the potential to earn a high school diploma. So, we partnered with Jefferson County to develop Fostering Opportunities, a program that better aligns child welfare and education practices to ensure that every student who has experienced foster care has a consistent mentor and advocate for their educational success. Fostering Opportunities removes systemic barriers and ensures that every student has a reliable network of academic and social-emotional support. This builds the educational social capital of students who are often highly mobile and widens the pathway to opportunities in school and life.”

- Drs. Elysia V. Clemens and Alison P. Sheesley, Deputy Director and Staff Researcher at the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab

The Three Key Components of Fostering Opportunities

With a foundation in social capital theory, the three key components of Fostering Opportunities are designed to be responsive to and respectful of fluidity in students' living situations, caregivers, eligibility for services, child welfare case statuses, and safety precautions or plans:



The Three Key Components of Fostering Opportunities

(1) Child Welfare and Education Systems Alignment

Coordination and communication between child welfare and education systems.

Systems alignment begins by developing relationships and open lines of communication between child welfare, education, and other youth serving agencies. Then, formal processes such as data sharing agreements that work to systematically remove barriers can occur.

(2) The Role of the Specialist

Fostering Opportunities staff who work with students in schools and are the key providers of Fostering Opportunities services.

Specialists advocate, mentor, and provide social-emotional support and academic support. They also consult and coordinate information to ensure that students experience a consistent network of support in the school environment and beyond. They are typically employees of a local education agency but could also be state education agency staff. They are not bound to a specific school but instead follow the students.

(3) A System to Track Students Across Placements and Schools

The data tools and procedures used to build education social capital and track students across placements and schools.

An effective database and intentional practices comprise the system used to identify students eligible for the program, ensure timely and reliable communication to their network of support, track changes in their network of support, and monitor them as they exit intensive services. The system is intertwined with systems alignment and the role of the specialist.

Together, the three key components of Fostering Opportunities ensure that:

- Each member of a student’s network has timely, consistent, and reliable information that can be used to advocate for the student and support their educational progress.
- Each student has the support necessary to fully engage in school, grow academically, and advocate for what is important to them in school and beyond.

Students and their caregivers are typically on-boarded at entry into or while in foster care, and then the program serves them continuously:

- While the child welfare case is open and after it closes; *and*
- Until students demonstrate sustained educational success, as defined by each individual student.

Foundation in Social Capital Theory

Fostering Opportunities considers the network of people and systems (within and beyond education and child welfare) that are important to each student’s attendance, behavior, course completion, and engagement in school.

The program is founded in social capital theory, which espouses the idea that there is a priceless, intangible value in strong relationships with peers and adults in the school community, especially because these relationships often support academic achievement.¹ When students change schools, enter foster care, or change foster care placements, priceless social capital is often lost. Fostering Opportunities is designed to build and maintain students’ educational social capital.

Students who experience foster care have complex and dynamic networks that, when activated and connected, have the potential to provide consistent educational support.

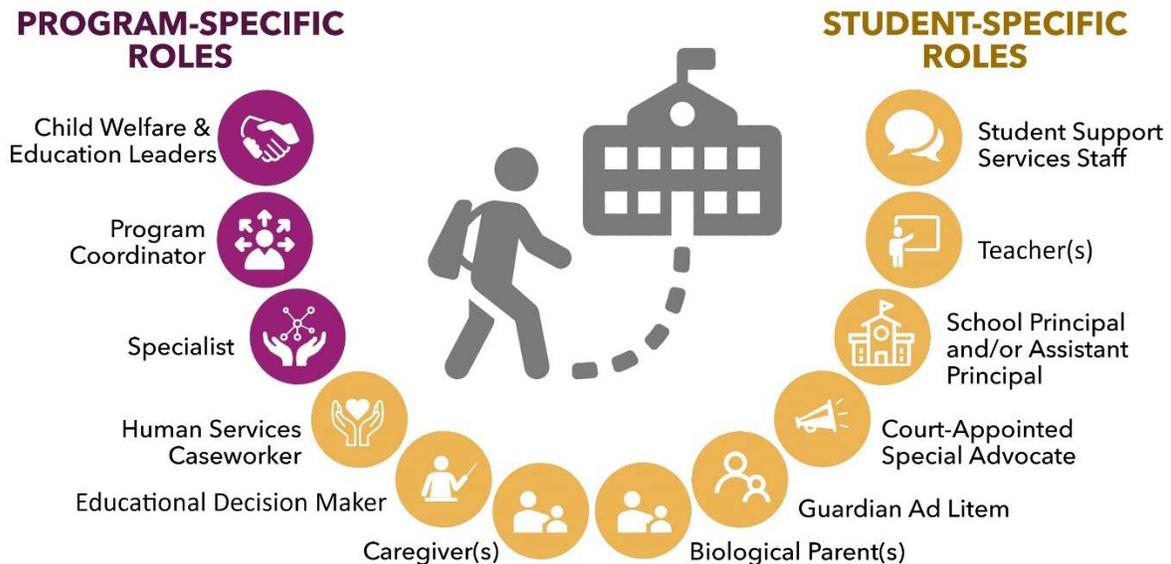
A Fostering Opportunities specialist communicates consistently with students, caregivers, and professionals in a student’s network. When adults in students’ lives are more connected with one another and communicate regularly amongst themselves and with the student, they can more effectively offer needed academic and emotional support. This is called **network closure**.

Network closure is an essential aspect of social capital theory that refers to all relevant parties being connected and noticing each other’s actions.² Network closure within and among all of the caregivers and professionals in a student’s life is necessary to build a student’s social capital and the relationships supporting academic achievement.

¹ Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, S95-S120.

² Burt, R. S. (2017). Structural holes versus network closure as social capital. In N. Lin, K. Cook, & R. S. Burt (Eds.), *Social capital: Theory and research* (2nd ed.) (pp. 31-56). New York, NY: Routledge.

Social Capital of Students in Foster Care: The Student's Network



Connecting a complex and dynamic network of professionals and caregivers begins with accurate and timely information about the student's academic progress. For students in foster care, the information siloes embedded into the education and child welfare systems must also be broken down.^{3,4} Thus, a [data tracking system](#) that monitors the information and actions of both the student and the specialist is necessary to improve engagement in school and support progress toward graduation.

When Fostering Opportunities provides the network surrounding a student with consistent, timely, and reliable information, students will experience fewer barriers to full participation in school. Coleman (1988)⁵ posited that, in a closed network, norms such as high school graduation are created and maintained because students' positive actions are more consistently reinforced. By increasing the social capital of youth who have experienced foster care, despite mobility, Fostering Opportunities strives to improve the attendance, behavior, and course pass rate of participating students. With aligned systems, consistent specialists, and tracked data, Fostering Opportunities has the potential to achieve the *function* of social capital: "changes in the relations among persons that facilitate action" (p. S100).⁶

³ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2014). *Sustaining momentum: Improving educational stability for young people in foster care*. Retrieved from <https://www.aecf.org/resources/sustaining-momentum/>

⁴ LaLonde, T., Tsai, C., & Myers, K. [study in progress]. Postsecondary participation of youth formerly in foster care. Retrieved from <https://coloradolab.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/postsecondary-participation-of-youth-formerly-in-foster-care.pdf>

⁵ Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, S95-S120.

⁶ Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, S95-S120.

Rationale for Fostering Opportunities and Its History

Fostering Opportunities was developed because of the clear need to improve high school graduation rates for students in foster care. The percentage of youth in foster care who graduate with their class varies throughout the nation, but typically ranges from 23% to 63%.^{7,8,9,10,11}

The majority of interventions aimed at improving the graduation rates of students who have experienced foster care are spearheaded by child welfare agencies or the judicial system, and for this reason, services tend to end when students exit the foster care system.¹² A student's risk for adverse educational outcomes does not end when they return home or are adopted. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that the risk for poor educational outcomes may be elevated after a removal episode ends.¹³ Education agencies are uniquely positioned to serve these young people even after their foster care case closes.

Other programs for students in foster care have recognized the unique needs of this population and are working to reduce barriers that result in substantially lower graduation rates for students who have experienced foster care. Treehouse, a Seattle-based nonprofit, has a goal of increasing the graduation rate of students who have experienced foster care so that by 2022 these youth across Washington will graduate from high school at the same rate as their peers, with support and a plan to launch successfully into adulthood.^{14,15}

Fostering Opportunities is an intervention developed at the local level based on the identified needs of local child welfare and education agencies.

⁷ Burley, M. (2013). *Educational outcomes of foster youth—updated benchmarks* (document number 13-06-3901). Retrieved from the Washington State Institute for Public Policy website: http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/1341/Wsipp_Educational-Outcomes-of-Foster-Youth-Updated-Benchmarks_Full-Report.pdf

⁸ Colorado Department of Education. (2007-2017). *Graduation and completion statistics*. Retrieved from <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/gradhistrates>

⁹ Courtney, M.E., Dworsky, A., Ruth, G., Keller, T., Havlicek, J. & Bost, N. (2005). *Midwest evaluation of adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 19*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, Chapin Hall Center for Children.

¹⁰ National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, American Bar Association, Center on Children and the Law, Legal Center for Foster Care and Education. (2018). *Fostering success in education: National factsheet on the educational outcomes of children in foster care*. Retrieved from <http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/>

¹¹ U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Human Services. (2016). *Non-regulatory guidance: Ensuring educational stability for children in foster care*. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/edhhsfostercarenonregulatorguide.pdf>

¹² National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, American Bar Association, Center on Children and the Law, Legal Center for Foster Care and Education. (2018). *Fostering success in education: National factsheet on the educational outcomes of children in foster care*. Retrieved from <http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/>

¹³ Berger, L. M., Cancian, M., Han, E., Noyes, J., & Rios-Salas, V. (2015). Children's academic achievement and foster care. *Pediatrics*, 135(1), e109-e116.

¹⁴ Academic Support. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.treehouseforstudents.org/our-services/academic-support/>

¹⁵ Treehouse. (2018, Jan. 29). *Treehouse announces statewide expansion, new 5-year graduation goal for youth in foster care* [Press release]. Retrieved from <https://www.treehouseforstudents.org/treehouse-announces-statewide-expansion-new-5-year-graduation-goal-youth-foster-care/>

Another program focused on youth who have experienced foster care, Kids in School Rule!, is a partnership among Cincinnati Public Schools, the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services, Hamilton County Juvenile Court, and the Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati.¹⁶ The program works to improve educational outcomes for youth in foster care by increasing school stability, improving direct communication about students, and reducing disruptions and removals from school.

There are other evidence-based interventions that serve at-risk youth in the school setting, though none that are specifically designed for the unique academic needs of youth in foster care. *Check & Connect* is an example of an evidence-based program that was designed for K-12 students who show warning signs of disengagement with school and who are at risk of dropping out, but it does not specifically target foster care youth.¹⁷

Fostering Opportunities is informed by these programs and emphasizes social capital theory as its theoretical bedrock because of the unique, systems-level needs of students in foster care.

With the goal of supporting the unique population of students in foster care, Fostering Opportunities was conceptualized, developed, and piloted in Jefferson County, Colorado, a geographically diverse, 890-square-mile area. Although Jefferson County was an early adopter of implementing the foster care educational stability provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the majority of foster students in the area still change schools with each foster care placement because the commute time to remain in their schools of origin is too long. With its highly mobile student population, Jefferson County provided an ideal setting to develop the Fostering Opportunities program in alignment with ESSA, starting with a pilot program in 2015 that served elementary students. Then, beginning in 2018, lessons learned from the elementary pilot informed and shaped the development of the current pilot program that serves middle and high school students.

The rich history of Fostering Opportunities in Jefferson County provides a strong foundation from which to transition this innovative program into schools beyond the region. The detailed description of the program contained in this Program Manual will serve to facilitate the broader application of this program.

¹⁶ Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2013). *Site visit report: Kids in School Rule! (KISR!)*. Retrieved from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/kisr.pdf>

¹⁷ Christenson, S. L., Stout, K., & Pohl, A. (2012). *Check & Connect: A comprehensive student engagement intervention: Implementing with fidelity*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration.

Section 2: Child Welfare and Education Systems Alignment

Systems alignment refers to the education and child welfare policy and practice coordination that is the foundation for successful implementation of the Fostering Opportunities intervention. System alignment typically begins by developing relationships and open lines of communication between child welfare, education, and other relevant youth serving agencies.

There are eight recommended systems alignment processes that can assist organizations in delivering the Fostering Opportunities intervention:

- (1) Data Spotlight
- (2) Geographical Boundaries
- (3) Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)
- (4) Consistent Meetings
- (5) Data Sharing Agreements (DSAs)
- (6) Releases of Information (ROIs)
- (7) Educational Stability
- (8) Best Interest Determinations (BIDs)

Processes

(1) Data Spotlight

It is important to first ensure that there is strong support and motivation to implement Fostering Opportunities at the systems level across child welfare and education agencies.

In any school district or region, education and child welfare data can be harnessed to shine a spotlight on the disparities between the educational experiences of youth in foster care and typical students. This data can be used to communicate the urgency of acting at the systems level to make it possible for youth in foster care to achieve academic success.

Education and child welfare data can be used to communicate a compelling rationale for why a targeted, intensive, and systems-level intervention such as Fostering Opportunities is necessary. This data can illustrate why it is necessary to invest in the academic success of youth who have experienced foster care so that systemic barriers to progress in the K-12 system can be removed and that these students are not burdened with removing barriers for themselves every time.

(2) Geographical Boundaries

Students in foster care frequently move between and across counties and school district lines. Setting the geographical boundaries for Fostering Opportunities informs which partners need to be a part of the systems alignment work. There are two key participants that define the geographical boundaries for the program:

- Child welfare agencies that partner with the program and whose youth are eligible for participation in the program.
- Schools or education agencies where the intervention can be delivered fully.

Particularly in state-supervised, county-administered child welfare states, the geographical boundaries defining child welfare agencies and school districts are distinct. Some county child welfare agencies may routinely place youth in foster homes outside of the county (e.g., county placement collaboratives). Thus, child welfare agencies who have custody of youth may not directly overlap with the geographical boundaries of a school district or education agency.

The unique geographical boundaries of the Fostering Opportunities program in a given region shape the partnerships, and hence, the legal documents that define the partnerships, such as memorandums of understanding (MOUs). For example, in an urban area, specialists may be easily able to travel to meet students in nearby school districts. Thus, the geographical boundaries could include nearby school districts in order to maximize the potential of the program to benefit the most students who have experienced foster care in a region.

(3) Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)

Fostering Opportunities uses MOUs with partners to outline how child welfare and education agencies will work together to implement the program. MOUs can be used to clarify the responsibilities of the agencies and ensure continuity of expectations through leadership and staffing transitions.

MOUs might include guidance on:

- Regular operational meetings, chairing, and facilitation responsibilities.
- Participation in hiring committees.
- Development, hosting, or maintenance of a shared database.
- Releases of information (e.g., How are releases developed, collected, and stored? Where? By whom? For how long?).

“Systems alignment, to me, is the idea that each system [human services and education] has an understanding of the other system. This does not have to be an in-depth understanding, but rather a general understanding. Also, we both understand trauma. We see these students not as ‘bad students,’ but that they are affected by the circumstances that they are in.”

- Natalie Mall, Associate Director of Jefferson County Human Services

- Consent (e.g., Who is responsible for gathering consent for Fostering Opportunities program participation? Where and how will consent forms be stored?).
- Data sharing agreements (e.g., How will we establish data sharing agreements? How will we make sure our agreements stay current?).
- Orientation (e.g., Who is responsible for orienting child welfare and school staff to the program?).
- The [Best Interest Determination \(BID\)](#) process.

(4) Consistent Meetings

Consistent meetings between education and child welfare leaders create the structure necessary to plan the implementation of Fostering Opportunities and to address programmatic issues once the program is rolled out.

Consider including the following individuals in the meetings:

- Two meeting co-chairs, one from education and one from child welfare, with decision-making authority.
- Representatives from a variety of systems affecting youth who have experienced foster care:
 - Court-appointed special advocate (CASA), juvenile justice (diversion), public health, mental health systems, etc.
- More than one individual at a given level of leadership (to ensure that information is not lost in the event of staffing transitions).

Consider implementing the following guidelines:

- Maintain a consistent meeting schedule through:
 - Monthly meetings at the upper leadership level.
 - Weekly or biweekly check-ins via phone, email, or in person at the specialist or caseworker-level to discuss administrative and programmatic details.
- Emphasize consistent attendance at meetings so that issues can be resolved more quickly.
- Establish a clear communication plan for decisions made during meetings.

The individuals involved in regular meetings must have the flexibility to make Fostering Opportunities a priority, and they must be willing to prioritize time towards launching the program successfully.

(5) Data Sharing Agreements (DSAs)

DSAs detail what information can be shared between agencies for the purposes of delivering and evaluating the program. DSAs are defined by the target population and [geographical boundaries](#) for the intervention (e.g., youth in foster care ages 11 to 16 who are enrolled in a given school district).

If the target population is in the custody of multiple child welfare agencies, then DSAs would be needed between each of those child welfare agencies and the education agency or agencies delivering the intervention. These DSAs are needed, in addition to [releases of information](#) for individual students, to allow for communication with their networks.

Best practice dictates that DSAs apply to all youth for whom the child welfare and education agencies seek to align their practices, including, but not limited to, youth in grade levels or age ranges eligible for Fostering Opportunities.

Reciprocal information sharing between child welfare and education agencies helps with overall systems alignment and implementation of educational stability provisions in ESSA. Furthermore, DSAs may be necessary to identify and enroll individual students in the Fostering Opportunities program and evaluate the impacts of the intervention.

The child welfare data needed includes:

- Parent or caregiver restrictions on access to information and student safety restrictions.
- Current placement type and date and contact information for current guardian.
- Name and contact information of educational decision maker.
- Caseworker name and contact information.
- Permanency plan (e.g., adoption, reunification).
- Child welfare history (e.g., number of placement type, age at entry into the child welfare system).
- Age and placement status of sibling(s).
- Case type (e.g., dependence and neglect, juvenile delinquent, or both).
- [Best Interest Determination \(BID\)](#) documentation.

The education data needed includes:

- Contact information for educational decision maker.
- School point of contact, if known.
- School enrollment data (e.g., schools enrolled and dates).

“This is a continuous improvement process. If one thing changes in your system, you have to revisit it.”

- David Kollar, Director of the Student Engagement Office for Jeffco Public Schools

- Attendance.
- Tardies.
- Absences—excused and unexcused.
- Behavior and suspensions (e.g., any disruptive behavior in school, whether managed in the classroom or outside of the classroom).
- Level of consequences—in school suspension, out-of-school suspension, detention.
- For each core area: grades and percentage (upload most recent report card if database allows).
- Credit accumulation.
- Assessment data.
- Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or 504 Plans, when applicable.
- Any plans or interventions around safety, behavior, attendance, etc.

DSAs allow for sharing between professionals within agencies, while [ROIs](#) allow for sharing client-specific information among members of a student’s network.

See [Appendix A](#) for an example DSA.

(6) Releases of Information (ROI)

ROIs are student-specific documents that indicate what information can be shared, with whom, and for how long. ROIs should be designed to facilitate timely and reliable information to the student’s network, which may include specialists, human services caseworkers, mental health or other service providers, educational decision makers, biological parents, guardians ad litem, CASAs, school principals, teachers, and student support services staff. When members of the network have regular access to and regular communications about the student’s educational progress and needs for support, this builds educational social capital, and the network can work together to support and advocate for the student.

Ideally, with an ROI:

- Every party identified in the document should have a copy and the document should also be uploaded into the database; and
- The option for terminating some information sharing either via date or changes in child welfare case status (e.g., case closure) should be available.

[MOUs](#) may also be used to detail who is responsible for developing, storing, and monitoring the status of ROIs.

See [Appendix B](#) for an example ROI.

(7) Educational Stability

Educational stability helps to ensure that students in foster care know what to expect during the school day, have their educational needs met, and feel connected to a school community.¹⁸ The school also knows the student and can provide a foundation for students in foster care to achieve academic success and make progress toward a high school diploma. Educational stability means the opportunity for students in foster care to have a consistent, predictable learning environment. When child welfare placement changes occur, or a student is initially removed from the home, educational stability must be maintained or established. Federal and state policies and best practice recommendations approach educational stability from two entry points:

- (1) **Seamless Transitions:** When students **enter or change placements**, Fostering Opportunities staff are notified to ensure that new caregivers are made aware of students' educational needs and know how to communicate with their schools of attendance. When students **change schools**, they are immediately enrolled in new schools with appropriate classes, educational services, and transfers of credits.
- (2) **School Stability:** Students remain in their schools of origin unless it is in their best interest to change schools. Transportation is provided to schools of origin, when needed, to maintain school stability.

Seamless transitions are an important part of maintaining educational stability for those students in foster care who do need to change placements or schools. Focusing on seamless transitions helps students participate fully in athletics and other extracurricular activities. The student, their caregivers, and the school are prepared for each transition. School stability, or remaining in the same school in the midst of child welfare placement changes, is a way to maintain educational stability but must be paired with seamless transition supports that respond to the new living situation.

Notifications to the School When Placement Changes Occur

Seamless transitions require timely notifications to the Fostering Opportunities program when students enter foster care or a placement change occurs. Standard and, ideally, automated processes can help ensure the program is notified in the midst of a crisis situation and can immediately begin implementing strategies to support a seamless educational transition to the next living situation.

As a connector of information throughout the student's network, the specialist can make sure that the school professionals in a student's network are aware of changes in living situations so that steps can be taken to mitigate the stress of the transition. Such notifications also cue the specialist to inquire about the [BID](#) process.

¹⁸ Clemens, E.V., & Phillips Sheesley, A. (2016). *Every transition counts: Educational stability of students in foster care (2007-08 to 2013-14)*. Retrieved from https://www.unco.edu/cebs/foster-care-research/pdf/reports/Every_Transition_Counts_V.1_Interactive.pdf

(8) Best Interest Determinations (BID)

A BID is a standard and deliberate process for determining when a school change is in a student’s best interest when entering foster care or changing foster care placements. BIDs are a federal legal requirement established by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

A Fostering Opportunities’ [MOU](#) can detail how the program intersects with the implementation of this federal requirement.

“Title I of the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, highlight the need to provide educational stability for children in foster care, with particular emphasis on collaboration between SEAs [state educational agencies], LEAs [local educational agencies], and child welfare agencies to ensure that students in foster care have the opportunity to achieve at the same high levels as their peers.

These provisions emphasize the importance of limiting educational disruption by keeping children who move in foster care (due to entering the foster care system or changing placements) in their schools of origin, unless it is determined to be in their best interest to change schools. These provisions also ensure that, if it is not in their best interest to remain in their schools of origin, children in foster care are enrolled in their new schools without delay” (p. 6).¹⁹

Consider:

- Fostering Opportunities team engagement in professional development that ensures leadership and staff are highly knowledgeable about the federal and local legislation, rules, and procedures governing the BID process.
- Fostering Opportunities’ role in the BID, such as providing timely and accurate information on students’ educational progress and needs, advocating for the student, planning for transitions when a school change is necessary, and ensuring communication between human services agencies and schools.
- Fostering Opportunities’ role when a BID results in a student changing schools, such as assisting the student and caregivers in navigating the school change and preparing the new school for the student’s arrival. Specialists support the seamless transition to the new school beyond enrollment, which involves helping to meet the student’s social-emotional needs, transfer credits, enroll in free and reduced lunch programs, engage in pro-social or extracurricular activities, meet new professionals at the school, and otherwise help the student acclimate to the new environment.²⁰

¹⁹ U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Human Services. (2016). *Non-regulatory guidance: Ensuring educational stability for children in foster care*. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/edhhsfostercarenonregulatorguide.pdf>

²⁰ Colorado Department of Education. (2016). *Foster Care Best Interest Determinations (BID): Understanding the BID process in Colorado*. Retrieved from <https://www.cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/fcbestinterestdeterminationfaqforschools>

- Fostering Opportunities' role when a BID outcome is to remain in the school of origin. Specialists support transportation needs²¹, information sharing, and team collaboration.

Relationships Between Involved Leaders and Staff

Systems alignment works when there are strong relationships among leadership and staff across and within the child welfare and educational agencies partnering to deliver Fostering Opportunities.

Relationships between systems are easier to build when the leadership and staff involved in the program possess the following qualities:

- Natural collaborators with strong relationship-building skills.
- Great communicators.
- Trusting within and outside of the organization.
- Flexible and creative.
- Open to feedback and non-defensive.
- Persistent.
- Comfortable with continuous improvement.
- Value and utilize quantitative data.
- Invested in the best interest of youth.

Leaders within the child welfare and education agency need to be champions for this intervention to be successful and willing to engage with each other to create solutions when implementation challenges arise. Leaders spearheading the implementation of this program need to have a high level of decision-making authority to prioritize practice changes necessary to align systems.

²¹ HopSkipDrive, a rideshare platform for children, is one solution that can potentially help specialists meet the transportation needs of youth in foster care. It is currently available in Los Angeles, Orange County, San Diego, the Bay Area, and Denver.

Section 3: Roles and Responsibilities

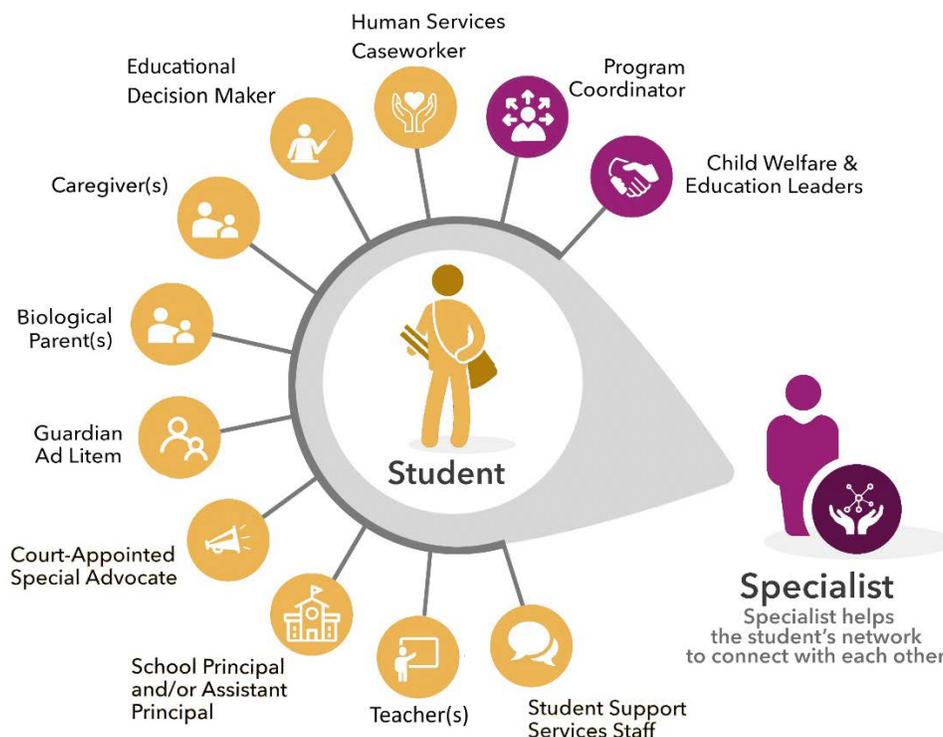
In order for the program to be successful, there must be an expansive, strong, and reliable network of support for students who have experienced foster care in the area. The roles and responsibilities are categorized into:

- (1) **Program-specific roles**, whose primary focus is to oversee communication and collaboration between the child welfare and education players involved in a student's life.
- (2) **Student-specific roles**, whose primary focus is to serve the student within their prescribed roles, while also increasing collaboration and communication across the student's network.

In summary, the program-specific staff seek to enhance communication and collaboration between everyone who plays a student-specific role.

An important responsibility of the specialist is to help students understand the role of each member of their network.

Students often are unclear about what each person does and who to reach out to when an issue arises. The specialist can help the student to better understand the role played by every member of the student's network. The Social Capital Assessment may be useful in this process (see [Appendix C](#)).



Program-Specific Roles

The program-specific roles create the foundation for the network that has the potential to support a student's educational success and to meet the unique needs of the student.

Child Welfare and Education Leaders

Leaders within the child welfare and education systems who work together to implement the systems-level changes described above.

While these individuals may not be interacting directly with youth involved in the Fostering Opportunities program, they play a critical role in achieving the systems alignment necessary to launch the program and addressing the barriers that arise during implementation. They must be fully committed to the mission of Fostering Opportunities and have strong interpersonal and [communication skills](#).

Program Coordinator

The program coordinator supervises a team of specialists who work directly and collaboratively with a caseload of students, their biological parents, foster parents or kinship providers, child welfare caseworkers, and system partners to implement comprehensive and inclusive strategies to ensure educational stability and academic success.

The program coordinator may provide direct services to a small caseload of students. This position may also support other initiatives of the education agency that are relevant to youth experiencing foster care. These may include, but are not limited to, Youth Mental Health First Aid,²² restorative practices, and other cross-agency trainings.

- **Hiring Process** (see [Appendix D](#) for more details)
- **Job Responsibilities** (see [Appendix D](#) for more details)
 - Hires and onboards specialists.
 - Leads team-building.
 - Provides initial orientations with all involved staff, including specialists and caseworkers.
 - Provides supervision to specialists.
- **Useful Skills**
 - [Supervision](#) skills.
 - Leadership skills.
 - Systems-levels cognitive abilities.
 - Budget management experience.

²² Youth Mental Health First Aid. Retrieved from <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/take-a-course/course-types/youth/>

- Knowledge of trauma-informed practices.
- Other useful skills listed under the specialist's role below.

Specialist

The specialist works directly and collaboratively with a caseload of students, their biological parents, foster parents or kinship providers, child welfare caseworkers, and system partners to implement comprehensive and inclusive strategies to ensure educational stability and academic success.

- **Hiring Process** (see [Appendix E](#) for more details)

The hiring committee should be diverse and may include perspectives of child welfare leadership, those experienced in working with multicultural, migrant, and/or homeless student populations, and experts in student engagement. Including a child welfare representative on the hiring committee models the partnership and collaboration that is essential to the successful implementation of this program.

Because of the level of skill required for the specialist to succeed in work with this vulnerable student population, preferred characteristics of specialists may include a master's degree in social work, counseling, other mental health fields, human services, or education. Case management experience is also essential because of the skill required to balance many responsibilities and tasks with the caseload of high needs students.

Ideal candidates will also possess experience in education and/or child welfare because this gives the specialist insider knowledge on how to collaborate with the two systems.

- **Job Responsibilities** (see [Appendix E](#) for more details)
 - Meets weekly with students on caseload.
 - Communicates regularly with all players in a student's network.
 - Ensures students receive effective instruction in academic, social, and emotional learning areas.
 - Facilitates data and information sharing among all players in a student's network.
 - Coordinates with child welfare, school districts, transportation, and Title I department to ensure uninterrupted transportation or transportation assistance to/from school upon placement in foster care.
 - Understands graduation requirements in order to assist students in identifying coursework necessary to obtain high school diploma.
 - [Advocates](#) for students.
- **Useful Skills and Experiences**
 - Basic helping skills (e.g., empathy, open-ended questions, reflection of feeling and content).
 - Strong relationship skills (e.g., follow-up, consistency).

- [Motivational interviewing skills.](#)
- [Trauma-informed principles and approaches.](#)
- K-12 education and/or child welfare experience.
- Program development experience.
- Case management experience.
- Background in psychology, counseling, or social work.
- Bilingual or multilingual.

Depending on the program complexity and size, some organization may choose to differentiate administrative, operational, or even caseload responsibilities among the team of specialists. For example, a program might choose to select a particular specialist to engage in all monitoring and step-down processes or to coordinate administrative functions.

Student-Specific Roles (i.e., Networks of Support)

Outlined below are the responsibilities of each member of a student’s network. Encouraged and facilitated by Fostering Opportunities staff, these players fulfill their promises to students, which creates a strong foundation of social capital that allows students to focus all their energy towards educational goals.

Human Services Caseworker

Caseworkers are found in different areas of the Department of Human Services and provide child welfare services using safety-organized practice techniques to engage families. In general, caseworkers conduct home and community visits to assess allegations of child/adult abuse and neglect; assess situations for safety and risk; make referrals to community and system-based services; create treatment plans; monitor progress of specific cases; document case information; and collaborate with multidisciplinary teams and other resources for services and supports.

In the Fostering Opportunities program, caseworkers serve as a critical connector between the student and the child welfare system and provide invaluable information on the student’s current and historical involvement in the child welfare system.

Specifically, the human services caseworker:

- Communicates regularly with specialist about student’s needs.
- Provides case progress information, permanency goals, and case experience to specialist.

“A lot of students in foster care don’t have that consistent person, and I think for someone [the specialist] to be giving them that voice and saying, ‘It is in your control! What do you need? Let’s see how we can get that for you!’ That is powerful. Specialists play a unique role where we’re able to give students a real voice and teach them how to use it appropriately and effectively to self-advocate.”

- Fostering Opportunities Specialist

- Obtains initial [ROI](#) signed by educational decision maker and student if feasible.²³

Educational Decision Maker

This is the person who has the legal authority to make education-related decisions for the student. The legal definition of “educational decision maker” is defined in state statute and varies by state, but a court must issue an order designating a specific person as the official “educational decision maker” for a youth in foster care. This role is likely to be held by an individual who has another role in the student’s network (e.g., biological parent, caregiver, guardian ad litem [GAL], etc.).

Specifically, the educational decision maker:

- Participates and signs all IEP documents.
- Supports student’s enrollment in school.
- Communicates regularly with specialist about student’s needs.
- Signs [ROI](#).
- Supports student towards goal of high school graduation.

Caregiver

The person who is responsible for providing care to the child on a day-to-day basis. This role may or may not be filled by the same person as the educational decision maker.

The caregiver:

- Supports student’s enrollment in school.
- Communicates regularly with specialist about student’s needs.
- Supports student towards goal of high school graduation.

Biological Parent(s)

Cooperation and support to students by the biological parent(s) may increase a student’s engagement in the program. Biological parents are usually excited to hear that their child will be receiving more support in school. However, it is not necessary for biological parent(s) to sign the ROI unless they are the current educational decision maker.

For this program, the biological parent:

- If involved and able, communicates regularly with specialist about student’s needs.
- Learns about the program from the specialist.
- Expresses support to student for involvement in the program.

²³ The person who facilitates the ROI process may depend on local practices. This can be left to the discretion of the program coordinator.

Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)

*A GAL is a unique type of guardian in a relationship that has been created by a court order only for the duration of a legal action. Courts appoint these special representatives for youth in foster care with the goal of protecting their rights in court.*²⁴

Generally, GALs are regulated by state and local laws. Jurisdictions differ not only on when to appoint GALs but also on the guardian's minimum qualifications, training, compensation, and duties. Depending on state and local requirements, GALs can be lawyers or mental health professionals who have had specialized training.²⁵ For this program, the GAL:

- Communicates regularly with specialist about student's needs.
- Receives and understands orientation to the program.
- Signs [ROI](#) if also the educational decision maker.
- Acts as a partner in supporting student towards goal of high school graduation.

Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)

CASA volunteers are appointed by judges to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in court and other settings.

CASA volunteers are charged with advocating on behalf of at-risk youth all over the United States. For this program, the CASA:

- Communicates regularly with specialist about student's needs.
- Makes recommendations consistent with the best interests of the student regarding placement, visitation, and appropriate services for the child and family.
- Monitors student and makes sure that the child's essential needs are being met and that the terms of the court order have been fulfilled.
- Acts as a bridge between school and home for the student.
- May transport student outside of school hours (e.g., to supportive services such as tutoring or other activities that increase student's engagement in school).

School Principal and/or Assistant Principal

- Gives approval for specialist to be in school setting.
- Communicates to teachers, school counselors, and other appropriate staff about the program.
- Collaborates with specialist and participates in meetings related to the student as needed.

²⁴ Guardian ad litem. (2008) *West's Encyclopedia of American Law. (2nd ed.)*. Retrieved from <https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/guardian+ad+litem>

²⁵ Guardian Ad Litem. (n.d.). Legal Information Institute at Cornell Law School. Retrieved from https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/guardian_ad_litem

Teacher

- Communicates with specialist on a regular basis about student's academic performance and any social-emotional needs observed.
- Helps specialist to problem-solve related to student's engagement and coursework completion.

Student Support Services Staff

Student support services staff may include a school psychologist, school counselor, school social worker, Dean of Students, campus security, or other supportive staff in a school setting.

Support staff:

- Communicate regularly with specialist about student's social-emotional needs.
- Provide mental health services to student in school setting or provide mental health referrals as needed.
- Communicate with specialist about student's IEP, if applicable.
- Support crisis, behavior, and safety planning for student.

Note about oversaturation: It is possible that a student selected for the program is already meeting regularly with many different professionals about different needs: a caseworker, an individual mental health counselor, a family therapist, a tutor, a credit recovery specialist, etc. Although there is a risk of oversaturation and losing the student's interest, Fostering Opportunities program staff can take into account the personality of the student and their expressed interest in checking in with the Fostering Opportunities specialist weekly.



Section 4: The Role of the Specialist – A Closer Look

Specialists advocate, mentor, and provide social-emotional support and academic support. They also consult and coordinate information to ensure that students experience a consistent network of support in the school environment and beyond. They are typically employees of a local education agency but could also be state education agency staff. They are not bound to a specific school, but instead follow the students.

At the heart of the specialist's role is the concept of advocacy, which encompasses both the specialist's advocacy for the student and teaching the student to self-advocate. Advocacy provides the foundation upon which mentoring, social-emotional support, and academic support rest. The social-emotional support provided by the specialist is focused around building the social and emotional skills that allow students to become more effective self-advocates for their needs. Specialists advocate for students' academic and social-emotional needs while simultaneously teaching students and their networks to advocate for their own academic needs. This leads to network closure in the school environment as the student's network becomes more aware of the barriers to academic achievement faced by the student and how to help the student more effectively overcome those barriers.

Laying the Groundwork for Success: The Role of the Specialist



The specialist's communication with students is motivated by this understanding of advocacy and uses strengths-based language, motivational interviewing techniques, and a trauma-informed approach to promote advocacy in every interaction with students.

The specialist's relationship and work with the student cannot replace the student's need for a trained and licensed mental health provider. It is important to recognize the primacy of students' relationships and emotional work with their mental health providers.

Specialists should be aware of the rules on mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect and be knowledgeable of the school district's policies and procedures related to student disclosure of suicidality, homicidal ideation, or self-harming behaviors.

Students should also be informed in the Fostering Opportunities consent process of the specialist's role as a mandatory reporter and other safety-related situations where specialists will take action to ensure safety.

“There are many reasons why school counselors cannot fulfill specialists’ roles, and many reasons why specialists play a critical role for students who have experienced foster care, even when a dedicated school counselor is part of the student’s network. The student ratio is much smaller for specialists than for school counselors, so specialists can be entirely available and attentive to the complex needs of this unique group of students. Specialists also have the singular ability to provide continuity for students through planned and unplanned school changes. They have unparalleled access to the child welfare system because they are positioned at the intersection of the youth’s child welfare experience and the youth’s academic experience. Specialists are truly fluent in both systems.”

- Dr. Elysia V. Clemens, Deputy Director of the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab, former school counselor and counselor educator

I. Advocacy

At the heart of the specialist's role is the concept of advocacy, which encompasses the specialist's advocacy for the student, teaching the student to self-advocate, and engaging in activities that build the capacity of the student's network to advocate on the student's behalf.

The Equation of Advocacy



“Advocacy means making decisions with the student’s voice and choice at the forefront.”

- Addi Cantor, *Fostering Opportunities Program Coordinator for Jeffco Public Schools*

Self-advocacy is a term that originates from the civil rights movement focusing on individuals with disabilities.²⁶ Individuals with disabilities and family members of individuals with disabilities have historically been faced with the challenges of advocating for individual needs that are different from the “norm.”²⁷ The needs of youth who have experienced foster care are also often different from the “norm” in a school setting. Self-advocacy means “having the opportunity to know about your rights and responsibilities, to stand up for them, and to make choices about your own life” (p. 223).²⁸

Fostering Opportunities’ practical application of advocacy is strongly informed by advocacy literature in the mental health field. For example, the following American Counseling Association’s (2003) student advocacy competencies are also key responsibilities of specialists:²⁹

- Negotiate relevant services and education systems on behalf of students.

²⁶ Test, D. W., Fowler, C. H., Wood, W. M., Brewer, D. M., & Eddy, S. (2005). A conceptual framework of self-advocacy for students with disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education, 26*, 43-54.

²⁷ Clemens, E. V., Shipp, A., & Kimbel, T. (2011). Investigating the psychometric properties of school counselor self-advocacy questionnaire. *Professional School Counseling, 15*(1), 34-44. doi:2156759X1101500101

²⁸ Pennell, R. L. (2001). Self-determination and self-advocacy: Shifting the power. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies, 11*(4), 223-227.

²⁹ American Counseling Association (2003). *Advocacy competency domains*. Retrieved from https://www.counseling.org/resources/competencies/advocacy_competencies.pdf

- Help students gain access to needed resources.
- Identify barriers to the well-being of individuals and vulnerable groups.
- Develop an initial plan of action for confronting these barriers.
- Identify potential allies for confronting the barriers.
- Carry out the plan of action.

Advocacy within Fostering Opportunities takes the form of:

- Building the student’s social capital by ensuring that the student’s network of support has access to consistent, timely, and reliable information about the student’s academic progress and educational needs.
- Making sure that students have access to the right resources at the right time.
- Taking actions to help students overcome barriers to academic success.
- Enhancing and emphasizing students’ strengths.
- Ensuring educational stability and seamless transitions through planned and unplanned school changes.
- Building the capacity of students to advocate for themselves *and* building the capacity of caregivers and others in the student’s network to advocate for the student.

“Advocacy is a balance of hearing what the student wants—their goals, motivations, interests—and asking whether they are in the right place to advocate for those things?”

Do they have the connections with people in their school and their community to access what they need to pursue those things?

Or, do they need my support in that process? If they need my support in that process, can I model advocacy for them?”

- Addi Cantor, Fostering Opportunities Program Coordinator for Jeffco Public Schools

To achieve these goals, there are five steps that can guide the advocacy process.

Five Steps to Advocacy

The steps to advocacy listed below are not considered chronological, but instead create an iterative and cyclical process wherein the student’s needs provide the touchpoint.

- (1) Build consistent, reliable, and collaborative relationships with students and their networks.

Students and members of students’ networks will feel more comfortable expressing their needs within a relationship that is perceived to be non-judgmental and supportive. The specialist can make assumptions about the barriers faced by the student, but it is important that the student and network members express their perceptions of barriers to academic success. Only then can the specialist, the student, and the student’s network work together collaboratively to overcome those barriers.

- (2) Listen to students and their networks with a lens of advocacy and anticipate students' needs and the needs of their networks.

The specialist must always be looking for opportunities to help students and their networks advocate for unmet needs, personal or academic. Unmet personal needs may be interfering with the student's ability to take in new information and invest in the learning process, so it is important to address those needs as well as academic needs.

Specialists are charged with anticipating students' needs related to education, which may not be expressed or known by students and their networks. The specialist must always anticipate opportunities for creating more seamless school transitions and connecting the student to future career goals, meaningful career conversations, or other resources and support.

The specialist is also charged with connecting the information gathered from conversations with students and their networks so that it can be harnessed to support students. This requires thinking strategically about how to leverage the student's network to help the student succeed in school.

- (3) Recognize and prevent barriers to academic success and encourage academic achievement using data whenever possible.

The responsibility of the specialist is to help students and their networks clarify specific barriers to learning and academic success, whether the issue is primarily social, emotional, or academic in nature. Identifying barriers is the first step towards creating an action plan to overcome these barriers and encourage academic achievement.

A goal of the Fostering Opportunities program is that advocacy on behalf of the student is grounded in data so that it is less susceptible to opinion and bias (i.e., the specialist's perceptions of the student's needs rather than the student's demonstrated needs). Whenever possible, the specialist should leverage data to identify and prevent barriers to academic success and to identify students' strengths that can support academic achievement.

- (4) Leverage the student's network to help the student access resources, navigate systems, overcome barriers, and thrive in school.

Specialists must first be highly knowledgeable about available resources and systems in the area and within the student's own network in order to help the student navigate these barriers. The goal is to build and utilize the social capital within the student's network to overcome barriers to academic success and thrive in school.

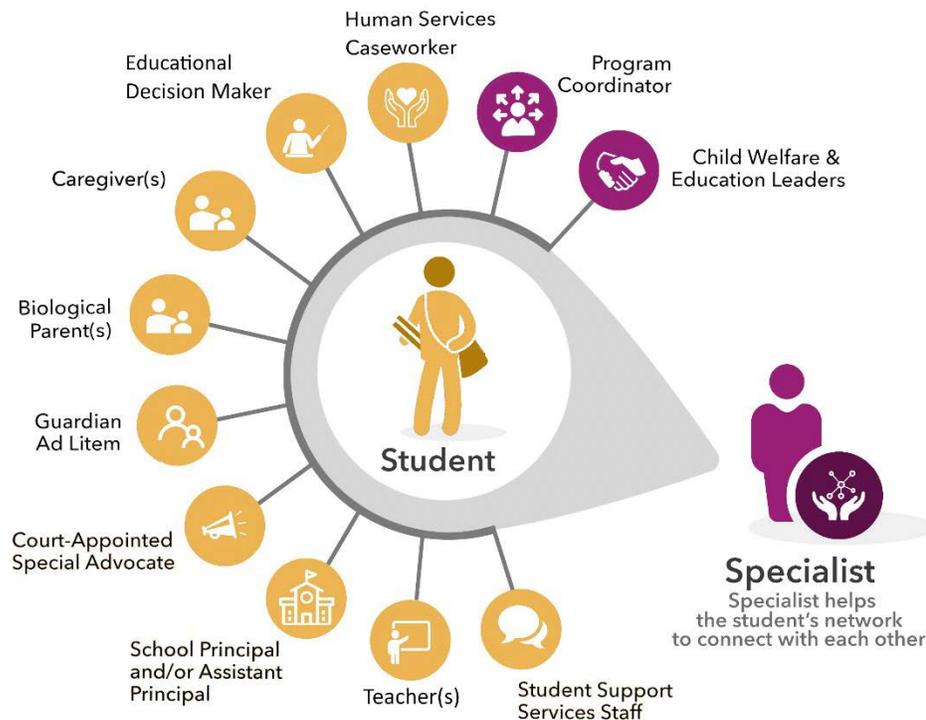
Specialists also need to understand the student's internal resources and scaffold the plan appropriately. In some cases, the student is ready to advocate for themselves (e.g., asking their teacher for the missing homework assignment after class). In other cases, the student may need the specialist to take the lead (e.g., coordinating a meeting between the teacher and the student to discuss homework).

- (5) Build the capacity of the student to self-advocate and the capacity of the student’s network to advocate on behalf of the student.

Debriefing the student’s experience of overcoming a barrier will increase the student’s self-awareness of their own internal resources and build self-advocacy skills for the future. Debriefing can also occur with members of the student’s network in order to build the network’s awareness of the student’s capacities and needs related to advocacy.

Students and their networks often need help in reframing perceived failed self-advocacy attempts as successes (e.g., the teacher did not change your grade, but you practiced communicating your needs to someone in a supervisory role; the IEP process did not proceed as smoothly as anticipated, but the student still received needed supports; etc.). During this step, specialists can embody their role as [mentor](#) and provider of [social-emotional support](#).

How the Specialist Does Advocacy Work



ADVOCACY CASE EXAMPLE

A specialist had been working with a bright 11th grade student “Liz” for six months when she was removed from her home the night before she was scheduled to take the SAT, the critical college entry exam she had been preparing for over the course of the past year. Liz was placed into a group home and missed school the next day.

The school had a policy that, after a certain number of unexcused absences, students are disciplined with an in-school suspension. Moreover, Liz’s SAT exam was rescheduled for a day that she was required to attend a court hearing related to her child welfare case. Liz did not feel comfortable sharing with the school administrator why she missed school, and her caseworker and caregiver had not reached out to the school to excuse the absence.

The specialist, in consultation with Liz, determined what information related to the child welfare placement and court attendance should be shared and with whom at the school. Then, the specialist worked with the school counselor to advocate for Liz’s right to re-take the SATs on a date she was available. In addition, the specialist advocated to the assistant principal for Liz’s in-school suspension to be excused because this particular absence was beyond her control and a result of necessary child welfare actions.

The specialist also worked with her teachers to help Liz prioritize which school work was critical and which school work could be excused. The specialist’s advocacy facilitated network closure and ensured that Liz’s child welfare status did not unfairly impact her opportunities for future academic success.

While instilling the value of accountability is a goal of the Fostering Opportunities program, students who have experienced foster care have the right to school-based accommodations. Specialists possess the expertise to help school professionals determine whether a child welfare situation warrants school-based accommodations for a limited time.

The program should be marketed such that the student’s school-based network trusts the specialist to make judicious recommendations about when to create an alternative plan for the student.

II. Mentoring

The specialist serves the important role of mentor to students participating in the Fostering Opportunities program. As defined by MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, a mentor is “a supportive adult who works with a young person to build a relationship by offering guidance, support, and encouragement to help the young person’s positive and healthy development over a period of time” (p. 13).

In the Fostering Opportunities program, the three key components of the specialist’s role as a mentor are: (1) building an enduring emotional attachment with the student by being a consistent support person; (2) serving as a role model of a healthy, functioning, and successful adult; and (3) gradually coaching the student towards self-advocacy.

Mentoring is one of the most common intervention strategies for preventing adverse outcomes, with over three million youth in the U.S. currently being mentored by mentoring professionals.³⁰

As described by Dr. Joan Rhodes, Director of the University of Massachusetts Boston Center for Evidence-Based Mentoring, “Virtually every aspect of human development is fundamentally shaped by interpersonal relationships. So, it stands to reason that when close and caring relationships are placed at the center of a youth intervention...the conditions for healthy development are ripe” (p. 16).³¹

The specialist creates an empowering mentoring relationship with the student that can serve as a consistently positive example for future relationships, an example that may not (and likely does not) exist within parental relationships.³² When paired with social-emotional support, the mentoring provided by a specialist can increase a student’s ability to self-advocate.

Ample research supports this hypothesis. A 2013 study found that after approximately one year of mentoring, mentored youth demonstrated significantly more positive beliefs about their ability to succeed in school and achieve better grades in school, a sign of increased self-advocacy.³³ More generally, a 2011 meta-analysis of 73 mentoring studies published over the past decade found that mentoring improved outcomes across a host of domains (academic, social, emotional, and behavioral).³⁴

³⁰ MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership. (2006). *Mentoring in America 2005: A snapshot of the current state of mentoring*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

³¹ MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership. (2014). *The mentoring effect: Young people’s perspectives on the outcomes and availability of mentoring*. Retrieved from https://www.mentoring.org/new-site/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/The_Mentoring_Effect_Full_Report.pdf

³² Taussig, H. N., Culhane, S. E., & Hettleman, D. (2007). Fostering Healthy Futures: An innovative preventive intervention for preadolescent youth in out-of-home care. *Child Welfare*, 86(5), 113-131.

³³ Herrera, C., DuBois, D.L., & Grossman, J.B. (2013). *The role of risk: Mentoring experiences and outcomes for youth with varying risk profiles*. New York, NY: A Public/Private Ventures project distributed by MDRC.

³⁴ DuBois, D. L., Portillo, N., Rhodes, J. E., Silverthorn, N., & Valentine, J. C. (2011). How effective are mentoring programs for youth? A systematic assessment of the evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 12(2), 57-91.

The key components of the specialist's role as a mentor are based in the importance of the developmental relationship. Developmental relationships are characterized by "reciprocal human interactions that embody an enduring emotional attachment, progressively more complex patterns of joint activity, and a balance of power that gradually shifts from the developed person in favor of the developing person" (p. 157).³⁵ Within Fostering Opportunities, as the student's self-advocacy skills improve, the balance of power gradually shifts from the specialist's advocacy on behalf of the student towards the student's personal self-advocacy. Before focusing on any tasks, the specialist first strives to show the student that they are a consistent support person with whom the student can build an enduring emotional attachment.

"Especially in the beginning, consistency is the key to rapport-building. I'm consistently showing up every week so that students realize that they are really going to see me every week and that I'm really going to be there for them."

- Fostering Opportunities Specialist

This is in contrast to prescriptive relationships that are found with adult mentors who "expect the mentoring relationship to produce rapid, meaningful, lasting changes in their mentee's life" and whose relationships are characterized by a "high degree of control from the mentors that are not responsive to the mentees' needs and do not fade over time" (p. 161).³⁶

Fostering Opportunities specialists can serve as effective mentors by:³⁷

- (1) Being consistent.
- (2) Demonstrating genuine interest in the student's success and goals.
- (3) Having realistic goals and expectations for the relationship and for the student's academic progress.
- (4) Enjoying time spent together with the student.
- (5) Giving the student a voice and choice in deciding on activities.
- (6) Being positive.
- (7) Letting the student have much of the control over what is talked about and how it is talked about.
- (8) Listening to what the student is saying and not saying.

³⁵ Li, J., & Julian, M. M. (2012). Developmental relationships as the active ingredient: A unifying working hypothesis of "what works" across intervention settings. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 82(2), 157-166

³⁶ Li, J., & Julian, M. M. (2012). Developmental relationships as the active ingredient: A unifying working hypothesis of "what works" across intervention settings. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 82(2), 157-166

³⁷ The Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence & The National Mentoring Center at Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, with support from Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice. *Building effective strategies for providing quality relationships, youth mentoring in schools and communities: A guide for new mentors*. (2007). Retrieved from <https://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/effective-strategies-for-providing-quality-youth-mentoring-in-schools2.pdf>

- (9) Respecting the trust the student places in them.
- (10) Remembering that the relationship is with the student first, followed by the student's network second.
- (11) Remembering that they are responsible for building the relationship and setting appropriate boundaries.

This list also illustrates the importance of building an enduring emotional attachment with the student, above and beyond completing any specific academic-related tasks.

In order to build an enduring emotional attachment with the student, the critical component of the specialist's role as a mentor is consistency over time.³⁸

III. Social-Emotional Support

Social-emotional support is intertwined with mentoring throughout the Fostering Opportunities program because students who experience foster care often have histories of complex trauma.³⁹

Grounded in the mentoring role, specialists provide social-emotional support that aims to increase student self-advocacy by using three intentional communication strategies: strengths-based language, a trauma-informed approach, and motivational interviewing techniques.

Specialists also work to improve the social-emotional support provided to students by their networks by serving as consultants about the trauma-informed approach.

The three communication strategies have been selected because they are developmentally appropriate for most middle and high school students and can be implemented in a school setting.



³⁸ Herrera, C., Grossman, J., Kauh, T., Feldman, A., McMaken, J., & Jucovy, L. (2007). *Making a difference in schools: The Big Brothers Big Sisters school-based mentoring impact study*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures. Retrieved from <https://files.bigsister.org/file/Making-a-Difference-in-Schools.pdf>

³⁹ Greeson, J. K., Briggs, E. C., Kisiel, C. L., Layne, C. M., Ake III, G. S., Ko, S. J., ... & Fairbank, J. A. (2011). Complex trauma and mental health in children and adolescents placed in foster care: Findings from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. *Child Welfare, 90*(6), 91-108.

Need for Social-Emotional Support for Student with a History of Complex Trauma

Studies have estimated as many as 70% of youth in foster care have experienced complex trauma, defined as recurrent interpersonal trauma perpetrated by caregivers early in life.^{40,41} Typically, a traumatic event perpetrated by a caregiver precipitates removal from the home.⁴² These traumatic experiences are associated with a wide range of complicated social and emotional reactions, which can be further exacerbated by the loss and separation often associated with placement in foster care.⁴³

It is not surprising that youth in foster care with complex trauma histories are more at risk for internalizing behavior problems and post-traumatic stress, which can make it more difficult to self-advocate.⁴⁴

As the National Child Traumatic Stress Network explains:

“Children learn their self-worth from the reactions of others, particularly those closest to them. Caregivers have the greatest influence on a child’s sense of self-worth and value. Abuse and neglect make a child feel worthless and despondent. A child who is abused will often blame him- or herself. It may feel safer to blame oneself than to recognize the parent as unreliable and dangerous. Shame, guilt, low self-esteem, and a poor self-image are common among children with complex trauma histories” (para. 14).⁴⁵

These deeper issues can be best addressed by a licensed mental health provider specializing in the treatment of trauma who regularly works one-on-one with the student. The specialist’s role is to focus on the educational success of the student and to reach out to mental health providers and caseworkers to determine how the Fostering Opportunities program’s advocacy, mentoring, social-emotional support, and academic support can align with their treatment plans. When students are not currently receiving mental health services, the specialist can follow school district policies related to how to

⁴⁰ Fratto, C. M. (2016). Trauma-informed care for youth in foster care. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing, 30*(3), 439-446.

⁴¹ Greeson, J. K., Briggs, E. C., Kisiel, C. L., Layne, C. M., Ake III, G. S., Ko, S. J., ... & Fairbank, J. A. (2011). Complex trauma and mental health in children and adolescents placed in foster care: Findings from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. *Child Welfare, 90*(6), 91-108.

⁴² Greeson, J. K., Briggs, E. C., Kisiel, C. L., Layne, C. M., Ake III, G. S., Ko, S. J., ... & Fairbank, J. A. (2011). Complex trauma and mental health in children and adolescents placed in foster care: Findings from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. *Child Welfare, 90*(6), 91-108.

⁴³ Cook, A., Spinazzola, J., Ford, J., Lanktree, C., Blaustein, M., Cloitre, M., DeRosa, R., Hubbard, R., Kagan, R., Liataud, J., Mallah, K., Olafson, E., & van der Kolk, B. (2005). Complex trauma in children and adolescents. *Psychiatric Annals, 35*, 390–398.

⁴⁴ Greeson, J. K., Briggs, E. C., Kisiel, C. L., Layne, C. M., Ake III, G. S., Ko, S. J., ... & Fairbank, J. A. (2011). Complex trauma and mental health in children and adolescents placed in foster care: Findings from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. *Child Welfare, 90*(6), 91-108.

⁴⁵ Greeson, J. K., Briggs, E. C., Kisiel, C. L., Layne, C. M., Ake III, G. S., Ko, S. J., ... & Fairbank, J. A. (2011). Complex trauma and mental health in children and adolescents placed in foster care: Findings from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. *Child Welfare, 90*(6), 91-108.

“If a student is not mentally or emotionally ready to learn, academic support doesn’t matter. Sometimes the best support we can give a student is giving them the space to talk about their feelings. That is trauma-informed practice.”

- Fostering Opportunities Specialist

support students and their families through the process of accessing mental health services and providing referrals.

But, it is a critical aspect of the specialist’s role to collaborate with the student to address social-emotional issues that may be interfering with the student’s ability to self-advocate, especially in the school environment. Doing so will help to increase the student’s resilience, a concept closely related to self-advocacy, which occurs when trauma survivors experience an increased sense of personal strength and belief in one’s capacities to survive and prevail after the trauma.^{46,47}

Existing studies illustrate that positive adult mentoring relationships encourage resilience in youth who have experienced foster care.^{48,49,50}

The specialist’s ability to communicate intentionally with the student and their network is key to the success of Fostering Opportunities and to helping the student increase self-advocacy skills.

Communicate Using Strengths-Based Language

Strengths-based language refers to implementing a strengths-based approach in communication with others. Strengths-based approaches stress “developing [an individual’s] assets” and asking the questions: “What strengths has a person used to deal effectively with life?” and “What are the fundamental strengths of humankind?” (p. 16).⁵¹

Within the Fostering Opportunities program, strengths-based language is not simply a technique but rather a whole-program philosophy affecting beliefs, attitudes, expectations, and biases. Specialists constantly look for students’ strengths and communicate those strengths back to students and their networks.

Strengths-based language implies using person-first language, which is language that is neither stigmatizing nor objectifying.

⁴⁶ Calhoun, L. G., & Tedeschi, R. G. (2006). *Handbook of posttraumatic growth: Research and practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

⁴⁷ Davidson-Arad, B., & Navaro-Bitton, I. (2015). Resilience among adolescents in foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review, 59*, 63-70.

⁴⁸ Ahrens, K. R., DuBois, D. L., Richardson, L. P., Fan, M. Y., & Lozano, P. (2008). Youth in foster care with adult mentors during adolescence have improved adult outcomes. *Pediatrics, 121*(2), e246-e252.

⁴⁹ Collins, M. E., Spencer, R., & Ward, R. (2010). Supporting youth in the transition from foster care: Formal and informal connections. *Child Welfare, 89*(1), 125-143.

⁵⁰ Daining, C., & DePanfilis, D. (2007). Resilience of youth in transition from out-of-home care to adulthood. *Children and Youth Services Review, 29*(9), 1158-1178.

⁵¹ Smith, E. J. (2006). The strength-based counseling model. *The Counseling Psychologist, 34*(1), 13-79.

For example:

- “Students experiencing foster care” or “students in foster care” *instead of* “foster care students” or “foster care youth.”
- “Not interested in...” *instead of* “Unmotivated.”
- “What happened?” *instead of* “What’s wrong?”
- “When you graduate...” *instead of* “If you graduate...”
- “The student came to school 2 days this week.” *instead of* “The student missed 3 days of school this week.”

Students’ ability to self-advocate depends upon their self-concept, and language can shape self-esteem and self-concept.⁵²

In addition, strengths-based language supports caregivers, teachers, and others in the student’s network to positively reframe how they view the student.^{53,54}

It is critical that specialists use intentional, strengths-based language when communicating with students and their networks.

Communicate Using a Trauma-Informed Approach

As previously described, youth experiencing foster care frequently have a history of complex trauma.^{55,56} It is essential for all members of a student’s network to interact and communicate with the student in a trauma-informed manner, and, at times, the specialist must educate members of the network on how to do that.

For example, Myers conducted phenomenological qualitative interviews with youth formerly in foster care, and the results include several participant quotes that exemplify how school staff may

“What language are we using when we talk to school staff and community partners? What language are we using to talk about these students and their experience? Language can advocate and change perspective.”

- Fostering Opportunities Specialist

⁵² Smith, E. J. (2006). The strength-based counseling model. *The Counseling Psychologist, 34*(1), 13-79.

⁵³ Connell, J. P., Spencer, M. B., & Aber, J. L. (1994). Educational risk and resilience in African-American youth: Context, self, action, and outcomes in school. *Child Development, 65*, 494-506.

⁵⁴ Smith, E. J. (2006). The strength-based counseling model. *The Counseling Psychologist, 34*(1), 13-79.

⁵⁵ Cole, S., Greenwald O’Brien, J., Gadd, M. G., Ristuccia, J., Wallace, D. L., & Gregory, M. (2009). *Helping traumatized children learn: Supportive school environments for children traumatized by family violence* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Massachusetts Advocates for Children Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative.

⁵⁶ Greeson, J. K., Briggs, E. C., Kisiel, C. L., Layne, C. M., Ake III, G. S., Ko, S. J., ... & Fairbank, J. A. (2011). Complex trauma and mental health in children and adolescents placed in foster care: Findings from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. *Child Welfare, 90*(6), 91-108.

unintentionally marginalize students who have experienced foster care unless they take a trauma-informed approach:⁵⁷

“Yeah, I think a lot of the times teachers, students alike, anyone that works in a public school, sometimes they forget that they're the outliers [students who have experienced foster care], and they think, you know, they're so in the ritual of dealing with the same people over and over again that they forget that sometimes these kids have problems outside of school and maybe there's a reason why they're not fully paying attention in class, and there's a reason they're getting behind and not wanting to try.”

“[My school counselor] She would check in with me every single day. She was so helpful. But then as I kinda – a couple weeks later, she just dropped off the face of the earth and kinda was like, ‘Oh, well, you need to do this yourself now. You need to pick up yourself.’ ...”

The specialist’s role includes ensuring that the school environment does not unduly contribute to the student’s stress by guaranteeing that it is safe, supportive, and does not perpetuate trauma that the student previously experienced.

Fostering Opportunities’ conception of trauma-informed communication is informed by the 2014 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) comprehensive publication, *SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach*.⁵⁸

The document outlines the key principles essential to a trauma-informed approach, and they are applicable to the Fostering Opportunities program as follows:

- (1) **Safety:** Throughout the school and within the Fostering Opportunities program, staff and the students they serve feel physically and psychologically safe, the physical setting is safe, and interpersonal communication promotes a sense of safety. Understanding safety as defined by those served is a high priority.
- (2) **Trustworthiness and Transparency:** Organizational operations and decisions are conducted with transparency, with the goal of building and maintaining trust with the student and members of the student’s network, among school staff, and with others involved in the Fostering Opportunities program. Specialists communicate transparently with students, especially about actions where students are directly affected in any way.
- (3) **Collaboration and Mutuality:** Specialists communicate that collaboration and mutuality are primary goals of the Fostering Opportunities program. Emphasis is placed on partnering with students and their networks and the leveling of power differences between staff and students and among organizational staff from clerical and janitorial to specialists, teachers, and

⁵⁷ Myers, K. (2019). *Nevertheless they persisted: Youth formerly in foster care who have experienced trauma and their journey to postsecondary education* (Doctoral dissertation). Greeley, CO: University of Northern Colorado. Retrieved from <https://www.unco.edu/library/databases/resources/dissertations-theses.aspx>

⁵⁸ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). *SAMHSA’s concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach*. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Retrieved from <https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma14-4884.pdf>

education and child welfare administrators. This demonstrates to students that healing happens in relationships and in the meaningful sharing of power and decision-making.

- (4) Empowerment, Voice, and Choice: Throughout the participating schools and within the Fostering Opportunities program, students' strengths and experiences are recognized and built upon. The program fosters a belief in the primacy of the students served, in resilience, and in the ability of individuals, schools, and communities to heal and promote recovery from trauma. Fostering Opportunities recognizes the ways in which students in foster care, historically, have been diminished in voice and choice. Students are supported in shared decision-making, choice, and goal setting to determine the plan of action they need to heal and move forward. They are supported in cultivating [self-advocacy](#) skills. Specialists communicate empowerment using [strengths-based language](#).
- (5) Equity and Inclusion (referred to as Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues by SAMHSA): Throughout the participating schools and within the Fostering Opportunities program, work is being done to move past cultural stereotypes and biases. The program promotes access to gender responsive services; leverages the healing value of traditional cultural connections; and promotes school policies, protocols, and processes that are responsive to the racial, ethnic, cultural, gender identity, sexual orientation, and ability needs of the students served.

SAMHSA also provides more specific recommendations related to implementing a trauma-informed approach. The specialist is responsible for educating and role modeling for individuals in the student's network the important aspects of a trauma-informed approach. Doing so ultimately benefits future students experiencing foster care who will also interact with these professionals.

Keep in mind that a "trauma-informed approach" frequently refers to work with individuals who have already experienced trauma, but youth in foster care may continue to experience trauma as they navigate relationships (or lack thereof) with biological parents, adjust to foster care, and experience the loss of identity that accompanies major life transitions.



Communicate Using Motivational Interviewing Techniques

Motivational interviewing is considered by many to be a trauma-informed approach because it emphasizes trustworthiness and transparency, collaboration and mutuality, and empowerment, voice, and choice—the foundations of self-advocacy that also create the crucial tenets of SAMHSA’s trauma-informed approach.^{59,60,61}

“Motivational interviewing is a collaborative, goal-oriented style of communication with particular attention to the language of change. It is designed to strengthen personal motivation for and commitment to a specific goal by eliciting and exploring the person’s own reasons for change within an atmosphere of acceptance and compassion.”

- William Miller and Stephen Rollnick, co-creators of motivational interviewing⁶²

Motivational interviewing was introduced by William Miller and Stephen Rollnick in the 1980s to originally treat clients with alcohol abuse. Since then, motivational interviewing techniques have been implemented in many different fields and with many different populations, including at-risk youth and youth who have experienced foster care.^{63,64} Motivational interviewing builds on humanistic theories about individuals’ capabilities for exercising free choice and change through a process of self-actualization.⁶⁵ The spirit of the technique is collaboration, evocation, and autonomy.

The specialist can implement motivational interviewing techniques with seven general principles in mind:⁶⁶

- (1) Allow the student to guide the conversation.**
- (2) Express empathy through reflective listening.**

⁵⁹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). *SAMHSA’s concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach*. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Retrieved from <https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma14-4884.pdf>

⁶⁰ Levenson, J. (2017). Trauma-informed social work practice. *Social Work*, 62(2), 105-113.

⁶¹ Greenwald, R. (2009). *Treating problem behaviors: A trauma-informed approach*. New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

⁶² Miller, W., & Rollnick, S. (2012). *Motivational interviewing: Helping people change*. (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

⁶³ Miller, W., & Rose, G. (2009). Toward a theory of motivational interviewing. *American Psychologist*, 64(6), 527-537. doi: 10.1037/a0016830

⁶⁴ Naar, S., & Suarez, M. (2011). *Motivational interviewing with adolescents and young adults*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

⁶⁵ Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. (1999). Motivational interviewing as a counseling style. In *Enhancing motivation for change in substance abuse treatment* (Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series, No. 35). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK64964/>

⁶⁶ Miller, W.R., & Rollnick, S. (1991). *Motivational interviewing: Preparing people to change addictive behavior*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

- (3) Use affirmations to encourage the development of the student’s self-advocacy skills.
- (4) Develop discrepancies between the student’s goals or values and current behaviors.
- (5) Avoid argument and direct confrontation.
- (6) Adjust to student resistance rather than opposing it directly.
- (7) Support self-efficacy and optimism.

Principles 3 and 4 are discussed in further detail below because of their importance to successful work with students who have experienced foster care.

Principle 3. Use Affirmations to Encourage the Student’s Self-Advocacy Skills

Affirmations are statements and gestures that recognize the strengths of students and acknowledge behaviors that lead in the direction of positive change, no matter how big or small. Affirmations build confidence in one’s ability to change. To be effective, affirmations must be genuine and congruent.

For students who have experienced foster care, hearing affirmations from a trusted adult can be especially valuable because affirmations may positively influence the student’s self-esteem and locus of control, and subsequently, the student’s capacity for self-advocacy.^{67,68}

While motivational interviewing theory does not emphasize locus of control in the use of affirmations, this manual includes examples of affirmations along a continuum of locus of control (from external to internal), because the work of the specialist inevitably involves building the student’s internal locus of control. Locus of control⁶⁹ is a concept that reflects “a belief about whether the outcomes of our actions are contingent on what we do (internal control orientation) or on events outside our personal control (external control orientation)” (p. 275).⁷⁰

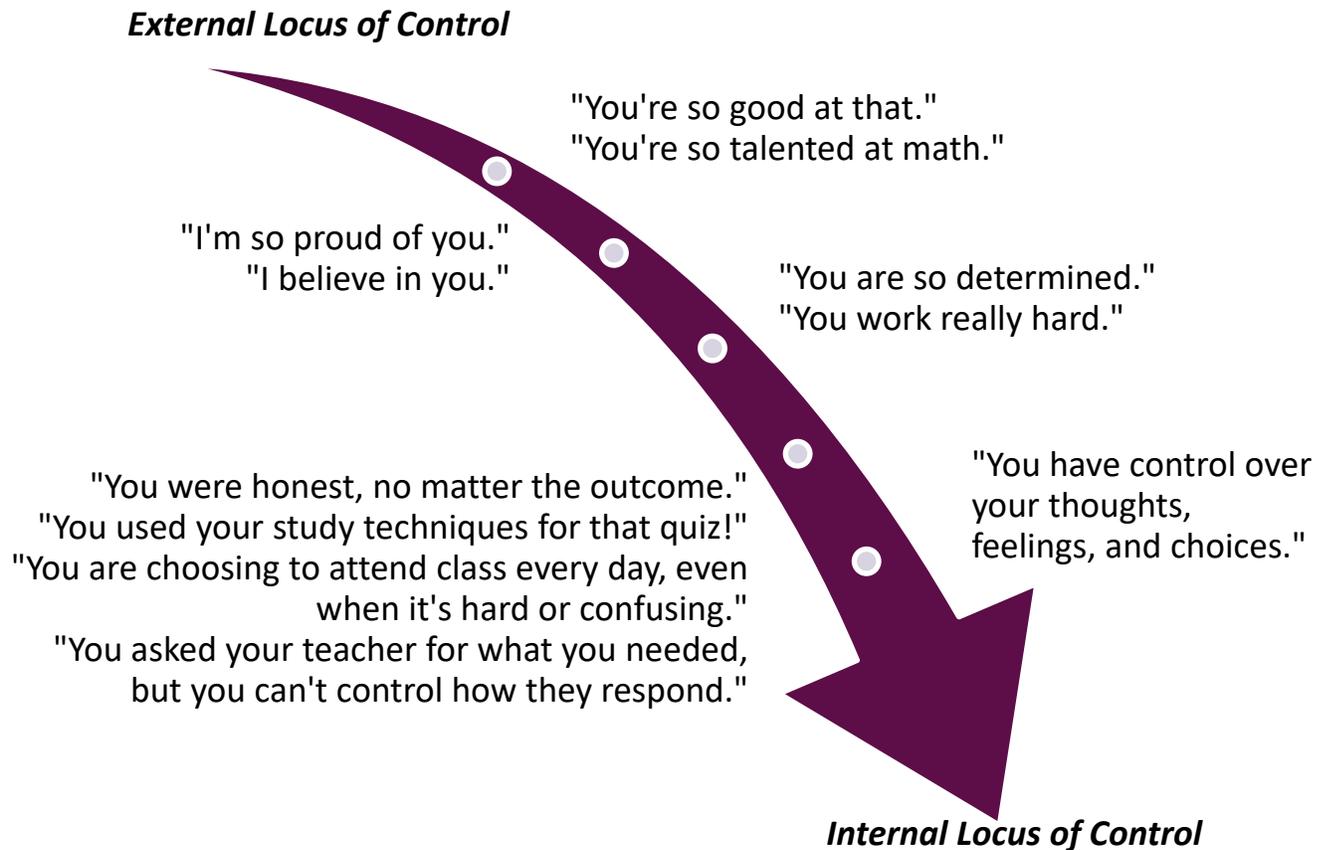
Affirmations that are oriented to external locus of control are more likely to be compliments about the student’s qualities and characteristics. Affirmations that are oriented to internal locus of control are more likely to be observations of students’ realistic abilities to control their surrounding environments, personal reactions, thoughts, and feelings. A student who develops a greater sense of internal locus of control is more likely to be able to self-advocate for academic needs.

⁶⁷ National Child Traumatic Stress Network. (n.d.). *Effects*. Retrieved from <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/complex-trauma/effects>

⁶⁸ Judge, T. A., & Bono, J. E. (2001). Relationship of core self-evaluations traits—self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability—with job satisfaction and job performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*(1), 80-92.

⁶⁹ Rotter, J. (1966). Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. *Psychological Monographs: General and Applied, 80*, 1-28.

⁷⁰ Zimbardo, P. G. (1985). *Psychology and life*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.



Principle 4. Develop Discrepancies between the Student's Goals or Values and Current Behaviors

Motivational interviewing also provides specialists with the skills needed to develop discrepancies between a student's behavior and their goals, which may be especially helpful for students who have experienced foster care. There are many areas of life where students who have experienced foster care experience and express ambivalence, which may be a way they protect themselves from disappointment.

The goal of the specialist is to gently uncover and challenge a student’s discrepancies. This process may be best explained using an example of a 10th grade student currently in foster care, Kevin.⁷¹

Before starting the Fostering Opportunities program, Kevin had experienced many detentions and in-school suspensions due to absences and, in some cases, altercations with other students. His previous experience in school led him to believe that school was a place where he got in trouble and received low grades. Kevin had been removed from his home in 8th grade due to his mother’s substance abuse and, since then, had lived in two different foster care placements.

Jamie, the specialist working with Kevin, focused on trying to engage Kevin in the mentoring relationship first, before ever beginning to discuss attendance and grades. During the first check-ins, Kevin would frequently say, “This isn’t my fault” and, “I don’t even need this school.”

Kevin’s conflicting feelings about trying to do better in school are understandable. He has rarely, if ever, experienced success, acceptance, and belonging in school before. In conversations with Kevin, Jamie started listening for *sustain talk* (i.e., against change) versus *change talk*, an important first step in developing discrepancies.⁷²

Sustain talk is language that shows resistance to change.

Change talk is the first step towards developing discrepancies and changing behaviors.

Sustain Talk	Change Talk
“I’d rather not be here.”	“Where else am I going to go?”
“I don’t need those grades anyway.”	“If I don’t graduate, then what?”
“If I leave school, I’ll be free.”	“I don’t have many other options right now if I don’t graduate.”
“I’m not putting up with this anymore.”	“I’ve handled a lot in my life, and I can meet challenges if I want to.”

A conversation between Jamie and Kevin during a check-in might resemble the below conversation where Jamie is starting to focus on developing discrepancies between Kevin’s behaviors and goals:

Jamie: So how is school going?

Kevin: Well, I don’t want to be expelled [Change talk], but it’s not my fault. And why is it always me that those teachers pick on? I’m doing OK. [Sustain talk]

Jamie: Some of this feels unfair to you. [Reflection]

Kevin: No, all of it, that guy wound me up, he knew what he was doing so he got what he deserved. . . . I don’t see why I should get into trouble, no way is that fair [Sustain talk], I don’t need this hassle. [Change talk]

⁷¹ Example adapted from: Rollnick, S., Kaplan, S., Rutschman, & R. (2016). *Motivational interviewing in schools: Conversations to improve behavior and learning*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

⁷² Example conversation adapted from: Rollnick, S., Kaplan, S., & Rutschman, R. (2016). *Motivational interviewing in schools: Conversations to improve behavior and learning*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Jamie: And you don't want to get into more trouble. [Reflection of change talk]
Kevin: Yeah, I want to stay in school and keep to myself. [Change talk]
Jamie: You know what you want, and you don't want to get into more trouble. [Affirmation and reflection]
Kevin: Yeah, I still want to know how that guy is not expelled for what he did.
Jamie: You don't understand that, and yet you also know what you want. [Reflection]
Kevin: I need to stay here because leaving will just get me into more trouble. [Stronger change talk]
Jamie: How might you get on better in school? [Open question]
Kevin: Like I say, keep to myself more. [Change talk]
Jamie: That might work for you. [Reflection]
Kevin: It might, but then there's these guys who just make trouble.
Jamie: You might get sucked into a fight. [Reflection]
Kevin: Yes, and I must step away and go solo until I calm down. [Change talk] I just don't know, I don't want to be on the street but this place sucks, and I hate it because those teachers....
Jamie: You don't like it here, and you don't want to leave school either. [Double-sided reflection to highlight discrepancy]

The direction of this open, non-judgmental conversation sets Kevin up to talk more about why he does not want to leave school, which elicits more change talk.

Sometimes, education is not a priority for a student who has experienced foster care due to a necessary focus on survival. In exploring the student's ambivalence about education, the specialist may uncover that the student is concerned more about aging out of the system and having a place to live and a job. These are important realities in the student's life. The specialist can also work with the student and their caseworker, caregiver, and/or biological parent to set goals related to these steps to independence, especially as they may intersect with academic goals. Even if the student's case has already closed, this is still an important focus of the specialist's work with the student.

Specialists can collaborate with caseworkers to support students' Independent Living Plans.

The ultimate goal of Fostering Opportunities is to set youth up for success in life.

In addition, the student's mental health issues, such as depression, may be interfering with academic motivation, so the specialist can follow school district policies related to how to support students and their families through the process of accessing mental health services and providing referrals. The specialist can also coordinate these services with the caseworker or other members of the student's network who are supporting the student.

In any scenario, completing a motivational interviewing training with a highly qualified trainer⁷³ experienced in work with adolescents (ideally, youth who have experienced

⁷³ One source for identifying trainers is the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT). Another source may be a local university with a training program in counseling, social work, or psychology. The training should

foster care) will help the specialist to be more comfortable with listening to and empathizing with the student’s ambivalence and pain.

IV. Academic Support

Fostering Opportunities creates academic support that bridges across systems, addresses equity issues, provides continuity through transitions, and mentors the students toward independence. The goal of academic support is to ensure that the student is/stays on the path to completing high school. The academic support provided by a specialist is entirely dependent on the unique needs of each individual student but should not replace or supplant school-based supports or targeted interventions the student might be eligible to receive. This support may take many forms, and some examples are described below.

Four Key Categories of the Specialist’s Academic Support



(1) Academic Support that Creates Bridges across Systems

- Ensuring that the students’ network has timely and reliable information about the students’ academic progress and needs for support. This may be in the form of the monthly progress

include many opportunities for practicing the skills being learned. In addition, the implementation of the Fostering Opportunities program would be enhanced by the clinical supervision of specialists by the trainer. This may include submitting videos of check-ins with students and receiving feedback on motivational interviewing skills.

monitoring report, in addition to information provided as needed during the course of the month.

A monthly progress monitoring report serves to create bridges across systems. The report is compiled by the specialist and includes information on the student's grades, attendance, behaviors, progress towards graduation, and other important school-related information (see [Appendix F](#) for an example and [Section 6: A System to Track Students Across Placements and Schools](#) for more details).

The report is shared and discussed with the student and the student's network every month. The report uses strengths-based language and focuses on the student's achievements and progress towards graduation.

- Coordinating a plan for course completion when court appearances or child welfare related events impact attendance and ability to complete school work on time.
- Onboarding caregivers to district and school communication tools and how to monitor their students' progress.

(2) Academic Support that Addresses Equity Issues

- Helping the student, family, and caregivers navigate the IEP process and advocate for implementation of modifications and accommodations, if needed.
- Ensuring that fee waivers the student is eligible for are being applied.
- Providing funds for students to purchase school supplies as needed or maintaining a resource closet with school supplies on hand.
 - Tablets and computers are a frequently needed school supply. Ideally, these funds are set aside in the Fostering Opportunities budget.
- Helping the student identify ways to access the internet, if needed for homework assignments and not available in the home.
- Exploring credit recovery options for the student and providing funding for those options, which can be costly.
 - The specialist can gather information on night school, summer school, or other in-district alternative schools and programming for the student.

(3) Academic Support that Creates Continuity through Transitions⁷⁴

- Ensuring that when students change schools, they are immediately enrolled in a new school with appropriate classes, educational services, and transfers of credits. Students are able to participate fully in athletics and other extracurricular activities. Both the student and the school are prepared for the transition.

⁷⁴ Clemens, E.V., & Phillips Sheesley, A. (2016). *Every transition counts: Educational stability of students in foster care (2007-08 to 2013-14)*. Retrieved from https://www.unco.edu/cebs/foster-care-research/pdf/reports/Every_Transition_Counts_V.1_Interactive.pdf

- Helping the student and the student’s network to navigate the [Best Interest Determinations](#) Best Interest Determinations (BID) process by providing information and support related to the student’s best interests academically.
- Helping with school registration, enrollment, or school choice enrollment if needed.
- Helping to identify transportation solutions if needed.

(4) Academic Support that Mentors Students towards Independence and Self-Advocacy

- Helping the student and caregivers increase self-advocacy skills in relationships with teachers and communicate academic needs with teachers.
 - This may also include helping the student find a tutor or other in-school support if that is an academic need.
- Guiding discussions about current and future academic and post-secondary goals.
- Guiding discussions about current and future career/workforce goals.
- Helping the student pursue internships or job opportunities if expressed as a goal.

“My sister moved three schools in one semester and two were in the same school district. And at the end of the semester, all she had was English and math. Those were the only two that translated through all three schools. She was in German and the second school didn’t have German so that didn’t transfer, and it’s like if the school you transfer to doesn’t have that exact class that you were in...Then they can’t count it.”

- From Youth Perspectives on the Colorado Foster Care Education Data⁷⁵

In providing this support, the specialist helps students advocate for their own academic needs and become more effective self-advocates for academic needs in the future.

⁷⁵ Clemens, E. V., Thomas, C., Myers, K., & Helm, H. (2014). *Youth perspectives on the Colorado foster care education data*. Retrieved from www.unco.edu/cebs/foster-caresearch



Assessing Specialists' Success in Performing the Four Key Roles

If specialists are successfully able to serve as advocates, mentors, social-emotional supports, and academic supports, then students will be better positioned on the pathway to opportunity. Assessing the quality of the services delivered by the specialist is strongly recommended because the specialist's role is critically important to the success of the program.

In order to assess the performance of specialists, several methods are proposed:

- (1) **Program Self-Assessment.** To what degree each specialist delivers key services as they are intended is the focus of the Fostering Opportunities Self-Assessment Checklist, which has been developed to help the program coordinator self-assess the quality of program implementation for any Fostering Opportunities program (see [Appendix G](#)). Program coordinators can use the checklist to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement in the implementation of the Fostering Opportunities program at the site.
- (2) **Academic Progress of Students.** Tracking the school attendance, behavior, and course completion of students with whom the specialist has worked can be an important indicator. This will be one focus of the forthcoming impact study of Fostering Opportunities.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Jefferson County, Colorado, began implementing Fostering Opportunities as a Pay for Success project during the 2018-19 academic year. A randomized controlled trial is being used to determine if the intervention improves attendance, behavior, and course completion.

(3) **Student Social Capital.** This can be assessed through the Social Capital Assessment found in [Appendix C](#). The purpose of this assessment is to identify who is on the student's team and who can provide support, advocacy, or access to resources to support academic success. This assessment can be completed with the student at the beginning of work with the specialist and then again after six months of participation in the program to document whether the student's social capital has increased. Measures of family engagement in school might also be appropriate.

"But I also had a lot of people backing me, and a lot of people don't have that. I didn't have it for a long time. But, you know, even one really close connection that just believes in you will get you really far...Lots of people told me I can't, and I said, 'Watch me,' and I did it."

- From Myers' (2019)⁷⁷ phenomenological interviews with youth formerly in foster care

(4) **Student's Relationship with the Specialist.**

This can be assessed through examining the program attendance rates of students the specialist is working with. If students frequently miss weekly check-ins, it may be that the specialist is struggling to engage with students.

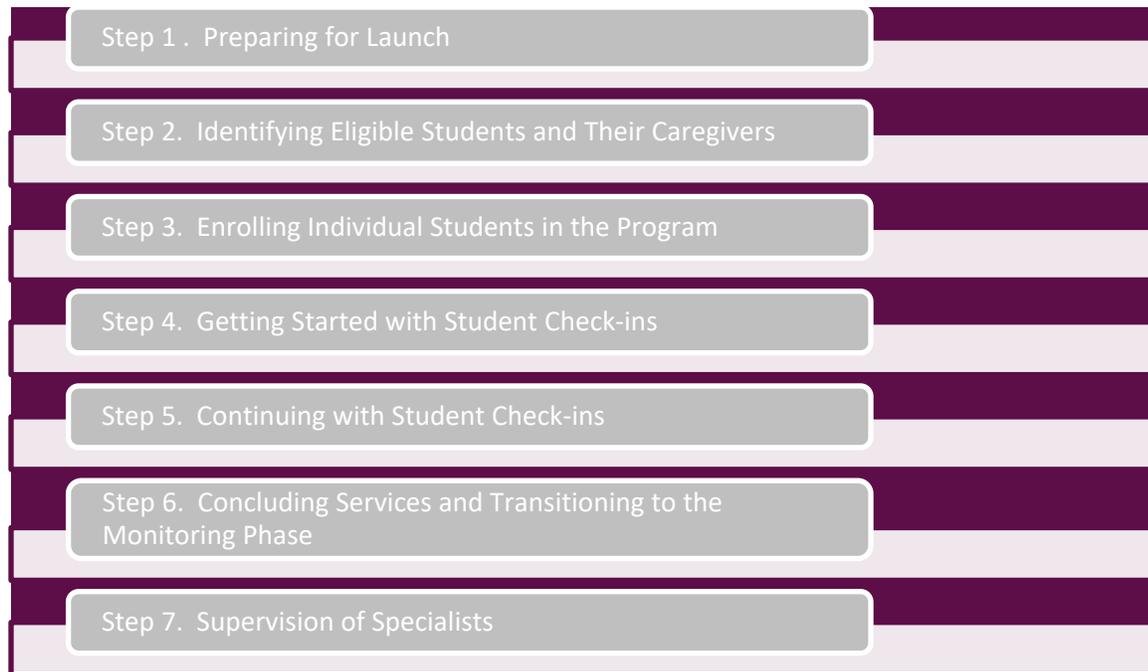
Overall, assessment can be beneficial to the functioning of the entire program, above and beyond the role of the specialist.



⁷⁷ Myers, K. (2019). *Nevertheless they persisted: Youth formerly in foster care who have experienced trauma and their journey to postsecondary education* (Doctoral dissertation). Greeley, CO: University of Northern Colorado. Retrieved from <https://www.unco.edu/library/databases/resources/dissertations-theses.aspx>

Section 5: Implementing Fostering Opportunities

This section describes the practical details of implementing Fostering Opportunities, from identifying eligible students to enrolling students and meeting with students. It includes examples of language that can be used to recruit students and explain the program to members of their networks.



Step 1. Preparing for Launch

Preparing for the launch of Fostering Opportunities requires taking action to engage in foundational child welfare and education systems alignment work, in addition to orienting caseworkers and school staff to the program and formulating an external communications plan.

Caseworker and School Staff Orientation to the Program

The program coordinator is responsible for leading orientations to the Fostering Opportunities program for caseworkers and for school staff who will be supporting the program. During orientation, the program coordinator can explain the supporting role of caseworkers and school staff and emphasize that the primary goal of caseworkers and school staff is not to inform students and caregivers about every aspect of the Fostering Opportunities program, a responsibility best left to Fostering Opportunities staff, but that caseworkers and school staff are responsible for connecting eligible students and caregivers to the program.

Ideally, the following tasks should be achieved during orientation:

- Provide an overview to the Fostering Opportunities program.
- Explain the supporting role of caseworkers and school staff.

- Convey energy and excitement for the program and motivate caseworkers and school staff to support the program.
- Provide marketing/recruitment materials to caseworkers to encourage referral network.
- Emphasize partnership and teamwork.
- Provide examples of how the caseworker and specialist might work together:
 - Co-facilitating the Independent Living Plan conversation and draft.
 - Sharing attendance and grades information.
 - Inviting each other to meetings—IEP, Family Engagement Meetings, court, staffing, discipline-related, etc.
 - Exchanging relevant information about case and family.

The program coordinator can also explain that they may be providing a list of potentially eligible students to caseworkers as a key way to identify possible youth participants in the program.

Orienting Staff to Communication about Students Served

Respectful communication about the students, their families, and their unique circumstances is critical to building the trust of students and the relationships between specialists and students. Respectful communication differs from confidential or privileged communications, which suggest that there are ethical or legal protections for information shared by students or their families with the specialist. Even if a specialist has a degree in a mental health field, unless they are hired into a role such as school counselor, school social worker, or school psychologist, they may not have a profession-established ethical code or legal protections that protects information shared by students or families as confidential.

Communication with Other Education Professionals

Respectful communication includes not disclosing more than “need to know” information to other education professionals without engaging the student in the decision-making and communication process. For example, the Fostering Opportunities program might adopt and socialize staff in its district to use language such as “handle with care” to convey that a critical or disruptive event is occurring in the student’s life.⁷⁸

A “foster care” label can be stigmatizing.⁷⁹ The specialist can talk with the student about the amount of details that the student might wish to share, and with whom, at their school and how sharing may help or hinder getting the support they need to be successful at school. It is very important to maintain the

⁷⁸ Handle with Care. (2019). *Washtenaw ISD: A Regional Educational Service Agency*. Retrieved from <https://washtenawisd.org/HandleWithCare>

⁷⁹ Myers, K. (2019). *Nevertheless they persisted: Youth formerly in foster care who have experienced trauma and their journey to postsecondary education* (Doctoral dissertation). Greeley, CO: University of Northern Colorado. Retrieved from <https://www.unco.edu/library/databases/resources/dissertations-theses.aspx>

student's trust throughout this process; the experience of betrayal by trusted adults appears to be unfortunately common for youth who have experienced foster care.⁸⁰

It is also important to proactively convey to students and families the limits of confidentiality related to communication with education professionals. In many states, specialists are likely to be mandatory reporters and information related to safety will be communicated consistent with school district policies and the law.

Communication with Other Professionals and Caregivers

It is likely that specialists will routinely be in the position of determining what information and details are necessary, relevant, and important to share with professionals and caregivers. With its emphasis on collaboration that benefits students, the field of school counseling^{82,83} can provide guidance on decision-making processes related to what to share, when, and with whom, which should include considerations such as:

- Age and developmental level of the student.
- Safety of the student.
- Safety of others.
- Rights of caregivers.
- Responsibility to educators.
- Information that may open or close doors to eligibility for services.
- Information that has the potential to stigmatize the student.
- Risk that the disclosure will negatively impact the relationship between the specialist and the student.

“...youth felt disempowered when they were not given a choice as to who knew about their involvement and who did not, and giving the opportunity for youth to have choices can empower the youth to have autonomy over their own lives.”

- Dr. Kristin Myers (2019)⁸¹ summarizing themes resulting from phenomenological interviews with youth formerly in foster care

⁸⁰ Myers, K. (2019). *Nevertheless they persisted: Youth formerly in foster care who have experienced trauma and their journey to postsecondary education* (Doctoral dissertation). Greeley, CO: University of Northern Colorado. Retrieved from <https://www.unco.edu/library/databases/resources/dissertations-theses.aspx>

⁸¹ Myers, K. (2019). *Nevertheless they persisted: Youth formerly in foster care who have experienced trauma and their journey to postsecondary education* (Doctoral dissertation). Greeley, CO: University of Northern Colorado. Retrieved from <https://www.unco.edu/library/databases/resources/dissertations-theses.aspx>

⁸² Dixon, A. L., DeVoss, J. A., & Davis, E. S. (2008). Strengthening links between the levels: School counselor collaboration for successful student transitions. *Journal of School Counseling*, 6(21), 1-33.

⁸³ Isaacs, M. L., & Stone, C. (1999). School counselors and confidentiality: Factors affecting professional choices. *Professional School Counseling*, 2(4), 258-266.

External Communications about the Program

Outlining a communication plan prior to the launch of the program is also beneficial. For example, there may be media requests to do a feature on the Fostering Opportunities program in the local newspaper. Who will be responsible for responding to media requests? Will both child welfare and education agencies be included in all opportunities for external communications? Clarifying these details in advance will ensure a smoother launch of the program.

A Note About Confidentiality and Media:

In all external communications, Fostering Opportunities staff have an obligation to maintain the confidentiality of students. In handling media requests, no student information should be disclosed without explicit, written permission of students and guardians.

Step 2. Identifying Eligible Students and Their Caregivers

Fostering Opportunities can identify eligible students by generating a list of students in foster care within the geographical boundaries of the program, creating a referral network, and inviting students and their caregivers to self-refer to the program.

Generating a List of Students in Foster Care

The DSAs established as part of the foundational systems alignment can be crafted to allow local or state human services agencies to provide a list of youth in foster care to the education agency to verify eligibility (e.g., enrolled in appropriate grade levels). A comprehensive list of eligible students ensures that all eligible families receive outreach and invitation to participate.

A comprehensive list of students in foster care is the most efficient and inclusive way of identifying eligible students.

Creating a Referral Network

Fostering Opportunities program staff may come into contact with many different types of professionals who interact with students in foster care at team meetings, professional conferences, and other events. They can take these opportunities to educate other professionals about the Fostering Opportunities program.

Once aware of the services and resources Fostering Opportunities provides, when any of these professionals come into contact with a student who could benefit from the program, they can make a referral to the Fostering Opportunities program coordinator or specialist if it is within the geographical bounds of the intervention. Geographical bounds could be expanded by the Fostering Opportunities program, but that should be an intentional, thoughtful decision made by program leadership.

Example language for doing outreach and building partnerships: “Have you heard about the Fostering Opportunities program? It's a program where we're offering students who have experienced foster care additional support in school to help them achieve their goals. As a part of the program, a specialist will

be checking in with these students every week at school to see how they are doing and address any needs they might have. The same specialist will keep meeting with them every week even if their placement changes or case closes, so they will establish a relationship over time. We want to support the engagement in school of students who have experienced foster care and help them be the most successful they can be by ensuring they have the resources they need. If you meet any student who has experienced foster care who you feel could benefit from the Fostering Opportunities program, please reach out to us.”

Marketing materials are an important aspect of recruiting potential participants into the program. Recruitment materials need to be developed that utilize this example language and include the program’s website and logo. A link to the website can also be added to other partner websites.

It is important for Fostering Opportunities program staff to use strengths-based language and the developed marketing materials to engage in direct outreach to students and families. This outreach can occur in many different places and in many different ways:

- School events (keep in mind that many families do not attend Back-to-School nights).
- Information sessions at school for students and families.
- Information for new foster families (information about Fostering Opportunities can be included in the provided menu of resources).
- Mailers (electronic or paper; via district communications and newsletters).
- Support groups.
- Professional development opportunities for educators.
- Public libraries.
- Foster home licensing agencies.
- Foster parent education nights or support groups.
- Parent-teacher conferences.

Inviting Student and Caregiver-Initiated Referrals

Equally important is the idea that students and caregivers can refer themselves to the Fostering Opportunities program in order to receive needed supportive services. The process of self-referring to the program could be provided through the following means:

- The Fostering Opportunities website.
- Materials distributed to schools and child welfare organizations.
- Mailers (electronic or paper; via district communications and newsletters).
- Business cards of Fostering Opportunities staff.

Step 3. Enrolling Individual Students in the Program

There are six primary steps for formally enrolling a student in the Fostering Opportunities program:

Enrolling Individual Students in the Program	(1) Specialist Makes Initial Contact with Caseworker	<p>a. Specialist obtains contact information for the student's network (i.e., roles and individuals to whom information can be released).</p> <p>b. Caseworker informs specialist of any restrictions or protective orders.</p>
	(2) Caseworker Makes Initial Contact with Educational Decisionmaker	<p>a. Caseworker briefly explains Fostering Opportunities program.</p> <p>b. Caseworker secures releases of information relevant to program participation.</p> <p>c. Caseworker sends this information to specialist.</p>
	(3) Specialist Makes Initial Contact with Educational Decisionmaker	<p>a. Specialist explains Fostering Opportunities program in detail.</p> <p>b. Educational decisionmaker informs specialist of student's relevant educational experiences and needs.</p> <p>c. Educational decisionmaker tells student that they will be meeting with specialist at school.</p>
	(4) Specialist Makes Initial Contact with Biological Parent(s) (If Allowed)	<p>a. Specialist explains Fostering Opportunities program in detail.</p> <p>b. If supportive, biological parent(s) tells specialist of student's relevant educational experiences and needs.</p>
	(5) Specialist Makes Initial Contact with Guardian Ad Litem	<p>a. Specialist explains Fostering Opportunities program in detail.</p> <p>b. Guardian ad litem informs specialist of any relevant history that may impact the student's educational outcomes.</p>
	(6) Specialist Makes Initial Contact with Student Support Services Staff	<p>a. Specialist explains Fostering Opportunities program in detail.</p> <p>b. Student support services staff informs specialist of best time to meet with student at school.</p>

(1) Specialist Makes Initial Contact with Caseworker

Once a student is identified as a potential participant in the program, the specialist reaches out to the caseworker working with that student. Caseworkers are the first point of contact because coordination between the education system and child welfare system is the foundation of Fostering Opportunities.

The initial conversation with the caseworker involves ensuring there is a standard [ROI](#) in place, as well as obtaining contact information from the caseworker for all players in a student's network, including the: (1) educational decision maker, foster parents, or current placement contact, (2) biological parent(s), (3) GAL, (4) CASA, and (5) therapist, mentor, or other professionals working with the student. Any restrictions or protective orders should also be noted by the caseworker at this time (e.g., biological father is not supposed to be provided with any educational information). Initial contact with the caseworker may be more efficient via email.

Example language for specialist reaching out to caseworker seeking contact information for student's network:

"Dear (caseworker),

My name is _____, and I am a specialist with the Fostering Opportunities program. Thank you for sending the release of information for _____ (Student Name) to participate in the Fostering Opportunities program. As we begin the initial outreach to this student and family, I was hoping you could provide me with the following information:

- Current placement name/guardian and contact information.
- Biological parent name and contact information.
- GAL name and contact information.
- Who has educational decision-making authority?
- Protective orders or restrictions on visitations/contact etc.
- Goals regarding permanency, reunification, adoption, etc.
- Any additional important information relevant to the student.

As a participant in the program, this student will meet weekly with a specialist who will provide mentoring and advocacy within the school environment. Specialists will support students in planning for their futures by identifying their individual goals and motivations, and ensuring they have access to the resources to achieve these goals. Additionally, specialists will problem-solve around barriers to engagement and success in school by building on student strengths and interests. The Fostering Opportunities program aims to increase attendance, increase courses passed, support credit

"Ideally, the Fostering Opportunities release of information would be signed by the educational decision maker upon a youth's entry into the child welfare system—for students of all ages, not just high school students who are eligible for this program."

- David Kollar, Director of the Student Engagement Office for Jeffco Public Schools

accumulation, and increase positive behaviors. We will also coordinate a high level of communication and collaboration between the school district, families, guardians, and other community partners.

I am happy to answer any questions you might have. I look forward to collaborating with you to best support this student's engagement and success in school.

Thank you,

(Specialist Name, Credentials)

Specialist, Fostering Opportunities
(Location)
Cell: (Specialist Cell Number)
Direct: (Specialist Direct Phone Line)
Main Office: _____

When a student starts an out-of-home placement, a meeting facilitated by Fostering Opportunities program staff could take place between all players in a student's network, including the: (1) educational decision maker, (2) biological parent(s), (3) GAL, and (4) CASA.

At this meeting, all of the benefits and supports of the Fostering Opportunities program could be described in detail and releases of information could be signed.

(2) Caseworker Makes Initial Contact with Educational Decision Maker

The caseworker then needs to contact the identified educational decision maker to request that they sign the [ROI](#) between the school and the Department of Human Services to ensure that the specialist can access information and share it between child welfare and the school district.

When the caseworker is making the initial contact with the educational decision maker about the Fostering Opportunities program, they should ideally not be explaining all of the details of the program at this time. Fostering Opportunities program staff are better positioned to explain the details of the program and answer any questions.

Example language for caseworker seeking to obtain signed [ROI](#) from the educational decision maker:

"Have you heard about the Fostering Opportunities program? It's a program where we're offering _____ (Student Name) additional support in school to help them achieve their goals. As a part of the program, a specialist will be checking in with them every week at school to see how they are doing and address any needs they might have. The same specialist will keep meeting with them every week even if their placement changes or case closes, so they will establish a relationship over time. We want to support _____ (Student Name) engagement in school and help them to be the most successful they can be by ensuring that they have the resources they need.

How do you feel about _____ (Student Name) participating in this program? What questions do you have?

If you would like for _____ (Student Name) to participate in this program, please sign this standard release of information that gives permission for this program's staff to talk to their caseworker, teacher,

and other professionals involved with them so that we can all work together to support them towards their goal of graduating from high school. If you agree to sign, I am going to put you in contact with Fostering Opportunities staff so that they can answer any additional questions about the program that you may have.”

Once the ROI is signed, the caseworker should send the ROI form signed by the educational decision maker to the specialist.

If the child welfare case is closing when the caseworker contacts the educational decision maker (because in many cases, the out-of-home placement is very short), then the caseworker should ask the current educational decision maker to sign the generic public schools’ ROI to cover all the bases.

(3) Specialist Makes Initial Contact with Educational Decision Maker

Next, the specialist contacts the educational decision maker and the school contact (e.g., school counselor) to further explain the program and answer any questions. It is important to first have conversations with the current educational decision maker so that they can tell students about the program and that a specialist will be meeting with them at school soon.

See [Appendix H](#) for example language.

(4) Specialist Makes Initial Contact with Biological Parent (If Allowed)

Then, the specialist can contact the biological parent (if they are allowed to be in contact) to let them know about the program.

See [Appendix H](#) for example language.

(5) Specialist Makes Initial Contact with Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)

Next, the specialist can contact the GAL to explain the program in more detail. The GAL can inform the specialist of any relevant history that may impact the student’s educational outcomes.

See [Appendix H](#) for example language.

(6) Specialist Makes Initial Contact with Student Support Services Staff

After that, the specialist needs to call and email the relevant student support services staff, including the school counselor or social worker, to let them know about the program and that they will be visiting with the student. If possible, the specialist can access the school database to determine where the student is enrolled in school and the school counselor will be listed there. At this point, the specialist should also ask the school counselor about their perception of the student’s possible needs. In addition, the specialist should ask the school counselor when the best time is to hold the initial check-in with student. The specialist should also ask the school counselor to tell the student that specialist will be coming to meet with them.

See [Appendix H](#) for example language.

Step 4. Getting Started with Student Check-ins

This section describes the programming led by specialists in meetings with students every week. These check-ins might be the primary source of support for students and are a primary mechanism of change within the program.

Following check-ins with students, it is very important for the specialist to document relevant information and action steps. Documentation is helpful to the program and especially so in the event of staff turnover. Because the program's foundation lies in creating social capital for students, staff turnover is incredibly detrimental, but detailed documentation can help to mitigate the negative consequences for students should this occur.

Specialists, with the help of the program coordinator, also need to establish a process for disclosing any potentially sensitive or traumatic information that may be disclosed in meetings with students. How will school counselors or teachers be informed? What is relevant, and what should remain confidential? The primary goal is building rapport and trust in the relationship with the student so that the student feels supported in school.

Weekly, monitor for:

- Feelings at school.
- Feelings at current residence.
- Relationships with any trusting adults at school.
- Availability of trusting adult.
- Any resources or supplies the student might need.

Check-ins 1 - 4: Building Rapport

The purpose of the first four check-ins with the student is to build rapport and trust and begin a strong working relationship on a foundation of empathy and mutual respect. Of course, depending on the pressing needs of a student, a [monthly progress monitoring report](#) may be needed in the first few check-ins.

Check-in 1

If possible, the first check-in should not be limited to 30 minutes but should last as long as the student is comfortable (within reason). The primary goal of the first check-in is to learn how the student can best be supported in school during future check-ins with the specialist.

During the first check-in, the specialist can make sure to also work with the student to identify when it is best to meet in the future. Ideally, specialists will not meet with students during core subject classes, but it is important to keep in mind that a student may enjoy an elective period so much that it is a primary reason they attend school. Meeting during this time would negatively impact a student's motivation to attend school.

The specialist can bring a toolkit (i.e., “Box of Fun”) that includes paper, pens, crayons, fidget spinners, play dough, candy, etc. to help break the ice while talking to the student for the first time.

During this first check-in, the specialist should:

- Introduce themselves and tell the student a little bit about who they are to build rapport. To encourage multicultural awareness, the specialist can follow the advice from GLAAD below related to the correct use of pronouns:

“If you're unsure which pronoun a person uses, listen first to the pronoun other people use when referring to them. Someone who knows the person well will probably use the correct pronoun. If you must ask which pronoun the person uses, start with your own. For example, ‘Hi, I'm Alex and I use the pronouns he and him. What about you?’ Then use that person's pronoun and encourage others to do so. If you accidentally use the wrong pronoun, apologize quickly and sincerely, then move on. The bigger deal you make out of the situation, the more uncomfortable it is for everyone⁸⁴.”

- Explain the program to the student:
 - **Example language to explain program to student:** “I’m meeting with you today about the program Fostering Opportunities. Have you heard about Fostering Opportunities? It's a program where we're offering you additional support in school to help you achieve your goals. As a part of the program, I will be checking in with you every week at school to see how you are doing and address any needs you might have. I will keep meeting with you every week even if your placement changes or case closes, so we will really get to know each other. We want to support your engagement in school and help you be the most successful you can be by ensuring you have the resources you need. How do you feel about participating in this program? What questions do you have?”
- Obtain the student’s signature on the Fostering Opportunities Participant Rights and Responsibilities Form (see [Appendix I](#)).
 - **Example language to explain the Fostering Opportunities Participant Rights & Responsibilities form to student:** “If you would like to participate in the program, I have this form that talks about your rights and responsibilities. Basically, what this is saying is that you have a right to be shown care, respect, and dignity and to be involved in planning for your future. We both have a responsibility to meet every week at the agreed upon date/time or communicate when we cannot meet. We will also agree to be honest with each other and you will let me know when you need or want support. Please take a moment to read this and when you are ready, sign it. I will give you a copy for you to keep.”
 - Explain role as a mandatory reporter and the limits of confidentiality.
 - Gather information on the student’s preferred communication method and communicate the specialist’s communication availability.

⁸⁴ GLAAD. (2018). *Tips for Allies of Transgendered People*. Retrieved from <https://www.glaad.org/transgender/allies>

Consistent (weekly) face-to-face check-ins between specialists and students are the foundation of Fostering Opportunities. However, students may need to communicate needs and issues with specialists outside of that time.

The strategies for communicating effectively with a student are dependent on the specific preferences of the student. It is important to use the communication tools that the student prefers, whether that involves texting, phone calls, or emails.

The specialist should communicate professional boundaries of the technology to the student at the start of the relationship. This could be highlighted on the Fostering Opportunities Participant Rights and Responsibilities Form (see [Appendix I](#)). For example, the specialist will not be able receive calls after 6 p.m. on weekdays or on weekends. To reduce the risk of burnout, the specialist should not be available at all times.⁸⁵

- Ask the student, “What do I need to know about you to be able to best support you?”
- Ask the student, “What kinds of things would you like to do during our time together that could help to support you?”

These questions yield rich information about a student’s communication style, needs, hopes, and fears. The specialist can listen with a lens of [advocacy](#).

- Start learning the student’s perception of their educational history, experiences, challenges, and successes.
- Begin filling out the Social Capital Assessment with the student (see [Appendix C](#)).

Check-ins 2 – 4

- Continue regular check-ins with the student, supporting and building upon needs identified in the first check-in.
- The Student Check-in Form (see [Appendix J](#)) can be used as a guide as needed. Or, the questions can be incorporated into conversations with the student.
- In documenting the check-in, it is helpful to conclude case notes with a welfare statement such as, “Student appears/reports healthy and safe. No concerns.”
- Continue rapport-building through games or other activities to engage the student.
- Allow the student to guide the conversation. Respond with [empathy and reflective listening](#).

⁸⁵ Killian, K. D. (2008). Helping till it hurts? A multimethod study of compassion fatigue, burnout, and self-care in clinicians working with trauma survivors. *Traumatology, 14*(2), 32-44.

Throughout every check-in, the specialist focuses on their four primary roles: advocacy, mentoring, social-emotional support, and academic support.

Step 5. Continuing with Student Check-ins

Check-ins 5 and Beyond

As the relationship develops, specialists can begin to focus more on their role in academic support. Monthly progress monitoring helps to proactively identify academic issues and share helpful information with the student's network (see [Appendix F](#) for an example of a monthly progress monitoring report).

“I like to tell my students, ‘You’re stuck with me until you graduate. I’m not going anywhere.’ That’s a huge thing to emphasize because, in general, students who have experienced foster care are not used to that. Unfortunately, they’re usually more used to people coming and going.”

- Fostering Opportunities Specialist

During check-in five and monthly after that, the specialist should:

- Perform monthly progress monitoring, which involves checking in with students regarding their [monthly progress monitoring report](#) (compiled from student data housed in the [database](#)).

Note: The specialist can review the monthly progress monitoring report with the student or complete it (i.e., the process of compiling the data for the report) during the check-in with the student present, depending on time constraints.

- Share monthly progress monitoring report with all members of student's network and with the student to facilitate network closure. Emphasize the student's strengths in the write-up of the report.
- Continue to target any barriers to the student's academic success and to encourage the student's resilience.
- Throughout every check-in, the specialist focuses on their four primary roles: advocacy, mentoring, social-emotional support, and academic support.

The specialist continues to meet with the student until the student is on track to graduate and their network is anticipated to be a stable system of educational support.

Step 6. Concluding Services and Transitioning to the Monitoring Phase

When students are determined to be meeting academic progress markers consistently and are on track to graduate, they can be transitioned to the monitoring phase of the Fostering Opportunities program.

While this is cause for celebration, this transition also needs to be handled very intentionally in order to ensure that the progress the student has made during participation in the active phase of the program is maintained.

The following suggestions can facilitate a more seamless transition to the monitoring phase. The specialist should:

- Hold a conversation with the student approximately three to four weeks before the planned final check-in.
- Complete final monthly progress monitoring report.
- Contact educational decision maker for signature on Ongoing Participation Form (see [Appendix K](#)).
- Contact caseworker and other members of the student’s network (e.g., school counselor, social worker, teacher, principal, GAL, CASA, etc.) to inform them that the student will be transitioning to the monitoring phase of the Fostering Opportunities program. Alert them to the final weekly check-in date.

Example language to explain transition to monitoring phase to caseworker and other members of the student’s support network: “ ____ (Student Name) will be transitioning to the monitoring phase within the Fostering Opportunities program soon due to ____ (list student successes and indications of stability). Our program will continue to monitor ____ (Student Name) to be sure that they continue to demonstrate success and engagement, as well as to monitor that no significant changes occur in this student’s situation. If there is a concern that may affect this student’s engagement or success in school, we would like to move the student back to our active caseload to begin providing a higher level of services to this student again. If you have a concern regarding this student moving forward, please do not hesitate to reach out. The final check-in with this student is scheduled for ____ (date of final check-in). Thank you so much again for your collaboration in supporting this student’s success and engagement in school.”

- Contact caregiver, parent, and/or guardian to inform them that student will be transitioning to the monitoring phase of the Fostering Opportunities program.

Example language to explain transition to monitoring phase to caregiver(s): “ ____ (Student Name) will be transitioning to the monitoring phase within the Fostering Opportunities program due to ____ (list student successes and indications of stability). Our program will continue to monitor ____ (Student Name) to be sure that they continue to demonstrate success and engagement, as well as to monitor that there are no significant changes to their situation. If there is a concern that may affect ____ (Student Name) engagement or success in school, we will move them back to the active caseload to begin providing a higher level of services to them again. If you have a concern regarding ____ (Student Name) moving forward, please do not hesitate to reach out. The final check-in with ____ (Student Name) is scheduled for ____ (date of final check-in). Thank you so much again for your collaboration in supporting this student’s success and engagement in school.”

- Recognize the student’s successes in a tangible way (e.g., making a certificate, celebratory snack or meal, etc.).

- Check to make sure that all notes and progress monitoring have been completed and are current in the database.
- In the [database](#), transition the student to monitoring procedures.
- The specialist can add a note to the [database](#): “ _____ (Student Name) has transitioned to the monitoring phase of the Fostering Opportunities program and will no longer have weekly check-ins with a specialist. If you have any concerns regarding this student moving forward, please contact _____ (contact information).”

Step 7. Supervision of Specialists

In the Fostering Opportunities program, specialists have a challenging and emotionally intensive role of advocating, providing social-emotional support and mentoring, and providing academic support to students who have or are experiencing trauma and complex life circumstances, all under the overarching goal of facilitating network closure.

Thus, supervision practices that draw from the clinical mental health field can be applied to provide a scheduled, contemplative time for specialists to consider how to perform their roles more effectively and how to support students and strengthen their networks more comprehensively.⁸⁶ Supervision may also help to prevent burnout,⁸⁷ which has been defined as, “a psychological syndrome embedded in the context of a complex interpersonal relationship involving the person's concept of both self and others in which chronic stress leads to emotional depletion and then to cynicism and a detachment response” (p. 32).⁸⁸

Supervision sessions typically range in length from 30 minutes to one hour and can occur individually or in a small group. These sessions are NOT intended to replace as-needed, brief consultations about a pressing issue or opportunity.

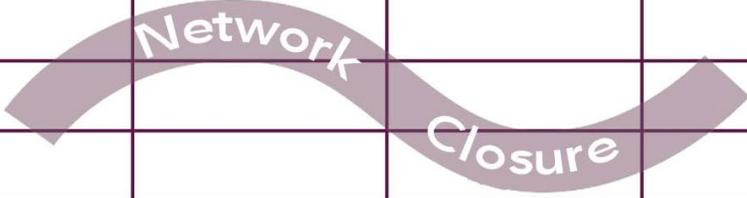
A three-by-four matrix (on the following page) provides the framework that the program coordinator can use to structure supervision of specialists.

⁸⁶ Bernard, J., & Goodyear, R. (2004). *Fundamentals of clinical supervision* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

⁸⁷ Maslach, C, Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P (2001). Job burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 397-422.

⁸⁸ Lambie, G. W. (2006). Burnout prevention: A humanistic perspective and structured group supervision activity. *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development*, 45(1), 32-44.

		Four Focal Topics			
		Advocacy	Mentoring	Social-Emotional Support	Academic Support
Three Key Roles of Program Coordinator	Teacher				
	Counselor				
	Consultant				



Three Key Roles of the Program Coordinator During Supervision

To meet the needs of the specialist and encourage professional development, the program coordinator shifts between three distinct roles during supervision: teacher, counselor, and consultant. Program coordinators use their judgement to determine what role might best support the specialist at a given time.

(1) Teacher

In this role, the program coordinator gives direct advice or tools to the specialist about how to solve problems and issues related to better supporting students in foster care.

(2) Counselor

In this role, the program coordinator provides a space for the specialist to process the emotional challenges of working with students who have experienced foster care within Fostering Opportunities. The program coordinator empathizes with these challenges but does not attempt to problem solve. The purpose of providing this emotional support is to encourage the specialist and help to prevent burnout or vicarious trauma.⁸⁹

(3) Consultant

In this role, the program coordinator asks the specialist questions that facilitate the specialist's professional development, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Instead of giving advice, the program coordinator brainstorms solutions in collaboration with the specialist.

⁸⁹ Lambie, G. W. (2006). Burnout prevention: A humanistic perspective and structured group supervision activity. *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development*, 45(1), 32-44.

Four Focal Topics

The four elements of the specialist's role that provide the focal topics for each supervision session: advocacy, mentoring, social-emotional support, and academic support.

(1) [Advocacy](#)

The program coordinator and the specialist discuss how to best advocate for the student, within the student's network and, at the systems level, within the child welfare and education systems. The program coordinator focuses on how the specialist can best support network closure.

(2) [Mentoring](#)

The program coordinator continuously emphasizes to the specialist that the primary goal is to be a consistent support person in the student's life.

(3) [Social-Emotional Support](#)

The program coordinator and specialist discuss how to best meet the social-emotional needs of the student and to best support the student's resilience. The discussion focuses on social-emotional issues that may be interfering with the student's self-advocacy skills and subsequent academic achievement (e.g., low self-esteem, external locus-of-control). The program coordinator focuses on how to support the specialist's motivational interviewing skills so that the student is most benefitted.

(4) [Academic Support](#)

The program coordinator and the specialist discuss how to best meet the individual academic needs of the student (e.g., school supplies, organizing homework, etc.).

The chart on the following page offers illustrative examples of situations for each topic area. Within the chart, there are illustrative examples of how a program coordinator might engage the specialist differently based on the chosen role. Throughout this process, in any role, the program coordinator focuses on offering resources and support to specialists.

Program coordinators supervising specialists who work with students who have experienced trauma should be on alert to changes in specialists' behaviors with and reactions to [students], intrusive thoughts, signs of burnout and feelings of being overwhelmed, signs of withdrawal in relationships, and signs of stress and an inability to engage in self-care.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Etherington, K. (2000). Supervising counsellors who work with survivors of childhood sexual abuse. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 13, 377–389.

	Advocacy	Mentoring	Social-Emotional Support	Academic Support
Case Example for Specialist	The specialist appears to be only focusing on helping the student to self-advocate, ignoring other forms of advocacy.	The specialist seems to be trying to force the goal of earning all As onto the student, even though it is not necessarily realistic.	The specialist is struggling to work with a student who has a history of trauma that manifests in relational difficulties.	The specialist is not sure how to support the student at school.
Teacher	Program coordinator educates the specialist on the importance of all three types of advocacy: (1) the specialist's advocacy for the student; (2) teaching the student to self-advocate; and, (3) engaging in activities that build the capacity of the student's network to advocate on the student's behalf.	Program coordinator reminds the specialist of the primary goal of mentoring, which is to be a consistent, supportive, non-judgmental support person in the student's life. The student may feel judged by the specialist's unrealistic academic goal.	The specialist is struggling with focusing check-ins on the student's history of trauma and personal relationship issues. The program coordinator feels that the specialist is veering into the role of the therapist. The program coordinator mentors the specialist on the role of the specialist and the difference between providing social-emotional support and therapy in the Fostering Opportunities program.	The program coordinator teaches the specialist the graduation requirements of the student's high school. The program coordinator teaches the specialist how to lead a conversation about career goals with the student.
Counselor	The program coordinator encourages the specialist to explore what is preventing him from encouraging other forms of advocacy beyond the student's self-advocacy. The specialist realizes his inherent bias towards self-sufficiency and autonomy in relationships.	The program coordinator explores with the specialist the trait of perfectionism that may be interfering with his ability to focus on the role of being a supportive mentor.	The program coordinator encourages the specialist to explore his personal reactions to the student. Why does this student make him feel helpless when he tries to reach out and offer support? The specialist expresses his frustration with the relationship dynamic and the program coordinator helps him to increase his self-awareness about his role in the dynamic.	The program coordinator helps the specialist to explore his reactions to the systemic barriers to academic success that the student is facing. The specialist increases his awareness of these systemic barriers, which helps to alleviate some of the frustration he is directing at the individual student.
Consultant	The program coordinator and the specialist brainstorm the resources needed by the student and the student's network in order to advocate more effectively.	The program coordinator and the specialist develop strategies to help the specialist recognize when perfectionism is interfering with supportive mentorship.	The program coordinator and the specialist discuss possible strategies for better engaging the student in the relationship with the specialist. The program coordinator and the specialist role play these strategies.	The program coordinator and the specialist trouble-shoot the specific academic barriers being faced by the student.

Other Important Considerations in Implementation

Assigning Students to Specialists' Caseloads

Another important supervision role of the program coordinator is the responsibility of assigning students to specialists' caseloads. When possible, it is important to consider the “match” between the student and the specialist. A thoughtful matching process can consider individual characteristics about the student and specialist that may help to foster an enduring relationship. These characteristics may include interests; age; gender; race/ethnicity; personality; expressed preferences of student and the specialist; the specialist's knowledge of a school or region; strengths; and previous experiences.⁹¹

Best Practices in Specialist Staffing Transitions

A critical theoretical underpinning of the Fostering Opportunities program is the importance of stability in relationships with specialists because this helps students to generate [social capital](#) and facilitates network closure.^{92,93} For this reason, in this program, specialist staffing transitions must be handled very intentionally.

Significant research in the field of mentoring emphasizes the importance of the concept of “closure” in mentoring relationships, which is the process of transitioning or ending relationships and is a natural part of the mentoring life cycle. Studies have shown that mentoring relationships that end prematurely may lead to negative consequences for mentees, including declines in self-worth and academic self-confidence.^{94,95}

The following suggestions can help facilitate closure in mentoring relationships and seamless transitions when staffing transitions occur.

For planned specialist transitions (e.g., anticipated leaves of absences, employment changes, etc.), the departing specialist should:

- Communicate transition to the student at least one month prior to planned transition, if that length of time is developmentally and situationally appropriate.
- Communicate to all members of the student's network (e.g., school staff, caseworker, GAL, parents and/or guardians, etc.) at least one month prior to planned transition.

⁹¹ DuBois, D., & Karcher, M. (Eds.). (2013). *Handbook of youth mentoring* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

⁹² Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, S95-S120.

⁹³ Burt, R. S. (2017). Structural holes versus network closure as social capital. In N. Lin, K. Cook, & R. S. Burt (Eds.), *Social capital: Theory and research* (2nd ed.) (pp. 31-56). New York, NY: Routledge.

⁹⁴ Rhodes, J., Liang, B., & Spencer, R. (2009). First do no harm: Ethical principles for youth mentoring relationships. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 40, 452-458.

⁹⁵ Spencer, R., Basualdo-Delmonico, A., Walsh, J., & Drew, A. L. (2014). Breaking up is hard to do: A qualitative interview study of how and why youth mentoring relationships end. *Youth & Society*, 438-460.

- Provide new specialist with copies of the student’s important paperwork (e.g., initial ROI, IEP if applicable, safety plan if applicable, etc.).
- Hold at least one check-in including student, departing specialist, and new specialist to facilitate the transition.
- Complete one monthly progress monitoring report together to orient the new specialist to the process (see [Appendix F](#) for example).
- Introduce new specialist to all other individuals in student’s network in person, if possible, and/or make introduction via email.
- Invite new specialist to all meetings related to the student (e.g., staffing, IEP, etc.) in the month leading up to the transition and after the transition.
- Share perspectives on the student’s strengths, interests, motivations, goals, and history with the new specialist.
- Provide new specialist with ideas for summer programming, classes, certification, and extracurriculars that would be of interest to the student.
- Provide new specialist with tips on building rapport with the student.
- Provide new specialist with helpful tips on the communication preferences of members of the student’s network.
- Provide new specialist with bell schedule and ideal times for meeting with the student.
- New specialist can add a note to the [database](#): “ _____ (Specialist Name), Fostering Opportunities Specialist, is currently providing services to this student. If you have questions or concerns please contact them at _____ (phone number).”

For unplanned specialist transitions (e.g., medical emergencies, abrupt employment changes, etc.), the departing specialist should:

- Consult with supervisors and human resources as needed to determine how to explain the transition to the student and their network.
- Acknowledge, reflect, and validate the student’s emotional and/or pragmatic reactions to the transition.
- Utilize the student’s network and existing documentation to create as seamless of a transition as possible.

Departing Specialist's Final Check-in with the Student

It is especially important for the specialist to facilitate a final check-in that provides a feeling of closure for the student. For individuals with a history of trauma, endings of relationships with attachment figures can be difficult.⁹⁶

The following suggestions can help to facilitate a beneficial final check-in that attends to the student's social-emotional needs. The departing specialist should:

- Complete a closure activity with the student.
 - One example includes creating a brochure of strengths and challenges that the student has overcome, along with goals (short term and in the future). The student can write and/or draw.
- Give the student a card or certificate listing the student's strengths and progress.
- Be clear about if or how communication with the departing specialist can occur. Be realistic about setting expectations for the relationship after this transition and ensure that those expectations align with the reasons why the specialist is departing (e.g., promotion to program coordinator versus new job outside of the system). Follow relevant policies of the education agency and best practices of the partnering agencies.
- Remind the student that after this check-in, the departing specialist will not be meeting with the student weekly anymore.
- Remind the student of how they can contact their new specialist and when their next meeting will be with their new specialist.
- Tell the student the wonderful qualities of the new specialist and encourage the student to engage in this new relationship.
- Discuss the trusting and supportive adults in the student's network and ensure the student knows how to get in touch with these individuals.

More guidance on closure can be found in the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* handbook from MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Oppenheim, D., & Goldsmith, D. (Eds.). (2007). *Attachment theory in clinical work with children: Bridging the gap between research and practice*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

⁹⁷ MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership. (2015). *The elements of effective practice for mentoring* (4th ed.). Retrieved from https://www.mentoring.org/new-site/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Final_Elements_Publication_Fourth.pdf#page=74

When Students Choose Not to Engage

Students' engagement in Fostering Opportunities is voluntary. The role of Fostering Opportunities program staff is to take a respectful, trauma-informed approach to inviting students to participate.

Although this can be challenging, specialists can ground themselves in the principles of motivational interviewing, which emphasize that the student is ultimately in control (e.g., allow the student to guide the conversation and avoid arguments or direct confrontation).

Rolling with resistance may mean giving the student more space.

Some students may not see the value in participating at this time. The following language may be helpful when this is the case:

- "Participation is an open offer; can I check back in with you in a couple weeks? And here's how to reach me in the meantime..."

Some students may simply not like or not connect with a given specialist. Part of the role of the specialist is modeling for the student how to self-advocate for their unique needs. The following language may be helpful when this occurs:

- "You and I may not have hit it off, and that's no problem. How about if my colleague [name] stops by next week to chat with you? Maybe you can share with them what might be most helpful to you?"

When students choose not to engage, this may bring up feelings of frustration, guilt, and burnout for the specialist. Processing these feelings during supervision will help the specialist make meaning out of these feelings and develop additional strategies for engaging students.

"Often these students struggle deeply with attachment and trust due to all of the transitions and broken trust they've experienced in their lives from the people they were supposed to be able to trust most."

- Fostering Opportunities Specialist



Section 6: A System to Track Students Across Placements and Schools

The goal of a system to track students across placements and schools is building and maintaining educational social capital. When the Fostering Opportunities specialists have access to students' educational information and appropriate access to their child welfare information (e.g., placement changes, court dates, etc.), they can ensure that the right information is shared with the right members of students' networks to support students' educational success.

Fostering Opportunities specialists and program coordinators can have access to the student's data in the system for the duration of their participating in the program.

Caseworkers can have access to the student's data in the system for the duration that the student has an open child welfare case.

The specialist can leverage the system to generate reports and provide information to **students** and **members of their network**. When members of the student's network have timely and reliable information about the student's educational progress, they are better positioned to advocate for and implement appropriate supports and services.

In this section, the functionality and procedures of the system are introduced with the understanding that the system will vary depending on the needs and capacities of the geographical region where the program is located.

Functionality of the System

The suggested technical solutions behind each functionality listed below can be shaped by the resources in each community.

Directory Functionality Includes the Ability to:

- Convey how to contact the student (e.g., preferred method is text, but that is only preferred before and after school) and when the student has access to those communication tools (e.g., email access only from school).
- Access the up-to-date contact information and preferred methods of communication for each member of the [student's network](#).
- Apply flags that convey what information can be shared, and with whom, and expirations for ROIs.
- Flag any safety precautions or no-contact information.

Educational Progress Monitoring Functionality Includes the Ability to:

1. Document the schools that the student has attended and confirm that the current school has complete educational records for the student.
2. Track relevant services and eligibility (e.g., transportation to/from school until end of fall semester; must maintain passing grades to keep playing baseball, etc.).
3. Document the student's college and career goals and interest in participating in career exploration opportunities.
4. Generate a report on the student's academic standing and progress, which spans across all schools the student has attended (e.g., attendance, behavior incidents, progress toward graduation) and can document the relevant date ranges—last month, last year, etc.).
5. Store copies of key educational documents, such as IEPs or 504 plans, or—alternatively—input relevant accommodations and modifications.
6. Note additional important information about the student's school experience, such as prosocial activities the student is currently engaged in; prosocial activities the student wants to be engaged in; short- and long-term goals; strengths; and areas of growth.
7. Share a short narrative describing the student's overall functioning and social/emotional/academic progress (which could also include a narrative from other professionals working with the student).

Integrated data platforms that offer a real-time picture of students' education data and select child welfare information are ideal and a goal to work towards. In the meantime, overlays to existing platforms and other **SECURE** low-tech systems for tracking student data can meet many of the basic functionality requirements.

What is most important is that the information is timely, reliable, respectful, and available to the right people in a student's network at the right time.

Child Welfare Information Functionality Includes the Ability to:

8. Track placements and permanency plans (e.g., reunify with mom).
9. View key events that are relevant to students' school attendance or educational progress (e.g., court dates; best interest determinations; anticipated placement changes).
10. Flag aspects of the child welfare history that are important and appropriate to share (e.g., a caseworker might choose to share that the student's disruptive behaviors tend to escalate before court appearances).

Permissions Functionality Includes the Ability to:

11. Accommodate the geographical bounds of the intervention, which may include multiple local child welfare and/or education agencies.
12. Display the minimal information necessary to initially enroll or refer a student to the program.

13. Display the full information necessary to deliver the program after a student has been referred or enrolled.
14. Turn on and off caseworker access to education data in the system based on the status of the child welfare case.
15. Add and remove specialist access if the student's case transfers to another Fostering Opportunities staff member or the student exits the program.

Reporting Functionality Includes the Ability to:

- Generate reports to inform program implementation and resource planning (e.g., number and type of contacts with students and their network).
- Outcome data to track progress of the intervention as a whole (e.g., academic outcomes).

[Appendix L](#) includes an example of an overlay system that can work within a child welfare database.

Using the System Effectively

Connecting a complex and dynamic network of professionals and caregivers begins with accurate and timely information about all of the factors related to a student's academic progress. For students in foster care, the information siloes embedded into the education and child welfare systems must be broken down.⁹⁸ Thus, a data tracking system that monitors the information and actions of both the student, the specialist, and the caseworker is necessary to improve engagement in school and support progress toward graduation.

When Fostering Opportunities provides the network surrounding a student with consistent, timely, and reliable information, students will be provided with education-specific support and continuity and will experience fewer barriers to full participation in school. Coleman (1988)⁹⁹ posited that, in a closed network, norms such as high school graduation are created and maintained because students' positive actions are more consistently reinforced. Monthly progress monitoring reports is a way that the program can use the system to ensure timely and reliable information. Additional strategies can be guided by the [ten principles for using student data](#).

Monthly Progress Monitoring Report

Regular information shared with the student's network can help caregivers and professionals get in the routine use of data to inform their advocacy and support. Specialists can use monthly progress monitoring reports to highlight the student's strengths to members of the student's network. Monthly progress monitoring reports can also provide a foundation for identifying opportunities to learn more about what is driving patterns (e.g., increase in tardies to first period as a result of transportation problems).

⁹⁸ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2014). *Sustaining momentum: Improving educational stability for young people in foster care*. Retrieved from <https://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-SustainingMomentum-2014.pdf>

⁹⁹ Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, S95-S120.

The information collected and compiled into a monthly progress monitoring report should be exportable from the system to track students (see [Appendix F](#) for an example).

Below is information that could be included in the monthly progress monitoring report:

- Attendance (tardies, absences—excused and unexcused).
- Behavior and suspensions (any disruptive behavior in school, whether managed in the classroom or outside of the classroom).
 - Level of consequences—restorative conference, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, detention, etc.
- For each of core areas: grades and percentage (upload most recent report card if database allows).
- Transcript review/credit accumulation.
 - Indicator for on track to graduate.
 - Bring transcript for student to review together. Going over the transcript with the student helps them to better understand where they stand. Some students have never reviewed their own transcripts (nor do they know what is required of them to graduate).
- Prosocial activities in which the student is currently engaged.
- Prosocial activities in which the student wants to be engaged.
- Short- and long-term goals.
- Strengths.
- Areas of growth.
- Include a short narrative describing the student’s overall functioning and social/emotional/academic progress (could also include a narrative from other professionals working with the student).

“The 11th graders really love seeing their transcripts. Most of them have never seen their transcripts before, and they are really excited to see their credits appear and accrue at the end of the semester.”

- Fostering Opportunities Specialist

This information can be compiled into a monthly progress monitoring report that is downloadable as a PDF and shared with members of a student’s network as allowed by signed ROIs. The report is shared at least monthly, although, there may be situations where sharing the report more than once a month is called for (e.g., during times of transition).

When all members of a student’s network are provided with this information, the Fostering Opportunities program promotes network closure.

Reviewing Monthly Progress Monitoring Reports and Data with Students

Within the Fostering Opportunities program, data is used from the beginning of the specialist's relationship with the student to guide the specialist's advocacy and network closure work. For example, if given access similar to that of a parent or guardian, specialists can check the school's database, such as *Infinite Campus*, to orient themselves to the student's educational history even before the first check-in. In the school's database, it is ideal if specialists can view data down to the assignment-level so that they can track the student's academic progress even more closely.

As part of the orientation to [weekly check-ins](#) and the program as a whole, students are aware that they will be reviewing school data, in some form, in every meeting with the specialist. Integrating this routine use of data into student interactions will normalize the process with students and convey that students are being supported in their academic goals with potentially greater accountability than in the past.

While some students will be excited to view their progress in a concrete way, other students may be less enthusiastic. It is important for specialists to rely on motivational interviewing skills and rolling with resistance if this occurs.

Some language that may be helpful to use with students when introducing the concept and reviewing student's data:

- Specialist: "How would you feel about us looking at your grades together every week?"

This language allows the student the space to explore about how they would feel and for the specialist to roll with resistance if there is any present.

- Specialist: "The reason that I want us to look at your grades together is because I think it will help me to know how I can support you better. If we don't ever look at your grades, I won't know where you might need help."

This language frames the conversation about grades in the way that Fostering Opportunities intends to use data—as a way to facilitate network closure and connect students to the resources they need.

- Specialist: "I am not going to be punishing you if you get 'bad' grades. That won't help you at all if you feel bad about your grades. The reason that we are doing this is so that we know where you might need some more support."

This language conveys the specialist's genuine interest in supporting the student. The student feels less shame in talking about grades and is more receptive to receiving support.

Sharing Monthly Progress Monitoring Reports with Students' Networks

The student's network may have a variety of responses to receiving the student's monthly progress monitoring report. It is likely that this information will be perceived as most helpful by caseworkers and GALs in the time period leading up to a court hearing or a team decision-making meeting. Caseworkers

may also appreciate being able to request specific information from specialists, such as the youth's educational goals that are required to complete an Independent Living Plan.

Student Data Principles

Fostering Opportunities subscribes to the Student Data Principles, which are 10 foundational principles for using and safeguarding students' personal information endorsed by many national associations and non-profit organizations that represent a range of perspectives, experience, and stakeholders in the education community.¹⁰⁰ The principles are as follows:

- (1) Student data should be used to further and support student learning and success.
- (2) Student data are most powerful when used for continuous improvement and personalizing student learning.
- (3) Student data should be used as a tool for informing, engaging, and empowering students, families, teachers, and school system leaders.
- (4) Students, families, and educators should have timely access to information collected about the student.
- (5) Student data should be used to inform and not replace the professional judgment of educators.
- (6) Students' personal information should only be shared, under terms or agreement, with service providers for legitimate educational purposes; otherwise the consent to share must be given by a parent, guardian, or a student, if that student is over 18. School systems should have policies for overseeing this process, which include support and guidance for teachers.
- (7) Educational institutions, and their contracted service providers with access to student data, including researchers, should have clear, publicly available rules and guidelines for how they collect, use, safeguard, and destroy those data.
- (8) Educators and their contracted service providers should only have access to the minimum student data required to support student success.
- (9) Everyone who has access to students' personal information should be trained and know how to effectively and ethically use, protect, and secure it.
- (10) Any educational institution with the authority to collect and maintain student personal information should:
 - a. Have a system of governance that designates rules, procedures, and the individual or group responsible for decision-making regarding data collection, use, access, sharing, and security, and use of online educational programs.
 - b. Have a policy for notification of any misuse or breach of information and available remedies.
 - c. Maintain a security process that follows widely accepted industry best practices.
 - d. Provide a designated place or contact where students and families can go to learn of their rights and have their questions about student data collection, use, and security answered.

¹⁰⁰ Student Data Principles. Retrieved from <https://studentdataprinciples.org/the-principles/>

Appendices

Appendix A: Data Sharing Agreement Example

JeffCo_JeffCoSchools_05 31 18
 Contract No: _____
 Name: Jefferson County



INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING - MASTER AGREEMENT (WITH PROJECT ADDENDA)

-----COVER AND SIGNATURE PAGE-----

<p>PUBLIC ORGANIZATION: JEFFERSON COUNTY, COLORADO Department of Human Services 900 Jefferson County Parkway Golden, CO 80401</p> <p>Notices to be sent to the attention of: Natalie Mall, Associate Director of the Division For Children, Youth, Families And Adult Protection</p>	<p>DISTRICT: JEFFERSON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT R-1 1829 Denver West Dr. Bldg 27, Golden, CO 8040</p> <p>Notices to be sent to the attention of: David Kollar, Director of Student Services and General Counsel</p>
<p>EFFECTIVE DATE: The date when the Parties sign. The later date if the Parties sign on different dates.</p>	<p>INITIAL AGREEMENT END DATE: <i>(check as applicable):</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On and including the following date: <i>10/1/2022</i></p>
<p>FEES/PAYMENTS/AMOUNTS PAYABLE:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ payable from _____ to _____.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No cost to the District.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No money paid between Parties</p>	<p>PURPOSE AND SCOPE: Public Organization's duties to District For District to comply with Pay for Success Grant Program requirements</p>

Signatures

The Parties agree to the terms and conditions set forth herein by signing below. Individuals signing on behalf of each Party represent and warrant that they are authorized to execute this Agreement on behalf of the Party for which they are signing.

<p>PUBLIC ORGANIZATION: Jefferson County, Colorado</p> <p>_____ <i>Signature</i></p> <p>By: _____ <i>Name and Title of Person Signing for Public Organization</i></p> <p>_____, 20____ <i>Date of Public Organization Representative Signature</i></p>	<p>DISTRICT: Jefferson County School District R-1</p> <p>_____ <i>Signature</i></p> <p>By: _____ <i>Name and Title of Person Signing</i></p> <p>_____, 20____ <i>Date of District Representative Signature</i></p>
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The **District** and the **Public Organization**, both identified on the above **Cover and Signature Page**, are entering into this Agreement as of the Effective Date listed on the **Cover and Signature Page** by signing on the **Cover and Signature Page**, and for good and valuable consideration, the District and the Public Organization agree to the terms of this Agreement.

BACKGROUND

The District is participating in a pay for success program (the “Program”) designed to provide expanded services to District students who are in foster care. The Program is created under the Colorado Pay for Success Act, C.R.S. §§24-37-401 to -403, pursuant to which the District is entering into a structured set of agreements with the grantors and other stakeholders in the Program (“Program Agreements”) describing the duties and responsibilities of the District under the Program. As part of the Program Agreements, the District needs to implement actions based on data and information that the Public Organization agrees to deliver to the District on a regular basis. This Agreement documents the Parties understanding thereto.

AGREEMENT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. **Purpose and Scope.** The purpose and scope of the Agreement are as described in the **Cover and Signature Page** and the **BACKGROUND**. The Services and Duties shall not exceed the scope as described herein.
2. **Definitions.** Capitalized terms used throughout the Agreement and any Agreement Document, which are not otherwise capitalized because of English grammar rules, shall have the meaning given to them either when first defined or as set forth in the Agreement section titled **Definitions**.
3. **Project Addenda.**
 - 3.1. **Master Agreement and Project Addenda.** The main portion of this Agreement establishes the relationship between the Parties. From time to time, the Parties may execute project **ADDENDA** describing specific collaborative education projects, each in form substantially as **EXHIBIT A – Sample Addendum** attached hereto and incorporated herein. Each **ADDENDUM** will set forth its own project description, the respective Services and Duties, prices, costs, and expenses, if any, and begin and end dates. Each **ADDENDUM**, when executed by both Parties, amends the Agreement and shall become part of and be governed by the Agreement. Each **ADDENDUM** will be titled **ADDENDUM - A.1** for the first Addendum to be executed, **ADDENDUM - A.2** for the next to be executed, and **ADDENDUM - A.3, - A.4, - A.5** and so on for subsequently executed Addenda.
 - 3.2. **Parties’ Duties.** The Public Organization and the District, each shall perform the Services and Duties described in the main portion of this Agreement and in each **ADDENDUM**.
 - 3.3. **Licensing.** The Public Organization shall have and, while the Agreement is in effect, maintain all professional and other licenses, certifications, and permits required for and shall comply with all legal and regulatory requirements for performance under the Agreement and each Addendum.
4. **Fees/Payments/Amounts Payable** *(check the box that applies):*
 - 4.1. **Money Payable.** The _____ *(insert Party that pays)* shall pay to _____ *(insert Party that receives pay)* as follows *(describe payment arrangement):*

 - 4.2. **No Cost to the District.** There shall be no direct, actual cost to the District payable to the Public Organization resulting from this Agreement.
 - 4.3. **No Money Paid between the Parties.** Each Party shall bear their own costs and expenses incurred as a result of performance under the Agreement, and as those costs are further allocated and described in any **ADDENDUM**.
5. **Term and Renewal.**
 - 5.1. **Initial Agreement Term.** This Agreement shall be effective as of the Effective Date through the date specified as the Agreement End Date on the **Cover and Signature Page**.

- 5.2. ***Addendum Term.*** Each ADDENDUM shall begin and end on such dates specified in each such ADDENDUM. An ADDENDUM may specifically and expressly state that the ADDENDUM may or shall extend after the termination of the Agreement. In that event, the terms of the Agreement are then incorporated into the ADDENDUM so as to govern that ADDENDUM until its termination. Any ADDENDUM that does not specifically and expressly state that the ADDENDUM shall extend after the termination of the Agreement shall terminate on the date of termination stated in the ADDENDUM or when the Agreement terminates, whichever is earlier.
- 5.3. ***Renewal by Agreement.*** The District and the Public Organization may renew the Agreement for up to 4 additional, successive terms of up to 12 months each. Each such 12-month term shall be a “Renewal Term.” The total term of the Agreement, including any Renewal Terms, shall not exceed 5 contract terms, including the initial terms and each Renewal Term. To enter into a Renewal Term, the parties shall execute an Agreement to Renew in the form substantially equivalent to **Exhibit B – Sample Agreement to Renew** attached hereto and incorporated herein. The first executed Agreement to Renew shall be labeled **Exhibit B.1**. Each subsequently executed Agreement to Renew shall be labeled **Exhibit B.2, B.3, and B.4**, and shall become a part of and be governed by the Agreement.

6. Insurance of Public Organization.

- 6.1. ***Requirement to Maintain Insurance.*** The Public Organization is a “public entity” within the meaning of the Colorado Governmental Immunity Act, §24-10-101 *et seq.*, C.R.S. (“GIA”), and shall maintain at all times, while the Agreement is in effect, including during any warranty period, such liability insurance, by commercial policy or self-insurance, as is necessary to meet its liabilities under the GIA.
- 6.2. ***Subcontractor Requirements.*** The Public Organization shall ensure that each Subcontractor that is a public entity within the meaning of the GIA, while the Agreement is in effect, including during any warranty period, maintain such liability insurance, by commercial policy or self-insurance, as is necessary to meet its liabilities under the GIA. The Public Organization shall require its Subcontractors that are not a public entity within the meaning of the GIA, to maintain during the term of the Agreement, including any warranty period, the following insurance policies and coverages: (i) Commercial General Liability insurance with limits of \$2,000,000 per occurrence/\$2,000,000 aggregate. (ii) Statutory Workers’ Compensation coverage and Employer’s Liability insurance with limits of not less than \$100,000 per accident, \$100,000 disease each employee, and \$500,000 accident/disease policy limit, including occupational disease provisions for all employees per statutory requirements. (iii) Professional Liability insurance with limits of \$2,000,000 per claim and aggregate. (iv) Comprehensive Auto Liability insurance, including hired and non-owned auto, and including coverage for all power mobile equipment used by the Public Organization on District property, with limits of \$2,000,000, per occurrence combined single limit. (v) Cybersecurity Technology Errors and Omissions/Professional Liability insurance, including Network Security and Privacy Liability Insurance acceptable to the District, providing coverage against technological failure, cyber theft, network liability, liability arising from computer virus, and related risks and damage. All Subcontractor policies shall contain waivers of subrogation in favor of the District. All Subcontractor insurance carriers shall have an AM Best rating of A-VIII or better, or otherwise be approved by the District in writing. The Public Organization shall submit, or cause the Subcontractors to submit, to the District certificates of insurance evidencing that the insurance required herein is in effect, no later than 10 calendar days after the Effective Date. The District’s receipt, review or acceptance of any insurance policies or certificates of insurance shall not be construed as a waiver or relieve the Public Organization from its obligation to meet the insurance requirements. The District shall be named as additional insured on all commercial general liability policies and auto insurance policies required of the Subcontractors.
- 6.3. ***Modification.*** Any modification, variance, or waiver of these requirements is only valid if the District’s Director of Risk Management or designee approves it in writing in advance.
- 6.4. ***Deductibles.*** The Public Organization or Subcontractor shall assume all financial responsibility deductibles and self-insured retentions that may be contained in any insurance policy.

7. Data Protection.

- 7.1. Ownership of District Information. The District owns all District Information, all now known or hereafter existing intellectual property rights associated with the District Information, and any derivative works thereof or modification thereto, including, without limitation, de-identified data. The District continues to own all District Information that the District may share with or disclose to the Public Organization or its Delegates in connection with performing its duties under the Agreement.
- 7.2. Ownership and Protection of Organization Information. (A) The Public Organization owns all Organization Information and continues to own all Organization Information that the Public Organization may share with or disclose to the District in connection with performing its duties under the Agreement. (B) The District shall use and maintain Organization Information only for the purposes authorized by the Agreement, and only in compliance with all applicable laws. The Agreement does not give the District any rights, title, or interest to or in Organization Information, except as expressly stated in the Agreement. (C) The District shall NOT do any of the following UNLESS specifically permitted by the Agreement, or permitted in a writing signed by an authorized representative of the Public Organization before the occurrence of any of the following, or as required by law: (i) Use Organization Information for any purpose not authorized by this Agreement; (ii) Publish, copy, or otherwise disclose Organization Information to any person not a Party; and (iii) Store Organization Information outside the continental United States. (D) The District shall cause its agents and subcontractors who have access to Organization Information to execute such confidentiality, non-disclosure, or data sharing agreements as the Public Organization may require from time to time. (E) The District shall securely destroy all Organization Information in its possession, and cause the secure destruction of all Organization Information in the possession of its subcontractors upon the Public Organization's written request.
- 7.3. CORA. Nothing in this section shall affect the Parties' obligations under the Colorado Open Records Act.
- 7.4. Use of District Information. The Public Organization shall use and maintain District Information for the sole and exclusive benefit of the District, only as necessary to perform under the Agreement, and only in compliance with all applicable Laws. The District hereby grants to the Public Organization a limited, nonexclusive license to use District Information solely for the purpose of performing its obligations specified in the Agreement. The Agreement does not give the Public Organization any rights, title, or interest to or in District Information or de-identified data, except as expressly stated in the Agreement.
- 7.5. Prohibited Uses of District Information. The Public Organization shall NOT do any of the following UNLESS specifically permitted by the Agreement or any Agreement Document, or permitted in writing signed by an authorized District representative before the occurrence of any of the following, or as required by Law:
- 7.5.1. Use District Information for its own gain and benefit outside of the benefits of this Agreement.
 - 7.5.2. Publish, copy, or otherwise disclose District Information to any person not a Party.
 - 7.5.3. Use the District's name, logos, or reputation.
 - 7.5.4. Use District Information to conduct External Research, as that term is defined by District Policy IGB and IGB-R, as those policies are in effect on the Effective Date and may be amended from time to time.
 - 7.5.5. Use, sell, rent, transfer, distribute, alter, mine, or disclose District Information, including metadata.
 - 7.5.6. Use District Information for its own commercial benefit, including but not limited to, advertising or marketing of any kind directed toward children, parents, guardians, or District employees.
 - 7.5.7. Use District Information in a manner that is inconsistent with Public Organization's privacy

policy.

7.5.8. Use District Information to create a student profile other than as authorized or required by the Agreement to perform the Services.

7.5.9. Store District Information outside the continental United States.

- 7.6. *Volunteer Agreements.* The Public Organization shall cause its employees, agents, Subcontractors, AND Public Organization Delegates, who perform the Services and Duties under or are otherwise engaged in connection with the Agreement, to execute such confidentiality, non-disclosure, or data sharing agreements as the District may require from time to time and as may also be listed in any **ADDENDUM**.
- 7.7. *Third Party Information.* In the course of performing the Services and Duties, the Public Organization may have access to information that is confidential and belongs to persons not a Party, such as specifications, software code, ideas, documents or other material. The Public Organization shall not disclose this third party information to any person except as necessary to perform the Services and Duties. The Public Organization shall not violate the intellectual property or confidentiality and privacy of information rights of third parties. The Public Organization shall require its employees, agents, and Subcontractors to comply with this paragraph.
- 7.8. *Data Destruction.* The Public Organization shall securely destroy all District Information in its possession, and cause the secure destruction of all District Information in the possession of its Subcontractors or Public Organization Delegates within 10 calendar days after receiving a written request from the District and as more specifically described in the Agreement section titled Termination, Default, and Remedies/Obligations at Termination. "Securely destroy" means to remove District Information from the Public Organization's systems, paper files, records, databases, and any other media regardless of format, so that District Information is permanently irretrievable in the Public Organization's and its Subcontractors' and Public Organization Delegates' normal course of business.
- 7.9. *Software-Specific Data Security and Protection.* The Parties have executed or are about to execute a data sharing agreement governing the specific sharing of data in connection with the Program Agreement, to be effective on or around the same date as the Agreement.
- 8. Order of Precedence.** If there is a conflict or inconsistency between or among any of the Agreement Documents, it shall be resolved in the following order of priority.
- 8.1. District Specific Provisions in the main body of the Agreement; then
- 8.2. The remainder of the main body of the Agreement; then
- 8.3. Executed **ADDENDA**, when executed, in reverse chronological order; then
- 8.4. Executed **EXHIBITS B.1, B.2**, and so on, in reverse chronological order; then
- 8.5. **EXHIBIT A – Sample Addendum**, together with any attachments; then
- 8.6. **EXHIBIT B – Sample Agreement to Renew**.
- 9. Public Organization's Representations and Warranties.** The Public Organization represents and warrants that the Public Organization:
- 9.1. Is competent and qualified to and capable of performing the Services and Duties.
- 9.2. Maintains the licensing, certificates, and other credentials required by law and by the District to perform the Services and Duties.
- 9.3. Has full authority under applicable law to execute and deliver the Agreement and has the authority to perform all of the obligations under the Agreement.
- 9.4. Any statement, representation, or information that the Public Organization has submitted to the District before the Effective Date and in connection with the Agreement and the Services and Duties, and on which the District has relied in the award of the Agreement, was true and correct when made.
- 10. Termination, Default, and Remedies.**
- 10.1. *Termination – No Default.* Either Party may terminate the Agreement at any time, if such Party determines that termination is in its best interest. If a Party elects to terminate under this provision, the Party shall send written notice to the other Party. The notice shall include the date, no less than 10

calendar days after the other Party receives the notice, when termination shall become effective.

- 10.2. *Events of Default by a Party.*** Each of the following shall be an Event of Default under the Agreement:
- 10.2.1. A Party fails to perform Services and Duties under the Agreement or any **ADDENDUM**.
 - 10.2.2. A Party fails to comply with any term, provision, agreement, or warranty of the Agreement.
 - 10.2.3. A representation or warranty made in this Agreement is not true as of the date made.
 - 10.2.4. The District determines in its sole discretion that the safety and security of the District or any of its schools, properties, premises, students, school visitors, school community, employees, agents, or the public are threatened or in danger.
 - 10.2.5. The Public Organization loses or becomes ineligible for any license, permit, certification or other regulatory action required to perform Services and Duties hereunder.
- 10.3. *Notice of Default.*** If an Event of Default occurs, and the non-defaulting Party elects to exercise its remedies, the non-defaulting Party will give written notice to the other Party. The notice shall set forth actions the defaulting Party has to take to cure the default, and dates by when such actions have to be completed. The District need not provide notice of default if the District determines in its sole discretion that the Event of Default affects, threatens or endangers the District or any of its schools, properties, premises, students, school visitors, school community, employees, agents, or the public.
- 10.4. *Remedies.*** In the Event of Default, and after the non-defaulting Party has given notice and opportunity to cure as the Agreement requires, and after the other Party has failed to cure as required by the notifying Party, the notifying Party may take, or elect not to take, any of the remedies available by law, in its sole discretion w.
- 10.5. *Obligations at Termination.*** When the Agreement terminates for any reason, the Parties shall do the following:
- 10.5.1. The Public Organization shall, as directed by the District, deliver and return to the District all District Information, or securely destroy all District Information that the Public Organization has received from or through the District in the course of performing under the Agreement, so as to make it permanently irretrievable (and certify as to such secure destruction).
 - 10.5.2. The District shall, as directed by the Public Organization, deliver and return to the Public Organization all Organization Information, or securely destroy all Organization Information that the District has received from or through the Public Organization in the course of performance under the Agreement, so as to make it permanently irretrievable (and certify as to such secure destruction).

11. General Contract Terms.

- 11.1. *Assignment.*** The Public Organization may assign or subcontract its rights and obligations hereunder only with the express prior written consent of the District
- 11.2. *Binding Effect.*** This Agreement binds the Parties and their respective successors and assigns.
- 11.3. *Captions and References.*** The captions and headings are for reference only and shall not define or limit its provisions.
- 11.4. *Counterparts.*** The Agreement, and any amendments, may be executed in one or more counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original, but all of which together shall constitute one and the same instrument. Photocopies, scans, and facsimiles of executing signatures are valid evidence of execution.
- 11.5. *Entire Understanding.*** The Agreement represents the complete integration of all understandings between the Parties related to the Services and Duties and the subject matter of this Agreement.
- 11.6. *Independent Contractor.*** The Public Organization is an independent contractor and NOT an employee of the District. Employees, agents, Subcontractors and Public Organization Delegates of the Public Organization are NOT employees of the District. The Public Organization shall perform all Services and Duties using independent judgment and expertise as an independent contractor. The District does not require the Public Organization to work exclusively for the District. The Public Organization shall deliver the Services and Duties in accordance with the plans and specifications set forth herein, and the District does not oversee the Public Organization's actual work or instruct the Public Organization as to how the Public Organization performs the Services and Duties. This Agreement may be terminated only in accordance with the terms of this Agreement. The District does not provide training (other than minimal), tools or benefits to the Public Organization, except that the District may supply materials and equipment as specified herein. Payment under the Agreement is in accordance with the contract rate or price set forth herein, and shall not be in the form of a salary or hourly wage. The District does not dictate the time of performance, except to the extent a completion schedule or work hours are established in this Agreement. The District

will make payments to the Public Organization in its trade or business name. The District does not combine business operations in any way with the Public Organization's business but maintains District operations separate and distinct from the Public Organization's operations. Neither Party is, or shall be construed to be, a partner or in joint venture with the other Party. Neither the Public Organization nor any agent, employees, Subcontractor, or Subcontractor's agent or employee has any authority, express or implied, to bind the District to any agreement or incur any liability attributable to the District. **Public Organization acknowledges that it is not entitled to Unemployment Compensation or Workers' Compensation benefits (unless coverage is provided by the Public Organization or other entity) and that Public Organization is obligated to pay federal and state income tax on any moneys earned from the District pursuant to the Agreement.** The District is not obligated to and will not pay federal, state, or local payroll taxes or make any payroll tax withholdings from payments made to the Public Organization, if any. The District will comply with all applicable tax reporting laws.

- 11.7. **Modification.** The Agreement can only be modified in writing executed by both Parties or as otherwise provided in the Agreement.
- 11.8. **Notices.** All notices required under the Agreement shall be in writing and shall be effective (i) upon personal delivery, or (ii) 3 calendar days after mailing when deposited in the United States first-class mail, postage prepaid, or (iii) when delivered, as such delivery is evidenced by a mailing tracking number, if mailed with an overnight or other tracked service (such as USPS Priority or ESPS Express, FedEx, or UPS), or (iv) when sent by electronic mail, or (v) when transmission is confirmed by facsimile. Notices shall be sent to the Parties' respective addresses on the **Cover and Signature Page**. Notice by paper letter mail or personal delivery shall be effective at all times. Notice by email or facsimile shall be effective only if the Parties agree and designate in writing email addresses or facsimile numbers for that purpose. Each Party may change their respective notice address and other information without amending this Agreement by sending a notice to the other Party, designating the new notice address and information.
- 11.9. **Notification of Legal Process.** In the event a Party becomes subject to legal process (e.g. without limitation, subpoenas, interrogatories, or pleadings) that relates to the Agreement or the Parties' performance under the Agreement or compels or will compel the Party to disclose District Information or Organization Information, the Party who becomes subject to legal process shall notify the other Party in writing within 7 calendar days after it receives such legal process. The notice shall include sufficient information for the other Party to take timely legal action to prevent disclosure and protect its information (such as motions to quash) as that Party may choose to take in its sole discretion. The provisions of this subsection survive the termination of the Agreement.
- 11.10. **No Third-Party Beneficiaries.** The Agreement does not give any rights or benefits to anyone other the Parties.
- 11.11. **Records.** The Public Organization shall maintain complete and accurate records of all charges incurred by the District under the Agreement, in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, and other records related to the Agreement and performance thereunder, for a period from the date of termination of the Agreement as required by law.
- 11.12. **Severability.** If a court of competent jurisdiction rules any Agreement provision to be invalid or illegal, such ruling shall have no effect upon the remaining provisions, which shall be considered legally binding and given full effect.
- 11.13. **Subcontracts.** The Public Organization shall, upon the District's request, provide (i) a list of all Subcontractors and (ii) a copy of each contract related to the performance under the Agreement with each such Subcontractor. All subcontracts entered into by the Public Organization in connection with the Agreement shall comply with all applicable Laws, shall provide that they are governed by the laws of the State of Colorado, and shall be subject to all provisions of the Agreement.
- 11.14. **Survival of Certain Agreement Terms.** Any provision of the Agreement that imposes an obligation on a Party after termination or expiration of the Agreement survives the termination or expiration of the Agreement and is enforceable by the other Party.
- 11.15. **Waiver.** A Party's failure to assert any rights or remedies, or a Party's waiver of its rights or remedies by a course of dealing or otherwise, shall not be deemed to be a waiver of any other right or remedy under the Agreement.

12. District Specific Terms.

- 12.1. **Availability of Funds and Constitutional Limitations on Debt.** Financial obligations of the District payable after the current Fiscal Year are contingent upon funds for that purpose being appropriated, budgeted, and otherwise made available. The District may also be relying on state or federal funding to satisfy its payment obligations under the Agreement. The District's payment obligations under the Agreement are subject to and conditioned upon the continuing availability of all funding for the purposes set forth in the Agreement. In the event funds are not appropriated, budgeted or otherwise made available, the District may terminate the Agreement as of the last day of the period for which funds were appropriated or monies made available for such purposes. All payments of the District under this Agreement constitute currently budgeted expenditures and do not constitute or give rise to a general obligation, indebtedness, or multiple-Fiscal Year direct or indirect debt or other financial obligation within the meaning of any constitutional or statutory provision or limitation. No provision of this Agreement shall be construed to pledge or to create a lien on any class or source of the District's monies. No provision of this Agreement shall be construed to restrict the future issuance of any bonds or obligations of the District payable from any class or source of District moneys.
- 12.2. **Compliance with Laws and District Policies/Non-Discrimination.** The Public Organization shall comply with all Laws that apply to performance under the Agreement, as amended from time to time. The Public Organization shall comply with Laws (1) prohibiting the use or possession of alcohol, tobacco or firearms on District property; (2) related to web access; and (3) prohibiting discrimination, intimidation, or harassment on the basis of ethnicity or race, color, religion, national origin,

ancestry, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, age, veteran status, or disability.

- 12.3. **Conflict of Interest.** The Public Organization hereby acknowledges that it (i) has no personal or financial interest in the Agreement (other than any payment or fee to be earned thereunder); (ii) shall not acquire any such interest, direct or indirect, which would conflict in any manner with the performance under the Agreement; and (iii) does not and will not employ or engage any person with a personal or financial interest in the project requiring the Services and Duties under the Agreement.
- 12.4. **Criminal Record Certification.** Where required by Laws, the Public Organization shall complete a criminal records check on itself, if an individual, and any Public Organization employee, agent, or Subcontractor providing the Services and Duties on District property under the Agreement. The Public Organization, if an individual, and Public Organization's employees, Subcontractors, or other agents of the Public Organization, who have been convicted of, pled nolo contendere to, or received a deferred sentence or deferred prosecution for a felony, or a misdemeanor crime involving unlawful sexual behavior or unlawful behavior involving children, shall not be allowed to work on District property. The Public Organization shall complete a certification or affidavit to that effect upon the District's request. The Public Organization shall be responsible for complying with applicable privacy and confidentiality laws relating to the certification.
- 12.5. **Student Data.** In the course of performing the Services and Duties, the Public Organization may gain access to District Information, even though the Services and Duties may not require it. In this case, the Public Organization shall comply with the requirements in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g and 34 CFR Part 99, concerning the confidentiality and release of student records and data, as reflected in District Policy JRA/JRC; and with the provisions of 20 U.S.C. § 1232h, as reflected in District Policy JLDAC, concerning the need to obtain written consent of the parent prior to subjecting a student to a certain manner of survey, analysis, or evaluation, and concerning the provision of psychological services. The Public Organization shall comply with the Colorado Student Data Transparency and Security Act, C.R.S. §§ 22-16-101 *et seq.*, as applicable. The Public Organization acknowledges that under applicable law, Public Organization officers, employees, and agents who access the education records and personally identifiable information of District students may use such information only for the purposes of providing Services and Duties under the Agreement; that the Public Organization is prohibited from re-disclosing such information to third parties, and shall use reasonable methods to ensure to the greatest extent practicable that such records and data are protected from further disclosure; and that Public Organization shall destroy any such information when the Agreement is terminated or when the information is no longer needed to provide the Services and Duties.
- 12.6. **Governing Law, Jurisdiction and Venue.** The Agreement is made in and shall be governed by the laws of the State of Colorado. A Party shall bring any action to enforce its rights hereunder in a court of competent jurisdiction in Jefferson County, Colorado. All references to Law refers to the Law as in effect on the Effective Date. Any changes to Law after the Effective Date is hereby incorporated into the Agreement.
- 12.7. **Governmental Immunity.** No term or condition of the Agreement shall be construed or interpreted as a waiver, express or implied, of any of the immunities, rights, benefits, protections, or other provisions, of the Colorado Governmental Immunity Act, §24-10-101 *et seq.* C.R.S., or the Federal Tort Claims Act, 28 U.S.C. Pt. VI, Ch. 171 and 28 U.S.C. 1346(b).
- 12.8. **Indemnification from Public Organization.** INTENTIONALLY OMITTED.
- 12.9. **Indemnification by District Void.** Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the Agreement or an Agreement Document, or any agreement document related to but outside of the Agreement and Agreement Documents, the District shall not indemnify the Public Organization. Any provision attempting to require that the District indemnify the Public Organization or any other party is null and void *ab initio*.
- 12.10. **Limitation of Liability – No Effect on Insurance Coverage.** Any provision in the Agreement, an Agreement Document or any agreement document related to but outside of the Agreement and Agreement Documents limiting the Public Organization's liability (if any) shall not affect or decrease any insurance coverage or coverage limits otherwise available. Any provision seeking to limit or disclaim the Public Organization's liability shall not apply to this Agreement. The provisions of this subsection survive the termination of the Agreement.
- 12.11. **Open Records Law/CORA.** The Colorado Open Records Act, CRS § 24-72-100.1 *et seq.*, as amended from time to time, applies to the Agreement, and the records and reports generated thereunder, to the extent not prohibited by federal law.
- 12.12. **PERA Contributions.** If the Public Organization is a Colorado Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA) retiree or employs Colorado PERA retirees in performance of the Agreement, they must inform the District of this status. The District will make any employer PERA contributions that are required by legislation. The Public Organization or the Public Organization's employee who is a Colorado PERA retiree will be responsible to pay any working retiree contributions to PERA that are required by legislation.
- 12.13. **Public Contracts for Services and Duties.** INTENTIONALLY OMITTED.
- 12.14. **Public Contracts with Natural Persons.** This provision is required by C.R.S. §§24-76.5-101 *et seq.* If Public Organization is a natural person 18 years of age or older, Public Organization hereby swears and affirms under penalty of perjury that he or she (i) is a citizen or otherwise lawfully present in the United States pursuant to federal law; (ii) shall comply with the provisions of C.R.S. §§24-76.5-101 *et seq.*, and (iii) has produced one form of identification required by C.R.S. §24-76.5-103, before the Effective Date.
- 12.15. **Taxes and Fees.** The District is exempt from the payment of any state, and most municipal, sales and use taxes.

13. Definitions. In addition to other capitalized terms defined elsewhere in the Agreement, the following terms shall have the

following meanings:

- 13.1.** “*Agreement*” means this **Intergovernmental Memorandum of Understanding - Master Agreement**, together with all Agreement Documents.
- 13.2.** “*Agreement Document*” means each and the combination of the following parts of the Agreement, all of which together form one agreement.
- 13.2.1. The main body of the Agreement.
- 13.2.2. **EXHIBIT A – Sample Project Addendum**, including any attachments, such as, without limitation, those incorporating solicitation documents.
- 13.2.3. **EXHIBIT B – Sample Agreement to Renew**.
- 13.2.4. Each executed **EXHIBIT B.1, B.2** and so on.
- 13.2.5. Each executed **ADDENDUM A.1, A.2.**, and so on.
- 13.2.6. Other (*none if blank*): _____
- 13.3.** “*District Information*” means any and all information, data, record, specification, software code, ideas, documents, and other material, in any form and on any media, including but not limited, to any such information that may belong to or affect third persons not a Party, which the Public Organization receives from the District, and includes, without limitation, Personally Identifiable Information (“PII”), Record, Education Record and all PII included therein or derived therefrom that is not intentionally made generally available by the District on public websites or publications but is made available directly or indirectly by the District to Public Organization or that is otherwise collected or generated by Public Organization in connection with the performance of the Services and Duties. “PII” means information and metadata that, alone or in combination, is linked or linkable to a specific student so as to allow a reasonable person in the school community, who does not have personal knowledge of the relevant circumstances, to identify the student with reasonable certainty. Personally identifiable information includes but is not limited to: (a) the student’s name; (b) the name of the student’s parent or other family members; (c) the address or phone number of the student or student’s family; (d) personal identifiers such as the student’s state-assigned student identifier, social security number, student number or biometric record; (e) indirect identifiers such as the student’s date of birth, place of birth or mother’s maiden name; and (f) demographic attributes, such as race, socioeconomic information, and gender. “To the extent it is not already included in the definition hereinabove, PII also includes “personal information” as defined in the Colorado Open Records Act, C.R.S. 24-72-101 *et seq.*; personally identifiable information contained in student “education records” as that term is defined in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. 1232g; “protected health information” as that term is defined in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, 45 C.F.R. Part 160.103; “nonpublic personal information” as that term is defined in the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Financial Modernization Act of 1999, 15 U.S.C. 6809; credit and debit card numbers and/or access codes and other cardholder data and sensitive authentication data as those terms are defined in the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards; other financial account numbers, access codes, and state- or federal-identification numbers such as driver’s license, passport or visa numbers. “**Record**” means any information recorded in any way, including, but not limited to, handwriting, print, computer media, video or audio tape, film, microfilm, and microfiche. “**Education Record**” means records, files, documents and other materials that: (a) contain information directly related to a student; and (b) are maintained by the District, or by a Party acting for the District such as Public Organization.
- 13.4.** **INTENTIONALLY OMITTED.**
- 13.5.** “*Effective Date*” means the date when both Parties execute the Agreement, and if they execute on different days, it means the latest of those dates.
- 13.6.** “*Fiscal Year*” means the 12 months’ period that starts on July 1 of each calendar year and ends on June 30 of the following calendar year.
- 13.7.** “*Organization Information*” means any and all information, data, record, specification, software code, idea, document or other material, in any form and on any media, including but not limited to any information that may affect or belong to a third party, that the District receives from the Public Organization under this Agreement.
- 13.8.** “*Public Organization Delegate*” means any person who (1) participates in the performance of the Public Organization’s Services and Duties, (2) is not a Party, and (3) is not an employee, agent, or Subcontractor of the Public Organization, and may be a college student if the Public Organization is an institution of higher education, a citizen volunteer, if the Public Organization functions through volunteers, and any other such person acting through the Public Organization.
- 13.9.** “*Party*” means the District or the Public Organization, and the plural means both the District and the Public Organization.
- 13.10.** “*School*” means the District school listed on the **Cover and Signature Page**.
- 13.11.** “*Services and Duties and Duties*” means the services and work the Public Organization and the District are performing in accordance with the Agreement and the **ADDENDA**.
- 13.12.** “*Subcontractor*” means persons not a Party engaged by the Public Organization to aid in the performance of the Services and Duties.

EXHIBIT A – Sample Project Addendum

ADDENDUM NO A. ____

This **ADDENDUM A. ____** is executed in accordance with the provisions of the INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING – MASTER AGREEMENT by and between **SAMPLE** (the “Public Organization”), and **Jefferson County School District R-1** (the “District”), with an Effective Date **SAMPLE** (the “Agreement”). This **ADDENDUM** amends the terms of the Agreement by the addition of the terms of this **ADDENDUM**. This **ADDENDUM** is effective when the Parties sign this **ADDENDUM**. If the Parties sign on different dates, the **ADDENDUM** effective on the later date. All capitalized terms not otherwise defined in this **ADDENDUM** are defined as in the Agreement.

The name and description of the project is:

The Public Organization shall perform the following Services and Duties:

The District shall perform the following Services and Duties:

The **ADDENDUM** shall terminate:

- When the Agreement expires or terminates for any reason.
- On _____ or on the date when the **ADDENDUM** expires or terminates for any reason, whichever is earlier.
- On _____. This **ADDENDUM** extends after the termination date of the Agreement.

Amendments to the Agreement: In addition, the Parties make the following changes to the Agreement:

All provisions of the Agreement not specifically amended herein shall remain in effect unchanged.

All provisions of the Agreement not specifically amended herein shall remain in effect unchanged

<p>PUBLIC OPRGANIZATION: <u> SAMPLE </u> <i>Signature</i></p> <p>By: <u> SAMPLE </u> <i>Name and Title of Person Signing for the Public Organization</i></p> <p>_____, 20____ <i>Date of Public Organization Representative Signature</i></p>	<p>DISTRICT: Jefferson County School District R-1 <u> SAMPLE </u> <i>Signature</i></p> <p>By: <u> SAMPLE </u> <i>Name and Title of Person Signing for District</i></p> <p>_____, 20____ <i>Date of District Representative Signature</i></p>
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EXHIBIT B – SAMPLE AGREEMENT TO RENEW

1st 2nd 3rd 4th

Agreement to Renew

The Parties to that certain INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING by and between _____, and **Jefferson County School District R-1**, effective _____ (“Agreement”) hereby agree to renew the Agreement for:

- One year, with a new termination date of _____.
- _____ months, with a new termination date of _____.

Changes to the Agreement: In addition, the Parties make the following changes to the Agreement:

All provisions of the Agreement not specifically amended herein shall remain in effect unchanged.

<p>PUBLIC ORGANIZATION:</p> <p>_____</p> <p align="center"><i>SAMPLE</i></p> <p>_____ <i>Signature</i></p> <p>By: _____</p> <p><i>Name and Title of Person Signing for Public Organization</i></p> <p>_____</p> <p align="center"><i>SAMPLE</i></p> <p>20____</p> <p><i>Date of Public Organization Representative Signature</i></p>	<p>DISTRICT:</p> <p>Jefferson County School District R-1</p> <p>_____</p> <p align="center"><i>SAMPLE</i></p> <p>_____ <i>Signature</i></p> <p>By: _____</p> <p><i>Name and Title of Person Signing for District</i></p> <p>_____</p> <p align="center"><i>SAMPLE</i></p> <p>20____</p> <p><i>Date of District Representative Signature</i></p>
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Appendix B: Release of Information Example

Within the educational setting, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g and Colorado Revised Statutes § 21-1-123 and 27-72-204, govern the confidentiality and disclosure of educational records. This form is used to request the release of information to _____ (School District) to assist the District in providing educational programs and services to the named student.

It also permits representatives from _____ (School District) to disclose the student's education record and information from that record to the individual/organization listed below. Any confidential student information received by the District and maintained or kept will become part of the student's educational record at the school of enrollment.

The parent, guardian, or eligible student named below may revoke this authorization in writing unless the party requesting this information has already taken action in reliance on it, or the information is being provided as part of an insurance application. Also, the party requesting this information may not condition the provision of treatment, payment, enrollment in a health plan or the student's eligibility for benefits on the basis of the signing this authorization except when research-related treatment is being provided or the signature is obtained prior to enrollment in the health plan at issue. Once information is disclosed pursuant to this signed authorization, the federal privacy law protecting health information (45 CFR Parts 160 and 164) may not apply to the recipient of the information and, therefore, may not prohibit the recipient from redisclosing it.

This release of information form pertains to:

Student's Legal Name _____

Date of Birth _____

Student # _____

Current School _____

Grade _____

If not revoked earlier, this authorization expires on:

_____ (Month/Day/Year)

I hereby authorize the following listed individual/organization to furnish copies by facsimile or mail of the designated information to, or to discuss said information with representatives of _____ (School District) listed below to be used to assist the District in providing educational programs and/or services to the student.

I hereby authorize _____ (School District) to furnish copies by facsimile or mail of the designated information to, or to discuss said information with, the individual/organization representative listed below in order to assist the District in providing educational programs and/or services to the student.

Signature of Guardian or Eligible Student

Date

Address

Party Requesting Information

Individual/Organization/School _____

Signature _____

Telephone Number _____ Fax Number _____

Address _____

Purpose for obtaining information _____

Party Providing Information

Individual/Organization/School _____

Person/Title _____

Telephone Number _____ Fax Number _____

Address _____

Information Requested

Documents, reports, evaluations, on-going verbal and written communication, or other materials or records related to the following:

- Audiometric
- Speech Language
- Immunizations
- Current status/relevant medical history
- Physical Therapy/Occupational Therapy
- Treatment Plan/Plan of Management
- Psychiatric/Psychological
- Special Education Records
- Social Work Services
- Other Medical
- Other: _____

Appendix C: Social Capital Assessment

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

Educational Social Capital are the relationships that support a student’s full participation in and connection to school and learning. The purpose of this assessment is to identify who is on their team and who could provide support, advocacy, or access to resources to help them do their best in school.

Materials Needed:

- ✓✓Thin markers (red, orange, purple, green, and blue)
- ✓✓List of individuals in roles specific to the student (e.g., caseworker, guardian ad litem, court-appointed special advocate, juvenile judge, caregivers, family, educational decision makers, school counselor, and teachers who have contact information available in the child welfare and education databases)

Step 1: Interview

	Name	Role
Who asks you about school?		
Who knows how you are doing in school?		
Who knows how your experience in foster care affects you at school?		
If something goes well for you at school, who do you tell?		
If you are having trouble at school, who do you ask for help?		

	Name	Role
Who do you think cares about how you are doing in school, but might not know how it is going for you and might not ask you?		
Who do you wish cared more about how you are doing in school?		

Step 2: Determine Levels of Support

Have the student categorize the individuals from Step 1 by the extent to which they, in their roles, support them in their education. Include any additional people that support the student in their education, and people who don't currently support them this way (they may provide a different kind of support), but whom the student thinks could or should focus on how school is going for them.

Supports

Somewhat Supports

Does Not Support

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Step 3: Organize a Network Map

Have the student draw a graphic organizer with them at the center and the people from Step 2 forming a circle around them. Use the following color code:

- GREEN: each person who supports the student in their role.

- PURPLE: each person who somewhat supports the student in their role.
- RED: each person who does not support the student in their role.

Next, draw lines between the names indicating the following:

- BLUE LINES: connecting the people who talk with each other about how the student is doing in school and how to support them as a student.
- ORANGE LINES: connecting individuals whom the student thinks *should* be talking with each other or working together to support them as a student.

Reflect on both strengths in the student's network and opportunities to create a more cohesive network of support.

Step 4: Discuss Information Sharing

The goal of this assessment is to help the student understand relationships that support their education, and to identify ways to further strengthen that network of support. Though changes in the network are usually inevitable due to changes in their living situation, changes in their school of attendance, or other factors, and though their network may never look exactly like what they sketched out today, we are going to work together to ensure that they have a solid network and the support they need to be successful in school, even if the players on their team change from time to time.

Possible conversation topics include:

- Information sharing tools that are a part of the Fostering Opportunities program.
- Which people/roles legally have access to information on how they are doing in school and/or what is happening in their child welfare case.
- How this relates to the way the student drew blue or orange lines.
- How this network can remain solid and reliable even through home and school changes.
- Whether there are individuals for whom releases of information might be something to discuss and explore with parents/caseworkers (as appropriate per case) or adults with whom the student wants to have more conversations about school.
- The ways the student may benefit academically from the sharing of information with the people who need it.

Appendix D: Program Coordinator Job Description

ADMINISTRATIVE & PROFESSIONAL/TECHNICAL JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title: Program Coordinator

SUMMARY: Grant funded position responsible for coordinating the school district’s approach to improving educational outcomes for students experiencing foster care. This position will supervise a team of specialists who work directly and collaboratively with a caseload of students, their biological parents, foster parents or kinship providers, child welfare caseworker, and system partners to implement comprehensive and inclusive strategies to ensure educational stability and academic success. The program coordinator will also provide direct services to a small caseload of students. The program coordinator will support other initiatives of the school district to impact outcomes for youth experiencing foster care, to include, but not limited to, youth mental health first aid, restorative practices, and cross-agency training.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES include the following:

Coordinate the school district’s plan for supporting youth experiencing foster care.

Supervise specialists and other staff as necessary.

Maintain a caseload of students as needed.

Act as liaison between the school, caregivers, child welfare agency, and other community partnerships.

Ensure students receive effective instruction in academic, social, and emotional learning areas.

Discuss future-planning; postsecondary and workforce readiness goals for all students.

Attend academic team meetings and act as advocate for student (e.g. during meetings for Individualized Education Plans, safety planning, etc.).

Facilitate data and information sharing with child welfare and other youth-serving agencies.

Inventory upcoming court and case-related dates for school staff to ramp up support for student as needed.

Attend child welfare team meetings and act as advocate for student (e.g., family engagement meetings, team decision-making meetings, etc.).

Act as ongoing, technical support for teachers and school personnel on best practices for meeting the educational needs of students experiencing foster care.

Assist school and central teams in enhancing intervention frameworks.

Coordinate multi-agency student-focused problem-solving meetings.

Coordinate with child welfare agency, school districts transportation, and Title I department to ensure uninterrupted transportation or transportation assistance to/from school upon placement in foster care.

Ensure all school fees are waived (per legal statute) as well as ensure all eligible students experiencing foster care are enrolled in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program.

Work with community agency partners to develop and improve supports and services for students experiencing foster care.

Counsel students regarding future plans including educational and career goal setting.

Act as a mentor for students in Fostering Opportunities program.

Provide direct, ongoing support to all teachers and administrators in regard to the implementation of student and community engagement.

Assess student social and emotional behaviors and assist the student in accessing support and sharing this information with those who need to know.

Facilitate team-building activities.

Work with staff to coordinate teaching of social-emotional curriculums.

Facilitate intake and/or outtake conferences with parents and students, as appropriate, including information on school options and provide student performance and discipline information.

Assist the student and parent in identifying and enrolling in appropriate services.

Collaborate with school personnel at the school students will attend to promote a successful plan for re-entry and support.

Meet with students and families in their homes, at school, at other government or service provider facilities, as well as in the community.

Complete documentation and reporting as required by school district or other entities.

Perform other duties as assigned.

To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill, and/or ability required.

Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

EXPERIENCE: A minimum of three years of experience coordinating integrated services between schools and related system partners to include juvenile justice, child welfare, public health, and mental health systems. Direct experience working with secondary students who are at risk for suspension, truancy, dropping out of school and/or expulsion. Demonstrated experience working with students and parents from diverse backgrounds.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING: Master's degree in social work, counseling, education, or human service related field required.

CERTIFICATES, LICENSES, & REGISTRATIONS: Valid driver's license. Must have reliable transportation.

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, & EQUIPMENT: Requires strong oral communication skills, strong writing skills, strong interpersonal skills, good phone etiquette, and good computer and office software skills. Have the ability to interact well with parents, students, and outside agencies. Spanish oral and written communication ability is a plus.

DECISION-MAKING ABILITY: Work is diversified and may require detailed analysis to determine practical courses of action. This analysis may involve modification of guidelines. Decision-making requires independent judgment, strategic planning, and global thinking to assist in providing program direction. Standards for decision-making are not defined and errors in decision-making could result in substantial embarrassment or cost to the school district and/or compromise student safety and the learning environment.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS: Daily contact with persons within and outside of the school district, including with students, parents, the general public, the court system, probation system, human services, and advisory boards. Program coordinator must be able to resolve problems and maintain harmonious relationships. Contact may involve somewhat sensitive matters involving problems and/or highly confidential information or data.

SPAN OF CONTROL: This position supervises the employees of the Fostering Opportunities program.

EDUCATIONAL DELIVERY: Facilitate problem-solving meetings with schools, students, child welfare caseworkers, foster care parents and cross-agency partners. Collaborate with students, parents/guardians, school personnel, and child welfare caseworkers to create plans for educational success, promote school stability, increase graduation rates, decrease the dropout rate, and increase enrollment in post-secondary options.

COMPLEXITY OF WORK: Duties are diversified and complex and cross several areas regarding student conduct. Work requires training in child-serving agencies' policies and governing statutes as well as school district policies and procedures. Duties and actions impact others across the district.

The physical demands, work environment characteristics, and mental functions described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions

of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS: While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to use hands; reach with hands and arms; and talk and hear. The employee frequently is required to stand, walk, and sit. The employee is occasionally required to climb or balance and stoop, kneel, or crouch. The employee must regularly lift and/or move up to 10 pounds and occasionally lift and/or move up to 50 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision and ability to adjust focus.

WORK ENVIRONMENT: The noise level in the work environment is moderate. The employee is required to work in a variety of schools and office settings.

MENTAL FUNCTIONS: While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to communicate and use interpersonal skills. The employee is frequently required to analyze, coordinate, compile, evaluate, synthesize, and compute. The employee is occasionally required to copy, instruct, and negotiate.

Appendix E: Specialist Job Description

ADMINISTRATIVE & PROFESSIONAL/TECHNICAL JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title: Specialist

SUMMARY: Specialists work to improve educational outcomes for students who have experienced foster care. The specialist works directly and collaboratively with a caseload of students, their biological parents, foster parents or kinship providers, child welfare caseworkers, and system partners to implement comprehensive and inclusive strategies to ensure educational stability and academic success. This position will also support other initiatives of the school district to impact outcomes for youth who have experienced foster care, including but not limited to, youth mental health first aid, restorative practices, and cross-agency training.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES include the following:

Maintain a target caseload of at least twenty students.

Act as liaison between the school, caregivers, child welfare agency, and other community partnerships.

Ensure students receive effective instruction in academic, social, and emotional learning areas.

Discuss future-planning; postsecondary and workforce readiness goals for all students.

Attend academic team meetings and act as advocate for student (e.g. during meetings for Individualized Education Plans, safety planning, etc.).

Facilitate data and information sharing with child welfare partners.

Inventory upcoming court and case-related dates for school staff to ramp up support for student as needed.

Attend child welfare team meetings and act as advocate for student (e.g., family engagement meetings, team decision-making meetings, etc.).

Act as ongoing, technical support for teachers and school personnel on best practices for meeting the educational needs of students experiencing foster care.

Assist school and central teams in enhancing intervention frameworks.

Coordinate multi-agency student-focused problem-solving meetings.

Coordinate with child welfare agency, school districts transportation, and Title I department to ensure uninterrupted transportation or transportation assistance to/from school upon placement in foster care.

Ensure all school fees are waived (per legal statute) as well as ensure all eligible students experiencing foster care are enrolled in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program.

Work with community agency partners to develop and improve supports and services for students who have experienced foster care.

Counsel students regarding future plans including educational and career goal setting.

Act as a mentor for students in Fostering Opportunities program.

Provide direct, ongoing support to all teachers and administrators in regard to the implementation of student and community engagement.

Assess student social and emotional behaviors and assist the student in accessing support and sharing this information with those who need to know.

Facilitate small groups with students focused on anger management, resume writing, social skills, etc.

Facilitate team building activities.

Work with school staff to coordinate teaching of social-emotional curriculums.

Facilitate intake and/or outtake conferences with parents and students, as appropriate, including information on school options and provide student performance and discipline information.

Assist the student and parent in identifying and enrolling in appropriate services.

Collaborate with school personnel at the school students will attend to promote a successful plan for re-entry and support.

Meet with students and families in their homes, at school, at other government or service provider facilities, as well as in the community.

Complete documentation and reporting as required by school district or other entities.

To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily.

The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill, and/or ability required.

Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

EXPERIENCE A minimum of three years of experience working with schools and related system partners to include juvenile justice, child welfare, public health, and mental health systems. Direct experience working with secondary students who are at risk for suspension, truancy, dropping out of school and/or expulsion. Demonstrated experience working with students and parents from diverse backgrounds.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING: Master's degree in social work, counseling, education, or human service related fields required.

CERTIFICATES, LICENSES, & REGISTRATIONS: Valid driver's license. Must have reliable transportation.

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, & EQUIPMENT: Requires strong oral communication skills, strong writing skills, strong interpersonal skills, good phone etiquette, and good computer and office software skills. Have the ability to interact well with parents, students, and outside agencies. Spanish oral and written communication ability is a plus.

DECISION-MAKING ABILITY: Work is diversified and may require detailed analysis to determine practical courses of action. This analysis may involve modification of guidelines. Decision-making requires independent judgment, strategic planning, and global thinking to assist in providing program direction. Standards for decision-making are not defined and errors in decision-making could result in substantial embarrassment or cost to the school district and/or compromise student safety and the learning environment.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS: Daily contact with persons within and outside of the school district, including with students, parents, the general public, the court system, probation system, human services, and advisory boards. Specialist must be able to resolve problems and maintain harmonious relationships. Contact may involve somewhat sensitive matters involving problems and/or highly confidential information or data.

SPAN OF CONTROL: This position has no supervisory responsibilities.

EDUCATIONAL DELIVERY: Facilitate problem-solving meetings with schools, students, child welfare caseworkers, foster care parents and cross-agency partners. Collaborate with students, parents/guardians, school personnel, and child welfare caseworkers to create plans for educational success, promote school stability, increase graduation rates, decrease the dropout rate, and increase enrollment in post-secondary options.

COMPLEXITY OF WORK: Duties are diversified and complex and cross several areas regarding student conduct. Work requires training in child-serving agencies' policies and governing statutes as well as school district policies and procedures. Duties and actions impact others across the district.

The physical demands, work environment characteristics, and mental functions described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS: While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to use hands; reach with hands and arms; and talk and hear. The employee frequently is required to stand, walk, and sit. The employee is occasionally required to climb or balance and stoop, kneel, or crouch. The employee must regularly lift and/or move up to 10 pounds and occasionally lift and/or move up to 50 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision and ability to adjust focus.

WORK ENVIRONMENT: The noise level in the work environment is moderate. The employee is required to work in a variety of schools and office settings.

MENTAL FUNCTIONS: While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to communicate and use interpersonal skills. The employee is frequently required to analyze, coordinate, compile, evaluate, synthesize, and compute. The employee is occasionally required to copy, instruct, and negotiate.

Appendix F: Monthly Progress Monitoring Report Example



Fostering Opportunities Progress Assessment

Case Information			
Case Name:		Trails ID:	1
Case Assignment History			
Caseworker	Date Assigned	End Date	Unit
Progress Assessment Summary			
Youth:	Sample Child (18)	DOB:	01/01/2001
School:	Bear Creek High School	Grade:	(Select)
Review Month:	5-2019	Specialist:	
Progress Assessment			
1. Attendance			
Number of tardies 5			
Number of excused absences 1			
Number of unexcused absences 0			
2. Behavior / Suspensions			
Behavior Status 1 No Behavior Incidents			
3. Grades			
English D+			
Social Studies C+			
Math F			
Science B			
Elective 1 B+			
Comments: Digital Design			

Elective 2

A

Comments:

Photography

Other 1

A

Comments:

Advisement

Credit Accumulation Total

N/A

Credits accrued

Per Semester

Is the youth currently on track to graduate on time?

N/A

Comments:

Student is in 8th grade

4. Other

What is the youth currently engaged in?

Student is currently engaged in Video Game club. Student also likes to attend the Teen Center after school with friends.

What does the youth want to be engaged in?

Student would like to get a job over the summer. Student is interested in looking for something having to do with the outdoors. Student would like support from Specialist in applying to jobs and getting necessary documents for applications (ie: birth cert, age cert, etc). Student would like to continue to utilize the Recreation and Teen Center.

Short and long term career and academic goals

Student reports he would like to get a summer job. His academic goals include getting to school on time and decreasing his tardies, completing his warm ups in Math and English to increase his grades, and utilizing support from Specialist and other school staff to prepare for High School. Student also reports a long term goal would be to play Basketball and to join ROTC in High School.

Strengths

Student demonstrates great self advocacy skills. He communicates well and always asks Specialist whenever he needs support. Student is very respectful to not only his peers, but school staff as well. Student takes pride in being as independent as he can be.

Areas of Growth

Getting to school on time and decreasing tardies is something the student reports he is working on. Student is also working on engaging more in Math and English and completing class assignments such as warm ups. Student is also working on taking more accountability for his actions.

Narrative

Student continues to engage in the Fostering Opportunities Program. Student meets with Specialist weekly and is currently working toward a summer incentive.

Appendix G: Fostering Opportunities Self-Assessment Checklist

This is a self-assessment checklist that can be used by Fostering Opportunities leadership and staff and involved child welfare and education leadership to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement in the implementation of the Fostering Opportunities program.

Rater: _____

Date: _____

Program Location/Site: _____

<p>I. SYSTEMS ALIGNMENT: Systems alignment refers to the education and child welfare policy and practice coordination that is the foundation for successful implementation of the Fostering Opportunities intervention.</p>
<p>1. Leadership Framework – Evidence of a site’s leadership-driven culture of commitment to the Fostering Opportunities program and its principles.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Leaders within the child welfare and education agencies position the program for sustainability (e.g., support efforts to secure funds, partner in removing barriers, and prioritize internal resources as needed).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Leaders within the child welfare and education agencies engage with each other to create solutions when implementation challenges arise (e.g., articulate concrete examples).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Leaders participate in regularly scheduled meetings to launch and sustain the program.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Leaders spearheading the implementation have a high level of decision-making authority to prioritize practice changes necessary to align systems (e.g., no approval for decisions is needed).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Leaders ensure child welfare caseworkers and school leaders (e.g., principals) are familiar with the Fostering Opportunities program and how to make referrals.</p>
<p>Comments:</p>
<p>2. Legal Framework – Evidence of a site establishing a strong legal framework for Fostering Opportunities so that the program can function as smoothly as possible.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> The site has established memorandums of understanding (MOUs) that clarify the responsibilities of the child welfare and education agencies within the Fostering Opportunities program, including related to the Best Interest Determination (BID) process.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The site has established data sharing agreements (DSAs) that detail what information can be shared between agencies for the purposes of delivering and evaluating the program.</p>

<input type="checkbox"/> The MOUs and DSAs are defined by the target population and geographical boundaries for the intervention (e.g., youth in foster care age 11 to 16 who are enrolled in a given school district). <input type="checkbox"/> The site has developed releases of information (ROI), which are student-specific documents that indicate what information can be shared, with whom, and for how long. ROIs are on file for all participating students.
Comments:
3. Practice Framework – Evidence that day-to-day practices and procedures affecting students in the school environment are implemented with fidelity at this site.
<input type="checkbox"/> The site has in place standard and, ideally, automated processes for notifying the Fostering Opportunities staff when a placement change occurs. <input type="checkbox"/> Fostering Opportunities’ role in the BID process is implemented as it is defined in the MOU, which may include: providing timely and accurate information on students’ educational progress and needs; planning for transitions when a school change is necessary; and ensuring communication between human services agencies and schools so that seamless transition occurs.
Comments:
II. PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS: The site-specific characteristics, procedures, and plan of action in place to implement the Fostering Opportunities program.
4. Staffing – Evidence that the Fostering Opportunities program is adequately staffed at this site.
<input type="checkbox"/> There are a sufficient number of staff dedicated to Fostering Opportunities implementation at this site, including: child welfare and education leadership, program coordinators, and specialists. This is measured in terms of the number of FTEs needed to support the program’s complexity and size at this site. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The recommended ratio of students to specialists is 20 students or fewer per specialist. The ideal ratio of specialists to program coordinators is 10 specialists or fewer per program coordinator. <input type="checkbox"/> There is a strong plan in place to handle planned and unplanned specialist staffing transitions.
Comments:

<p>5. Database – Evidence that a quality Fostering Opportunities database has been created and can be used to facilitate network closure at the site.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A database specific to Fostering Opportunities has been created for the site with the required functionalities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Directory Functionality <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Progress Monitoring Functionality <input type="checkbox"/> Child Welfare Information Functionality <input type="checkbox"/> Permissions Functionality <input type="checkbox"/> Reporting Functionality <input type="checkbox"/> Information in the database is up-to-date and accurate. <input type="checkbox"/> The database adheres to all relevant federal and local data security requirements. <input type="checkbox"/> There is reasonable IT support provided for any technical issues that may arise.
<p>Comments:</p>
<p>6. Monthly Progress Monitoring Reports – Evidence that monthly progress monitoring reports are generated every month and shared with both the student and all members of the student’s network.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A progress monitoring report is generated by the database for all students every month. <input type="checkbox"/> Progress monitoring reports are shared and discussed with all students during at least one check-in per month. <input type="checkbox"/> Progress monitoring reports with students’ entire networks as listed on the social capital assessment (and the program coordinator may be copied on emails to the student’s network to ensure this is completed). <input type="checkbox"/> Progress monitoring reports use primarily strengths-based and trauma-informed language.
<p>Comments:</p>
<p>7. Network Closure – Evidence that the program is fulfilling its goal of facilitating network closure for participating students.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> There are consistent documented improvements in students’ social capital assessments over time (e.g., at the six-month point as compared to the one-month point there are more people listed in the “supports” column or the quality of the support has improved).

- Monthly progress monitoring reports are sent to all members of students' networks (and the program coordinator may be copied on emails to the student's network to ensure this is completed).
- Specialists demonstrate familiarity with all members of students' network (e.g. names, details about relationship, etc.).
- Specialists are consistently checking-in with multiple members of students' networks at least once a month.

Comments:

8. Equitable Access to the Program – Evidence that students are selected to participate in the program in an equitable and unbiased manner at this site.

- There is a start list from which to select students to the program that is comprised of those students in the school district who are also identified as having experienced foster care. If there are insufficient resources to serve all students in the district, participants are randomly selected into the program.

OR

- Multiple methods are used to identify and recruit students so that the students who are selected to the program are not just those who have the strongest advocates in their networks.

Comments:

9. Supervision* – Specialists are receiving adequate supervision from the program coordinator, which enables them to better serve students.

Note: The program coordinator can give a copy of this section to each specialist to fill out anonymously as a way to seek feedback on the supervision process.

- The program coordinator provides a regularly scheduled supervision time (individually) for specialists to consider how to perform their roles more effectively and how to support students and strengthen their networks more comprehensively. This differs from time spent doing administrative tasks.
- The program coordinator shifts fluidly between the three roles (teacher, counselor, and consultant) in order to meet the specialist's needs.
- The program coordinator balances the focal topics (advocacy, mentoring, social-emotional support, and academic support), and does not overly emphasize one topic.

- The program coordinator is attentive to changes in specialists' behaviors with and reactions to [students], intrusive thoughts, and other signs of burnout and stress.
- Specialists report that the program coordinator conveys empathy and understanding for specialists, students, and their network.
- Specialists report that the supervision improves their practice and delivery of the program.

Comments:

III. THE ROLE OF THE SPECIALIST: Specialists have a responsibility to students as advocates, mentors, and providers of social-emotional and academic support.

The program coordinator can evaluate this entire section for each specialist and use this as an opportunity to provide feedback to specialists on role fulfillment.

10. Advocacy – Evidence that specialists are effective advocates for students at this site.

- Specialists can describe all of the five steps to advocacy.
- Specialists can provide examples of each of the following: (1) the specialist's advocacy for the student, (2) teaching the student to self-advocate, and (3) engaging in activities that build the capacity of the student's network to advocate on the student's behalf.
- Fostering Opportunities team engagement in professional development that ensures leadership and staff are highly knowledgeable about federal and local legislation, rules, and procedures governing the BID process.

Comments:

11. Mentoring* – Evidence that specialists are effective mentors for students at this site.

- Specialists document meetings with students at least three times per month on average.
- Check-ins are mostly occurring in person with the occasional check-in over the phone or via video chat when the student is not able to meet with the specialist in person.
- There is evidence that students are forming enduring emotional attachments with specialists as evidenced by continued engagement in the program (e.g., consistent attendance at check-ins; self-report of positive relationship with specialist).

Comments:

<p>12. Social-Emotional Support* – Evidence that specialists are effective providers of social-emotional support at this site.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Specialists consistently demonstrate advanced motivational interviewing techniques, such as developing discrepancies, rolling with resistance, and supporting self-advocacy through the use of affirmations targeted to the student’s locus of control. <input type="checkbox"/> Specialists consistently use basic motivational interviewing skills, such as open-ended questions and affirmations to build rapport with students. <input type="checkbox"/> Specialists primarily use strengths-based language to communicate with students. <input type="checkbox"/> Specialists use mostly person-first language, which is language that is neither stigmatizing nor objectifying (e.g., “students experiencing foster care” or “students in foster care” <i>instead of</i> “foster care students”) <input type="checkbox"/> Specialist appear to take a trauma-informed approach in all communications with students. <input type="checkbox"/> Specialists can provide at least two examples of advocating for the trauma-informed approach (e.g., ensuring that the school environment does not unduly contribute to the student’s stress by guaranteeing that it is safe, supportive, and does not perpetuate trauma that the student has previously experienced). <input type="checkbox"/> Specialists never overstep boundaries into the role of mental health provider.
<p>Comments:</p>
<p>13. Academic Support – Evidence that specialists are effective providers of academic support at this site.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Specialists can provide examples of each of the following types of academic support: (1) academic support that creates bridges across systems; (2) academic support that addresses equity issues; (3) academic support that creates continuity through transitions; and (4) academic support that mentors students towards independence and self-advocacy. <input type="checkbox"/> On average, progress monitoring suggests that students are making progress toward their educational and career goals. <input type="checkbox"/> Academic support provided by specialists is responsive to the unique needs of each individual student but does not replace or supplant school-based supports or targeted interventions the student might be eligible to receive.
<p>Comments:</p>

**This indicator would be best assessed via observation of specialists’ check-ins with students, either in-person or via a secure remote method.*

Appendix H: Language for Different Outreach Scenarios

H.1. Specialist Makes Initial Contact with Educational Decision Maker

The specialist contacts the educational decision maker and the school contact (e.g., school counselor) to further explain the program and answer any questions. It is important to first have conversations with the current educational decision maker so that they can tell students about the program and that a specialist will be meeting with them at school soon.

Example language for specialist at initial contact with educational decision maker: “Hello, I am getting in touch with you from the Fostering Opportunities program because you agreed to have ____ (Student Name) participate in the program. I know that the caseworker briefly explained the program to you, but I just wanted to tell you a little bit more about Fostering Opportunities. It's a program where we're offering ____ (Student Name) additional support in school to help them achieve their goals. As a part of the program, I will be checking in with them every week at school to see how they are doing and address any needs they might have. I will keep meeting with them every week even if their placement changes or case closes, so we will establish a relationship over time. We want to support ____ (Student Name) engagement in school and help them to be the most successful they can be by ensuring that they have the resources they need.

How do you feel about ____ (Student Name) participating in this program? What questions do you have?

Going forward, I'd love to keep in touch so we can work together to support ____ (Student Name). How do you feel they are doing in school right now? Is there any support you think they could use right now?”

Will you be able to tell ____ (Student Name) that they will be meeting with me at school next week [or specific date/time if available]?

Thank you, I look forward to working with you and will be in touch again soon.”

Example email for specialist at initial contact with educational decision maker:

“Dear (educational decision maker),

My name is ____, and I am a specialist with the Fostering Opportunities program. I am writing to let you know that ____ (Student Name), has been selected to participate in the Fostering Opportunities program.

As a participant in the program, ____ (Student Name) and I will meet weekly during which time I will provide mentoring and advocacy within the school environment. As a specialist, I will support ____ (Student Name) in planning for their future by identifying their individual goals and motivations and ensuring they have access to the resources to achieve these goals. Additionally, I will problem-solve around barriers to engagement and success in school by building on ____ (Student Name) strengths and interests. The Fostering Opportunities program aims to increase attendance, increase courses passed,

support credit accumulation, and increase positive behaviors. I will also coordinate a high level of communication and collaboration between the school district, families, guardians, and other community partners.

I am happy to answer any questions you might have. I look forward to collaborating with you to best support this student's engagement and success in school.

Thank you,

(Specialist Name, Credentials)

Specialist, Fostering Opportunities

(Location)

Cell: (Specialist Cell Number)

Direct: (Specialist Direct Phone Line)

Main Office: _____"

H.2. Specialist Makes Initial Contact with Biological Parent (If Allowed)

Next, the specialist can contact the biological parent (if they are allowed to be in contact) to let them know about the program.

Example language for specialist to explain program to biological parent: "Hello, I am getting in touch with you to tell you about the Fostering Opportunities program that ____ (Student Name) will be participating in. Have you heard about it? It's a program where we're offering ____ (Student Name) additional support in school to help them achieve their goals. As a part of the program, I will be checking in with them every week at school to see how they are doing and address any needs they might have. I will keep meeting with them every week even if their placement changes or case closes, so we will establish a relationship over time. I want to support ____ (Student Name) engagement in school and help them to be the most successful they can be by ensuring that they have the resources they need.

How do you feel about ____ (Student Name) participating in this program? What questions do you have?

Going forward, I'd love to keep in touch so we can work together to support ____ (Student Name). How do you feel they are doing in school right now? Is there any support you think they could use right now?"

Will you be able to tell ____ (Student Name) that they will be meeting with me at school next week [or specific date/time if available]?

Thank you, I look forward to working with you and will be in touch again soon."

Example email from specialist to biological parent:

“Dear (parent),

My name is ____, and I am a specialist with the Fostering Opportunities program. I am writing to let you know that ____ (Student Name) has been selected to participate in the Fostering Opportunities program.

As a participant in the program, ____ (Student Name) and I will meet weekly during which time I will provide mentoring and advocacy within the school environment. I will support ____ (Student Name) in planning for their future by identifying their individual goals and motivations and ensuring they have access to the resources to achieve these goals. Additionally, I will problem-solve around barriers to engagement and success in school by building on student strengths and interests. The Fostering Opportunities program aims to increase attendance, increase courses passed, support credit accumulation, and increase positive behaviors. I will also coordinate a high level of communication and collaboration between the school district, families, guardians, and other community partners.

I am happy to answer any questions you might have. I look forward to collaborating with you to best support ____ (Student Name) engagement and success in school.

Thank you,

(Specialist Name, Credentials)

Specialist, Fostering Opportunities
(Location)
Cell: (Specialist Cell Number)
Direct: (Specialist Direct Phone Line)
Main Office: ____”

H.3. Specialist Makes Initial Contact with Guardian Ad Litem

Then, the specialist can contact the guardian ad litem (GAL) to let them know about the program.

Example email from specialist to GAL:

“Dear (GAL),

My name is ____, and I am a specialist with the Fostering Opportunities program. I am writing to let you know that a child on your caseload, ____ (Student Name), has been selected to participate in the Fostering Opportunities program.

As a participant in the program, ____ (Student Name) will meet weekly with a specialist who will provide mentoring and advocacy within the school environment. Specialists will support students in planning for their futures by identifying their individual goals and motivations and ensuring they have access to the resources to achieve these goals. Additionally, specialists will problem-solve around barriers to engagement and success in school by building on student strengths and interests. The Fostering Opportunities program aims to increase attendance, increase courses passed, support credit

accumulation, and increase positive behaviors. We will also coordinate a high level of communication and collaboration between the school district, families, guardians, and other community partners.

I would appreciate any information you can share to inform the services we provide to ____ (Student Name). I am happy to answer any questions you might have. I look forward to collaborating with you to best support this student's engagement and success in school.

Thank you,

(Specialist Name, Credentials)

Specialist, Fostering Opportunities

(Location)

Cell: (Specialist Cell Number)

Direct: (Specialist Direct Phone Line)

Main Office: ____"

H.4. Specialist Makes Initial Contact with Student Support Services Staff

After that, the specialist needs to call and email the relevant student support services staff, including the school counselor or social worker, to let them know about the program and that they will be visiting with the student. If possible, the specialist can access the school database to determine where the student is enrolled in school and the school counselor will be listed there. At this point, the specialist should also ask the school counselor about their perception of the student's possible needs. In addition, the specialist should ask the school counselor when the best time is to hold the initial check-in with the student. The specialist should also ask the school counselor to tell the student that the specialist will be coming to meet with them.

Example email from specialist to school counselor:

"Dear (school staff),

My name is ____, and I am a specialist with the Fostering Opportunities program. I am writing to let you know that a student at your school, ____ (Student Name), has been selected to participate in the Fostering Opportunities program.

As a participant in the program, ____ (Student Name) will meet weekly with a specialist who will provide mentoring and advocacy within the school environment. Specialists will support students in planning for their futures by identifying their individual goals and motivations and ensuring they have access to the resources to achieve these goals. Additionally, specialists will problem-solve around barriers to engagement and success in school by building on student strengths and interests. The Fostering Opportunities program aims to increase attendance, increase courses passed, support credit accumulation, and increase positive behaviors. We will also coordinate a high level of communication and collaboration between schools, families, guardians, and other community partners.

Please let me know times during the school day that would be appropriate for me to meet with ____ (Student Name) as we hope to minimize disruption to academic learning as much as possible. We

appreciate any information you can share about this student to ensure we are providing the most informed services.

I am happy to answer any questions you might have. I look forward to collaborating with you to best support this student's engagement and success in school.

Thank you,

(Specialist Name, Credentials)

Specialist, Fostering Opportunities

(Location)

Cell: (Specialist Cell Number)

Direct: (Specialist Direct Phone Line)

Main Office: _____"

Consistent communication is a priority throughout all of these initial steps.

Appendix I: Fostering Opportunities Participant Rights and Responsibilities Form

Rights:

As a participant in the Fostering Opportunities program, you have the right to:

- Be protected from abuse, neglect, or other maltreatment
- Adequate food, clothing, shelter, and safety
- An education and accommodations based on individual needs
- Be free from discrimination based on race, ethnicity, spirituality, culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, appearance, or any other belief or identity
- Your own beliefs and values, and to have those beliefs and values respected
- Be shown care, respect, and dignity
- Be involved in planning for your future
- Express complaints, concerns, or suggestions
- Receive support in achieving your goals
- Receive support from an advocate in accessing resources
- Privacy and confidentiality unless you have agreed to release this information or in situations of legal necessity (mandated reporting, etc.)

Responsibilities:

As a participant in the Fostering Opportunities program, it is your responsibility to:

- Participate in a weekly check-in meeting with Fostering Opportunities staff
- Attend school consistently
- Participate in class and school related activities
- Complete assignments and homework to the best of your ability
- Ask for support or help when you want/need it
- Provide honest and accurate information
- Be respectful
- Use safe actions towards self and others
- Use equipment, tools, and games safely
- Respect other people's personal space and property
- Be involved in decision-making regarding your future
- Share your opinion and provide feedback related to your school experience

The signatures below are acknowledgement that the following parties agree to the rights and responsibilities for participation in the Fostering Opportunities program.

Student Signature

Date

Fostering Opportunities Specialist Signature

Date

Appendix J: Student Check-in Form

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

School: _____

How do you feel when you are at school?	  
How safe do you feel at school?	  
How do you feel when you are at _____?	  
Do you feel safe where you are currently living?	  
How do you feel about your relationship with _____? (any important person in student's life)	  
How would others say you are doing?	  
Do you have an adult you trust?	Yes No Who? _____
Do you need anything?	Yes No What? _____

Appendix K: Ongoing Participation Form

_____ (Specialist Name) has been supporting _____
(Student Name) through our Fostering Opportunities program.

We want to make sure that you are aware that we are still able and excited to continue to provide services that include mentoring, advocacy, and case management to help your student navigate educational challenges.

Targeted support will include student-centered interventions and increased coordination and communication with school staff. The information sharing associated with this program will continue for the purpose of serving your student and family well and to improve educational outcomes for all youth who have experienced foster care.

This information will include and is not limited to: grades, attendance, behavior, and credit accumulation. This information is stored on a secure server at _____ (location).

If you have any questions or do not want your child to continue receiving these services, please contact _____ (contact name and information).

I am excited for _____ (Student Name) to continue participation in the Fostering Opportunities program.

Guardian Name

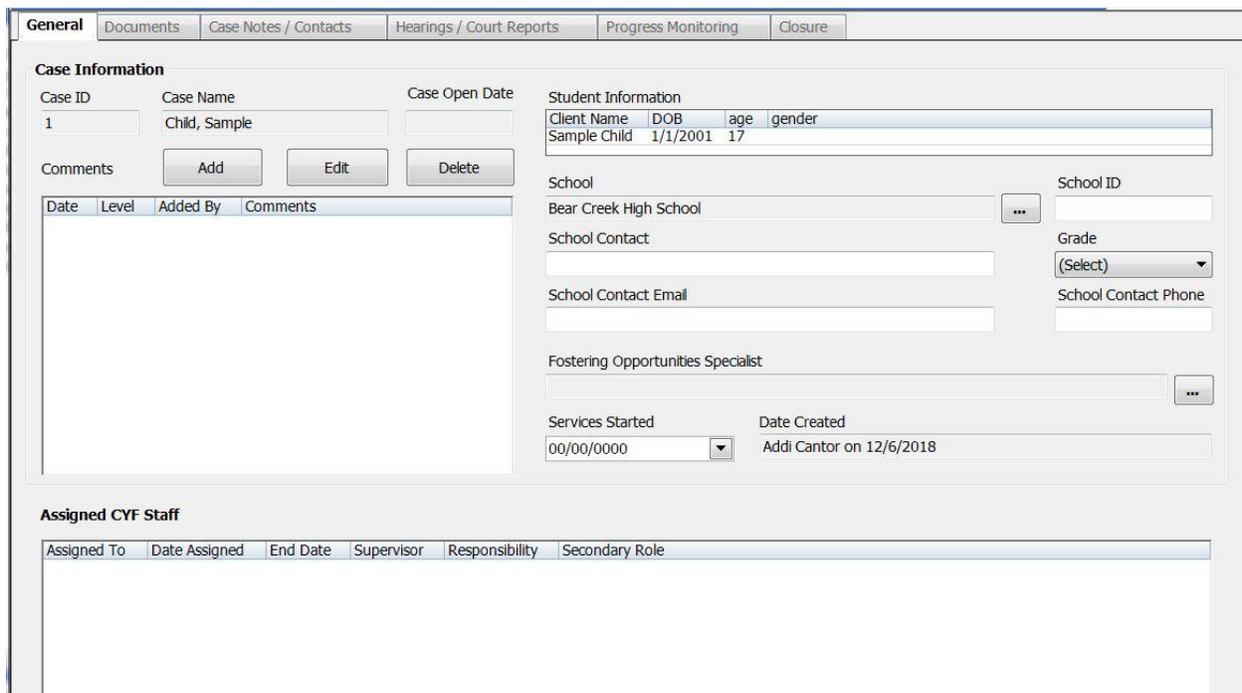
Date

Guardian Signature

Date

Appendix L: Database that Tracks Students Across Placements and Schools

Integrated data platforms that offer a real-time picture of students' education data and select child welfare information are ideal and a goal to work towards. In the meantime, overlays to existing platforms and other secure low-tech systems for tracking student data can meet many of the basic functionality requirements. Below are examples of an overlay to the existing child welfare data system.



General | Documents | Case Notes / Contacts | Hearings / Court Reports | Progress Monitoring | Closure

Case Information

Case ID: 1 | Case Name: Child, Sample | Case Open Date:

Student Information

Client Name	DOB	age	gender
Sample Child	1/1/2001	17	

Comments:

Date	Level	Added By	Comments

School: Bear Creek High School | School ID:

School Contact: | Grade: (Select)

School Contact Email: | School Contact Phone:

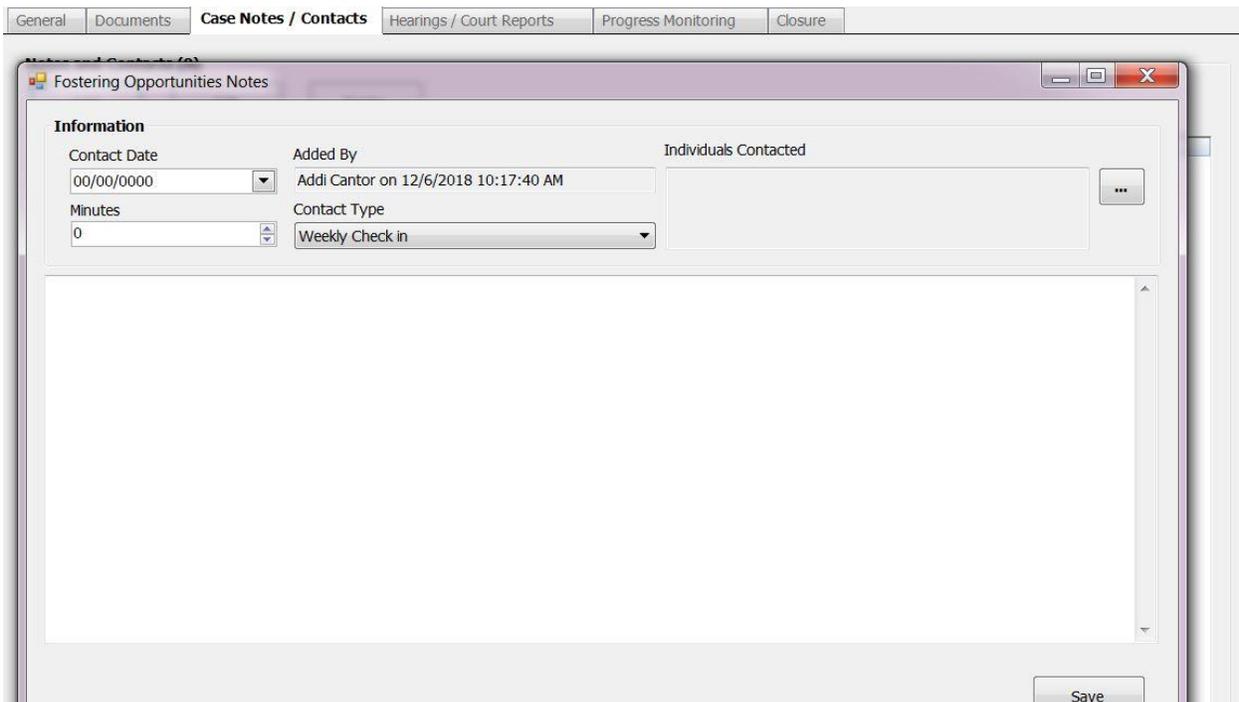
Fostering Opportunities Specialist:

Services Started: 00/00/0000 | Date Created: Addi Cantor on 12/6/2018

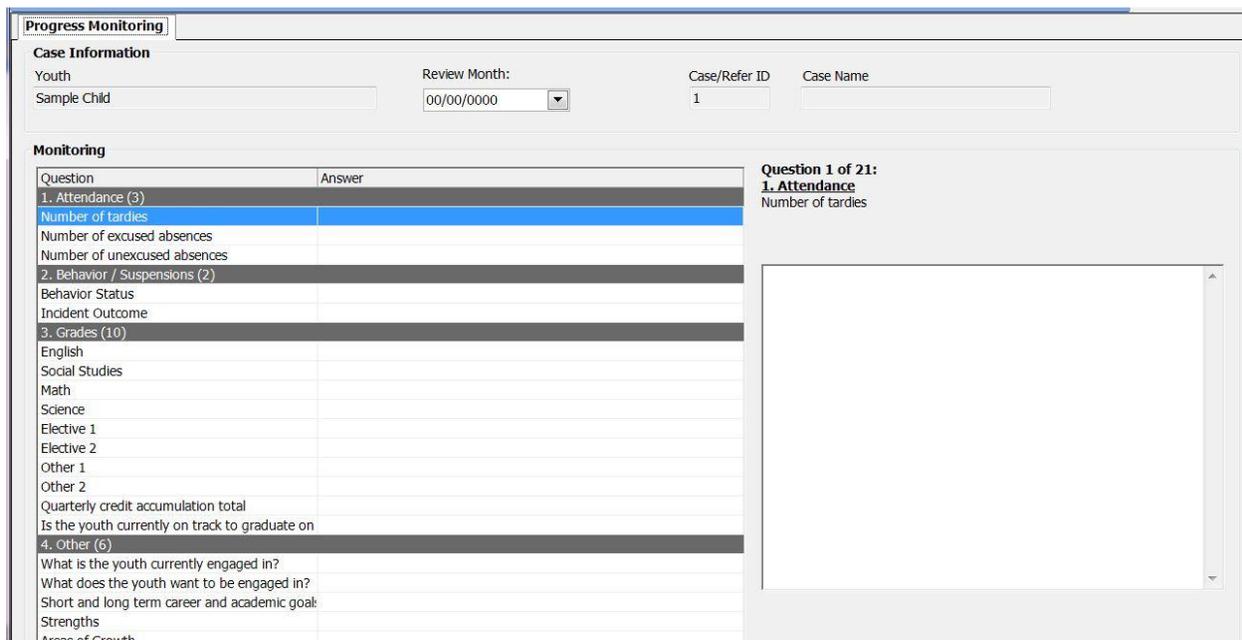
Assigned CYF Staff

Assigned To	Date Assigned	End Date	Supervisor	Responsibility	Secondary Role

The image above shows the main “general” page of an example database with places to input important contact information of members of the student’s network.



The image above shows an example of a space for specialists to insert case notes following each check-in with a student.



The image above shows an example of how information can be recorded in the monthly progress monitoring report, which can be shared with members of the student's network.