



# Fostering Opportunities

*The program improves graduation rates and outcomes for Jeffco Public Schools Students who have experienced foster care*

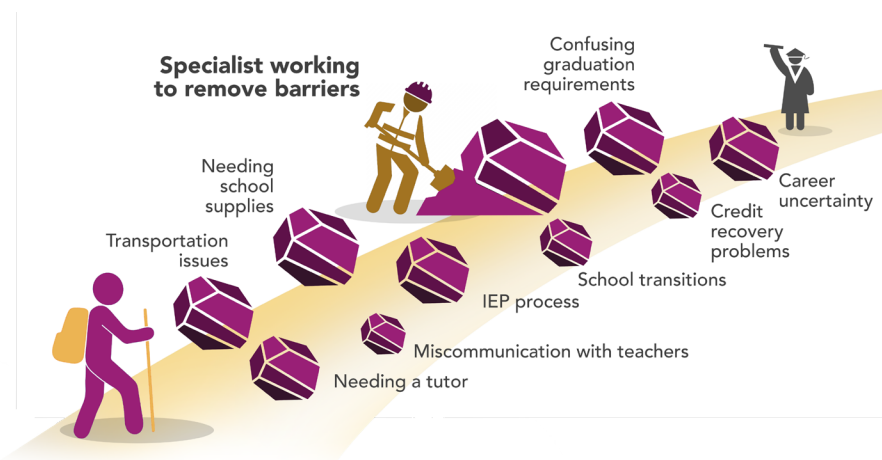
In Colorado, only 1 in 4 students who experience foster care during high school graduate with their class. In response, the Fostering Opportunities program was developed and piloted in Jeffco Public Schools, in partnership with Jefferson County Human Services.

**Fostering Opportunities is the only approach in Colorado proven to improve educational outcomes for middle school and high school students in foster care.**

### The program features three core elements:

- **Youth-serving agencies coordinate efforts**, aligning and opening up communications between child welfare, education, and other youth-serving agencies.
- **Systems track and support students** across placements and schools, actively identifying students eligible for the program.
- **Education “Specialists” work directly with students** as dedicated mentors that provide academic and social-emotional support, advocate on their behalf, teach them how to advocate for themselves, and help them to build a reliable network of support in the school environment and beyond.

### Barriers on the Path to Graduation for Students Who Have Experienced Foster Care



## The Equation of Advocacy

The Specialist's Advocacy Roles



Advocate for the student



Teach the student to self-advocate



Build the capacity of the student's network to advocate for the student

# Evaluation Proves Effectiveness of Fostering Opportunities

The Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab conducted a randomized controlled trial to determine the effectiveness of Fostering Opportunities.

## Study Results

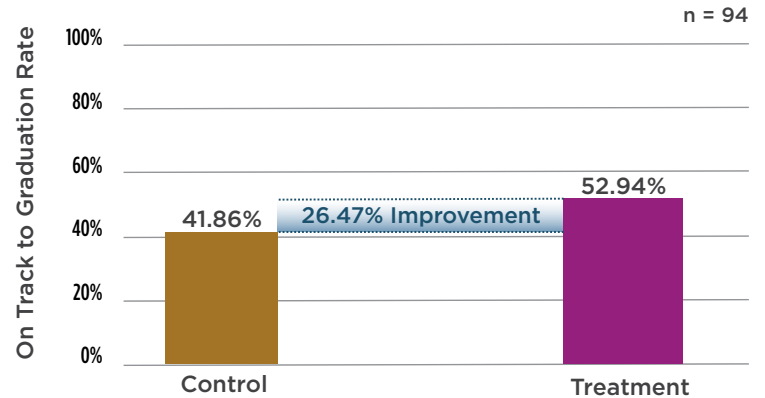
### Students on track to graduate

A **26% improvement** in the rate of students who were currently or formerly in foster care and had access to the Fostering Opportunities program being on track to graduate, compared to the control group. This result far exceeded the Pay for Success “highest level of success” goal of achieving a 10% improvement.

### Statistically significant improvements:

- Increasing rates of student attendance
- Declining number of student suspensions incidents

### More students who had access to the Fostering Opportunities program were on track to graduate on time



The randomized controlled trial evaluation shows Fostering Opportunities to be a proven practice.

“ I have never felt more noticed or listened to than when I learned I could be in this program. Going into foster care took so many things away from me, which sucked... but I gained the support of the program and without that, I don't know where I would be now... I probably would've quit school... yeah, maybe in trouble or something. But [the Specialist] kept showing up for me and believing in me and telling me I could be better, so I guess I started to believe it. She got on my nerves with her positivity but I get it, and I am grateful.” — Student who participated in the Jeffco Fostering Opportunities program

## Colorado's First Pay For Success Investment Pays Off

Fostering Opportunities is Colorado's first-ever state funded Pay for Success project. This funding approach relies on philanthropic funding to test promising interventions, ensuring that taxpayer dollars are directed to proven practices. In this project, the State of Colorado repaid Community First Foundation's initial investment plus interest because agreed-upon goals were met as determined by the rigorous, independent evaluation.

## Sustaining & Expanding Fostering Opportunities

Colorado's Foster Care Success Act (HB22-1374) provides the resources needed to sustain this program in Jeffco in perpetuity. It also makes it possible for two additional school districts to adopt the Fostering Opportunities program in the 2023-2024 school year.

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