



Washington Office of Superintendent of **PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

Foster Youth Outcomes

1. **Purpose:**

With the recognition of the critical role education plays in improving outcomes for youth in and alumni of foster care, the purpose of SHB 2254 (Foster Care—Education Success, 2012 Session) is to:

- a. Improve the high school graduation and postsecondary outcomes of foster youth through coordinated P–20 and child welfare outreach, intervention, and planning.
- b. Facilitate the on-time grade level progression and graduation of students who are the subject of a dependency proceeding pursuant to chapter 13.34 RCW.
- c. Provide Washington students in foster care wraparound educational advocacy services.
- d. Maintain students in foster care in their school of origin and minimize the number of school changes.
- e. Improve access to post-secondary scholarship opportunities and participation in post-secondary education.
- f. Mandate the timely transmission of educational records.
- g. Improve cross-system collaboration between the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) and the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC).

2. **Description of services provided:**

In the 2021-22 fiscal year, the Foster Care Education Program Supervisor at the OSPI has accomplished the following tasks:

- a. Collaborated closely with DCYF to secure formal agreements between local school districts and their respective child welfare field offices regarding specific strategies for communication and collaboration. This included the implementation of a new process for cost sharing of school transportation, when necessary.
- b. Successfully managed the Graduation Success Demonstration Site(s) contracts and the Educational Advocacy contract.
- c. Improved access to educational information regarding students in foster care by establishing clear and consistent communication with the field through GovDelivery, and providing training to school districts, social workers,

Educational Service Districts, advocacy organizations, foster parent organizations, and contractors.

- d. Supported a statewide system of foster care liaisons to ensure that their individual districts are collaborating with DCYF, service providers, and contractors and that students receive the services they are entitled to by law.
- e. Continued working with the U.S. Department of Education (US DOE) on the development of a national platform to exchange information between state foster care points of contact and hosting national office hours.
- f. Continued participation in the American Bar Association National Foster Care Community of Practice.
- g. Continued implementation for foster care school building points of contact.
- h. Implementation of HB 1955 (2022), Clarifying the definition of foster care and ensuring alignment with the federal definition.
- i. Collaboration on national projects, including:
 - 1) a RAND Corporation research project focused on structural barriers to collaboration between education and child welfare systems.
 - 2) a US DOE-funded study regarding how state education agencies and state child welfare agencies share data and information about students in foster care.
- j. Participated in the following workgroups to ensure the needs of students in foster care and the schools they attend are represented in higher level collaboration efforts:
 - 1) Children, Youth, and Family Citizen Review Panel
 - 2) Project Education Impact
 - 3) Passport to College Scholarship Leadership Team
 - 4) Supreme Court Commission on Children in Foster Care
 - 5) Family Well-Being Community Collaborative, Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) – overseen by the Supreme Court’s Commission of Children in Foster Care
 - 6) Removal & Placement Decisions Workgroup (AOC – Commission)
 - 7) DCYF – Mandatory Reporter Workgroup

3. **Criteria for receiving services and/or grants:**

SHB 2254 does not include grants or other direct funding to local districts.

Beneficiaries in 2021-22 School Year:

Number of School Districts:	295
Number of Schools:	0
Number of Students:	0
Number of Educators:	0
Other:	N/A

Number of OSPI staff associated with this funding (FTEs): 1

Number of contractors/other staff associated with this funding: 0

FY22 Funding: State Appropriation: \$123,000
Federal Appropriation: \$0
Other Fund Sources: \$0
TOTAL (FY22) \$123,000

4. Are federal or other funds contingent on state funding?

No

5. State funding history:

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2022	\$123,000	\$123,000
2021	\$123,000	\$123,000
2020	\$123,000	\$123,000
2019	\$123,000	\$121,429
2018	\$123,000	\$123,000

6. Number of beneficiaries (e.g., school districts, schools, students, educators, other) history:

Fiscal Year	Number of Districts
FY21	295
FY20	295
FY19	295

7. Programmatic changes since inception (if any):

In the 2021-22 fiscal year the following changes have occurred:

- a. The Washington State Legislature, passed HB 1955, aligning state statutes with federal law clarifying the definition of foster care.
- b. OSPI's foster care work continues in a virtual environment, including trainings, technical assistance through forums and office hours.

8. Evaluations of program/major findings:

In 2021, the Washington State Education Research Center and Data Center Education produced the report Education Outcomes of WA Students in Foster Care. Several key findings were noted:

- a. Students in foster care as a group continue to have lower attendance, completion, and proficiency rates than their peers, and higher mobility and discipline rates.
- b. Not many students in foster care are starting off high school on track for graduation.
- c. Despite having more absences overall, students in foster care have similar absence trends with their peers and by the last two years of high school their peers have caught up with them in number of absences per student.
- d. Most students in foster care have a middle and high school experience that includes formalized disciplinary actions. Even in elementary school, students in foster care are being suspended and expelled from school.
- e. Most students in foster care have also experienced homelessness at some point.
- f. Students in foster care are overrepresented among students receiving special education services as early as elementary school.
- g. Most students in foster care attend more than one district in a five-year period, and on average at least one more school and district than their peers.
- h. Although lower income school districts tended to have lower graduation and proficiency rates and higher income categories had higher rates for both student groups, the districts that are 75% and more low-income was the exception with the highest graduation and proficiency rates for students in foster care. Trends for rural/non-rural locations and district size were mixed.

9. **Major challenges faced by the program:**

COVID-19 continues to impact schools and students. Schools, caregivers, and community partners continue to navigate hybrid solutions to ensure support for students experiencing foster care. School districts and our partners at Treehouse worked diligently to ensure students had the tools needed to be successful at school, including devices, internet hotspots, homework packets, and meals.

One consistent challenge is that DCYF caseworkers often lack awareness of their legal obligations under state and federal law. Districts report that students are frequently moved to new foster care placements with no communication to schools, often resulting in students missing school.

OSPI has an internal need to expand the foster care program beyond 1.0 FTE to meet the increased demand for technical assistance from school districts which are striving to comply with the requirements under ESSA and state law. Providing regular online training and professional development opportunities to school districts has been an effective way to address this challenge, but such services are not sustainable with the current staffing allocations.

10. Future opportunities:

With the new building point of contact legislation, there is an improved framework of support for students in foster care. With both state and federal legislation focused on improving the educational outcomes of youth in foster care, an array of strategies to support these students have been implemented. Improved educational stability, coordinated interagency collaboration, and individual student services pave the way for Washington to be a leader in the nation with respect to students in foster care graduating from high school, enrolling in postsecondary education, and completing postsecondary education.

11. Statutory and/or budget language:

ESSB 5693 Sec. 501(1)(h) - \$123,000 of the general fund--state appropriation for fiscal year 2022 and \$123,000 of the general fund--state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 are provided solely for implementation of chapter 163, Laws of 2012 (Foster Care Outcomes). OSPI shall annually report each December on the implementation of the state's plan of cross-system collaboration to promote educational stability and improve education outcomes of foster youth.

12. Other relevant information:

N/A

13. Schools/districts receiving assistance:

See [OSPI's grantee list](#).

14. Program Contact Information:

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