

Foster Youth Ed. Outcomes

Statutory and/or Budget Language

ESSB 5187 Sec. 501(1)(f) - \$123,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$123,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for implementation of chapter 163, Laws of 2012 (Foster Care Outcomes). The office of the superintendent of public instruction 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.

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).

Description of Services Provided

In the 2023-24 fiscal year, the Foster Care Education Program Supervisor at OSPI has accomplished the following tasks:

- a. Collaborated closely with DCYF on:
 - i. Partnership with Regional Education Leads on trainings, regional monthly meetings, and student case assessments.
 - ii. Targeted support to DCYF regional offices such as creating regular communication, participation in interviews for regional education leads, and training on educational stability provisions.



- iii. Consultation on guidance for foster care liaisons and building points of contact.
- b. Updated the OSPI Foster Care website to allow for easier access to new information and resources:
 - i. [Foster Care Building Point of Contact](#) Information webpage.
 - ii. [Updated Frequently Asked Questions.](#)
 - iii. [Best Interest Determination Toolkit.](#)
 - iv. [Foster Care Liaison Toolkit.](#)
 - v. [Building Point of Contact Toolkit.](#)
- c. Drafted, procured approval for, and implemented the 2023-2025 contracts with Treehouse Graduation Success Demonstration Sites and Education Advocacy.
- d. Created a Foster Care Brochure for dissemination at foster care related events.
- e. Held monthly Foster Care Office Hours for school district staff.
- f. Established an Advisory Team made up of school staff and community partners.
- g. Conducted Program Reviews of 15 Local Education Agencies (LEAs).
- h. Improved access to educational information regarding students in foster care by establishing clear and consistent communication with the field through GovDelivery, guidance, and providing training to school districts, social workers, advocacy organizations, foster parent organizations, and contractors.
- i. Supported a statewide system of foster care liaisons and building points of contact 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.
- j. Partnering with the U.S. Department of Education (ED) on the national platform to exchange information between state foster care points of contact and presenting at ED's webinar on Best Interest Determinations for Students in Foster Care.
- k. Continued implementing the identification system for school-based Building Points of Contact and updates to the contact list on the OSPI Foster Care webpage.
- l. Provided training for school districts and system partners to clarify the definition of foster care as used in HB 1955 (2022) that ensures alignment with the federal definition.
- m. Participated in national projects, including:
 - i. Attended the ED and American Bar Association Convening in Washington D.C. with foster care points of contact from State educational agencies and State child welfare agencies.
 - ii. Monthly ED National State Education Point of Contact alliance focused on effective practices to support the learning of students in foster care.
 - iii. Bi-Monthly American Bar Association Community of Practice.

- n. Represented the needs of students in foster care and the schools they attend in higher-level collaborations through memberships in:
 - i. Project Education Impact.
 - ii. Passport to College Scholarship Leadership Team.
 - iii. Supreme Court Commission on Children in Foster Care.
 - iv. Family Well-Being Community Collaborative, Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) – overseen by the Supreme Court’s Commission of Children in Foster Care.
 - v. Interagency department coordination with Homeless, Institutional Education, Special Education, Financial Education Public-Private Partnership, Attendance, and Student Support teams.
 - vi. OSPI, DCYF, Developmental Disabilities Administration quarterly meetings to address educational impact on foster care students also identified as special education students.
 - vii. Education Resource Wednesday’s – OSPI, DCYF, Treehouse, and University of Washington Alliance training creation and offerings for caregivers, Court Appointed Special Advocates, and school staff on educational needs and programs for students in foster care.
- o. Presented at the following conferences on the federal and state educational stability provisions for students in foster care:
 - i. Foster Parent Alliance of Washington State.
 - ii. Becca Conference.
 - iii. Washington Association of Child Advocate Programs Conference.
 - iv. National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth.
 - v. National ESEA Conference.
 - vi. Children’s Justice Conference.
- p. Provided the following trainings:
 - i. Foster Care Liaison Training for school district Foster Care Liaisons.
 - ii. Building Point of Contact Training for school-based Building Points of Contact.
 - iii. Judicial Community of Practice through the Washington Administrative Office of the Courts for Washington State Judges.
 - iv. Office of Civil Legal Aid.
 - v. Clark County Court Appointed Special Advocates.
 - vi. Communities in Schools.
 - vii. Northwest Justice Project.
 - viii. Yakima County Juvenile Court.
 - ix. Thurston County Superior Court.
 - x. Youthnet.
 - xi. Education Resource Wednesdays for Foster Parents, Court Appointed Education Advocates, and Social Workers.

- q. Coordinated the following trainings for school district staff:
 - i. Comprehensive Education Data and Research System training.
 - ii. Life of a Welfare Case.
 - iii. Child Welfare Partners – DCYF, WACAP Advocates, Treehouse.
 - iv. Feedback for DCYF and Partnering with Child Welfare.
 - v. School Notification Form input with DCYF.

Criteria for Receiving Services and/or Grants

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

Beneficiaries in the 2023-24 School Year

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

Are Federal or Other Funds Contingent on State Funding?

No

State Funding History

GN – Foster Youth Outcomes

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2024	\$123,000	\$99,030
2023	\$123,000	\$80,862
2022	\$123,000	\$123,000
2021	\$123,000	\$123,000
2020	\$123,000	\$123,000

Number of Beneficiaries Per Fiscal Year (e.g. School Districts, Schools, Students, Educators, Other)

GN – Foster Youth Outcomes

Fiscal Year	Number of Beneficiaries
2024	295
2023	295

Programmatic Changes Since Inception (If Any)

In the 2023-24 fiscal year the following changes occurred:

- a. OSPI's foster care work continues to expand with training, technical assistance, collaborative forums and office hours in a virtual environment for LEA's along with child welfare agencies and community partners.

Program Evaluation or Evaluation of Major Findings

Students in foster care continue to face adversities that include:

- a. Higher mobility than their peers. 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.
- b. Starting off high school without being on track for graduation.
- c. Higher absence rates than their peers.
- d. Lower proficiency rates than their peers.
- e. Higher discipline rates than all other student population groups.
- f. Most students in foster care have also experienced homelessness at some point.

Students in foster care are overrepresented among students receiving special education services as early as elementary school.

Major Challenges Faced by the Program

Challenges within both the education and child welfare agencies persist.

Many school district Foster Care Liaisons carry additional district roles that impact their ability to dedicate the necessary time to the responsibilities of supporting the educational stability of students in foster care. Additionally, Foster Care Liaisons and Building Points of Contact are not provided with the necessary training around youth in dependency such as impacts of trauma, child welfare process, impacts of declining attendance and engagement, and special education. Without this knowledge, students in foster care cannot be fully supported in their school and in their educational career.

Within DCYF, not all caseworkers are aware of their legal obligations under state and federal law regarding the education of students in foster care. Some districts report that students are frequently moved to new foster care placements with no communication to schools, often resulting in students missing school. Additionally, at times, some caregivers and social workers withdraw students and move them to new schools without Best Interest Determinations and informing school staff. The demanding workloads along with the high turnover of DCYF caseworkers in some parts of the state doesn't always allow for sufficient time to dedicate to education.

Transportation has become a challenge for both the education and child welfare system. Lack of bus drivers and independent providers coupled with the high mobility of students to out-of-district placements has led to the inability of students in foster care to access transportation to their school thereby denying them educational stability.

Future Opportunities

Legislation authorizing school Building Points of Contact, RCW 28A.320.148, has created an improved framework of support for students in foster care. In the 2023-2024 school year, OSPI was able to train approximately 400 of these school-based staff. While still a new program, there are many opportunities for school-based staff to begin connecting with students in foster care to provide additional support. The OSPI Foster Care Team will continue to work with LEA's and Building Points of Contact to create a supportive structure for foster care students.

For the 2024-2025 school year, OSPI has coordinated regional meetings (based on the six DCYF regions) for LEA staff, DCYF staff, and Treehouse staff to allow for continued collaboration. Each region will meet every other month, and the meetings are optional based on their availability.

In addressing a couple of the major challenges identified above, the OSPI Foster Care Team will focus on engaging and focusing on sharing the educational stability provisions with DCYF caseworkers and foster families. This outreach is needed in order to truly see changes in decreased school mobility, better student academic outcomes, and higher graduation rates of students in foster care.

Other Relevant Information

N/A

Schools/Districts Receiving Assistance

[Click here to see a list of all OSPI grant recipients in the 2024 Fiscal Year.](#)

Program Contact Information

Name Stacey Klim
Title Foster Care Program Supervisor
Phone 564-999-1939
Email stacey.klim@k12.wa.us

Name Annie Blackledge
Title Director of Foster Care and Institutional Education
Phone 360-725-6000
Email annie.blackledge@k12.wa.us