

# Foster Care Education in Washington State



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

# Meet the Team



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**Foster Care Program  
Supervisor**



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**Foster Care Program  
Specialist**



# Which Students Qualify as Foster Care?

Students who are the “subject of a dependency proceeding”:

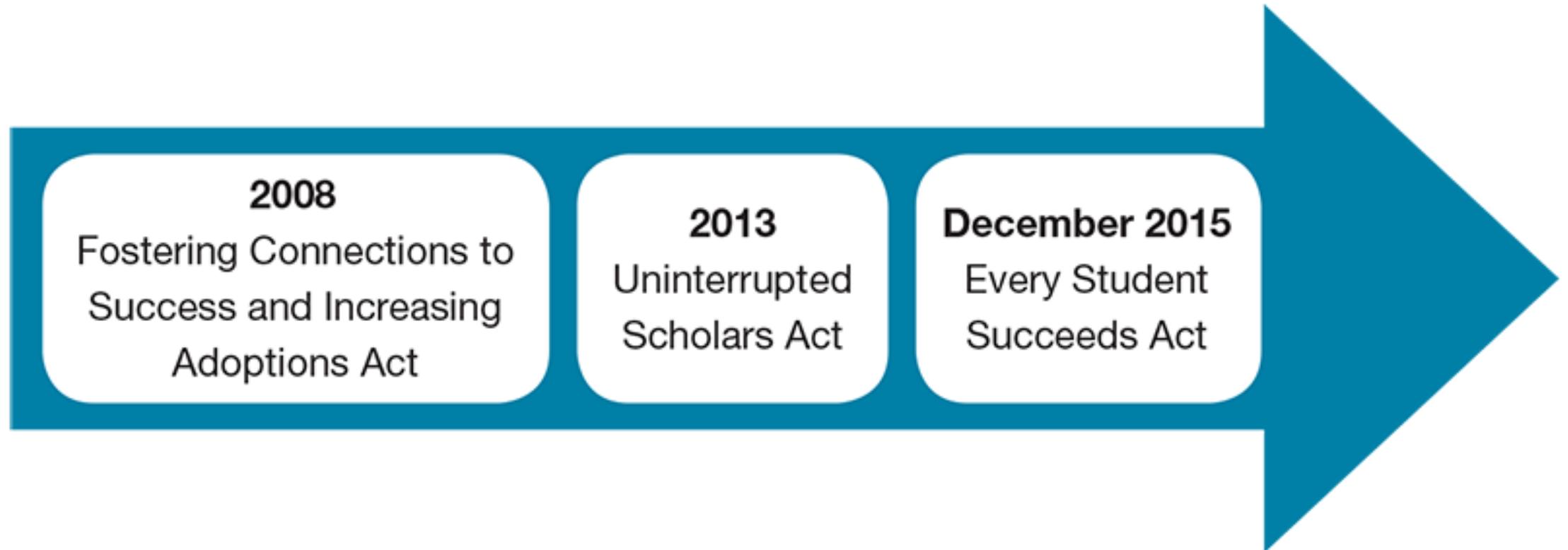
- Foster Home
- Residential Facility
- Relative
- Group Home
- Emergency Shelter
- Pre-adoptive Home
- Trial-return-home

\*Including Tribal Child Welfare and Unaccompanied Refugee Minors



# LAW AND PROVISIONS

# Legislative Milestones for Educational Stability of Students in Foster Care



# Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act - 2008

Fostering Connections Act requires providing **educational stability**

- State agencies are required to **consider school issues** (proximity to child's current school, fit with educational setting, etc.) when making **placement decisions**. Officials must keep children in their current school if it is in their **best interests**. States can now claim partial federal reimbursement for the cost of **transporting** children to their original school.
- If a child has to change schools, the state must ensure **immediate enrollment** in a new school and **transfer of the child's records**. Unless medically incapable, every school-aged child receiving federal foster care, guardianship, or adoption payments **must be enrolled full time** in an elementary or secondary school **or have completed secondary school**.



# Uninterrupted Scholars Act - 2013

- Educational agencies and institutions are permitted to **disclose personally identifiable information (PII) from the education records of students in foster care placement**, without parental consent, **to an agency caseworker or other representative of a State or local child welfare agency (CWA) or tribal organization authorized to access a student's case plan "when such agency or organization is legally responsible, in accordance with State or tribal law, for the care and protection of the student."**

# Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) - 2015

This is federal education law, and all schools must follow these provisions. Washington State has codified these all into state law as well.

Every school district is required to designate a Foster Care Liaison.

Students remain in school of origin unless there is a determination that it is not in their best interest.

Students in foster care are entitled to immediate enrollment, even without documents normally required.

Schools/OSPI must collaborate with Child Welfare Agencies.



# Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) - 2015

Every school district is required to designate a Foster Care Liaison.

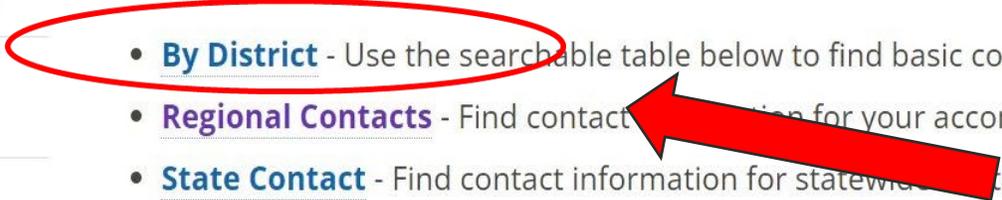


[Home](#) » [Student Success](#) » [Access & Opportunity in Education](#) » [Foster Care](#) » Foster Care Liaisons/DCYF Contacts/School Contacts

## Foster Care Liaisons/DCYF Contacts/School Contacts

Use one of the functions below to search for your Foster Care Liaison/Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) contact.

- **By District** - Use the searchable table below to find basic contact information for your district.
- **Regional Contacts** - Find contact information for your accompanying DCYF regional staff member.
- **State Contact** - Find contact information for statewide contacts.
- **By School (XLSX)** - Find school building points of contact. If the information in the spreadsheet needs to be updated, please submit an [Update Foster Care Building Points of Contact request](#). Allow two weeks for submitted updates to be reflected on this spreadsheet.



### STUDENT SUCCESS

Resources by Subject Area ▶

Learning Standards & Instructional Materials ▶

Graduation ▼

Graduation Requirements ▶

Waivers and CIA

Career Guidance

Windows Ink Workspace

# How Do I Find My Foster Care Liaison?

[Visit the OSPI Foster Care Education Website](#)



# Foster Care Building Points of Contact

Each school is required to designate a foster care building point of contact who knows which students are in foster care and what rights those students have under the law.



# Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) - 2015

Students remain in school of origin unless there is a determination that it is NOT in their best interest.

# School of Origin

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School in which child is enrolled at time of placement change

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Child must remain in school of origin until a determination is made

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Includes LEA preschool and designated feeder schools



# Best Interest Determinations

- Best interest determination meetings **should be made as quickly as possible** in order to prevent educational discontinuity for the student
- Every effort should be made to **gather meaningful input** from relevant and appropriate persons
- Student-centered factors must be used to determine what is in a student's best interest
  - *Age*
  - *Length of placement*
  - *Special needs*
  - *Timing in school year*
  - *Grade level*
  - *Existing connection*
- **The student must remain in his or her school of origin** while a best interest determination is made

# Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) - 2015

Students in foster care are entitled to **immediate enrollment**, even without documents normally required.

# Immediate Enrollment



**Immediate enrollment means that a child should be enrolled in, and attending, a new school as soon as possible.**

- Appropriate classroom placement
- Transportation, if required

**Enrollment must not be denied or delayed because documents normally required for enrollment have not been provided**

- Including Medical Records such as immunization or medical conditions

# Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) - 2015

Schools/OSPI must collaborate with Child Welfare Agencies.



# Department of Children, Youth, and Families Regional Structure



WASHINGTON STATE  
Department of  
Children, Youth, and Families



# State Legislation

- [RCW 28A.225.023](#) - Review of unexpected or excessive absences
- [RCW 28A.225.350](#) - Best Interest Determinations
- [RCW 28A.225.360](#) - Collaboration with DCYF
- [RCW 28A.320.192](#) - On-time grade level progression and graduation
- [RCW 28A.320.148](#) - Foster care liaison and building points of contact
- [RCW 28A.150.510](#) – Records Transfer

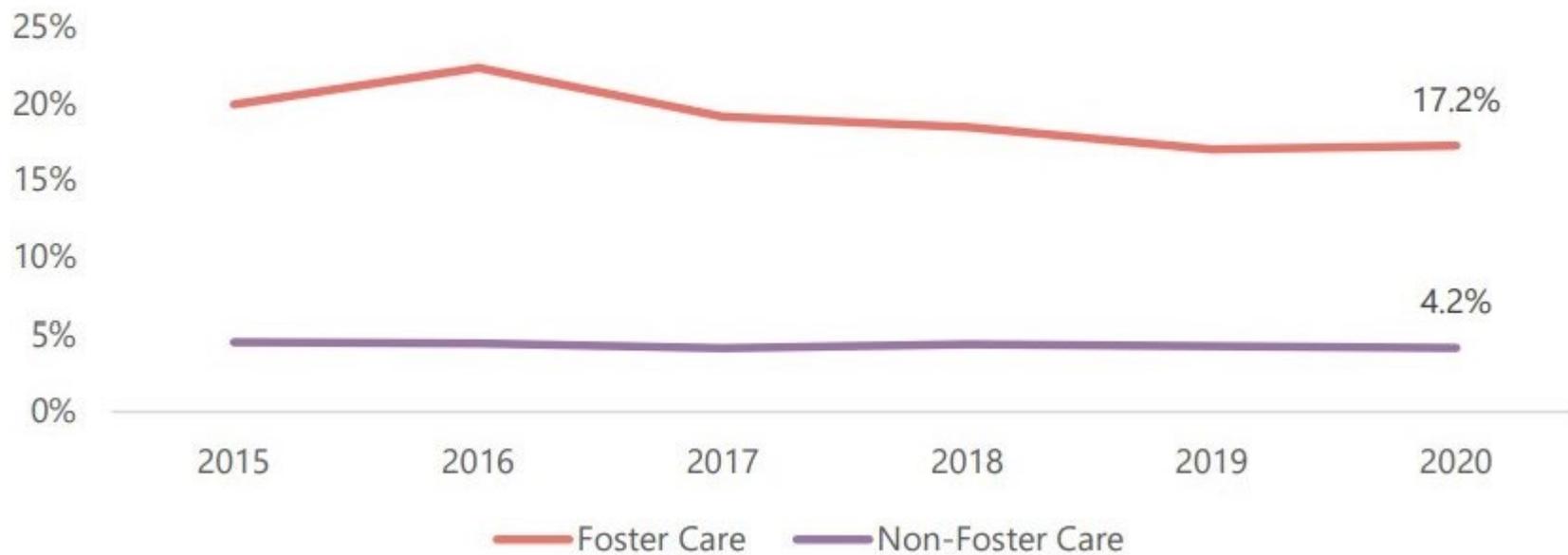
# Why Does School Matter?

- Research shows that every time a student changes schools, they lose between 4-6 months of academic progress. They quickly fall behind their peers.
- A positive, stable school experience provides structure and nurtures an environment where students can learn and grow.
- With fewer school disruptions, youth:
  - are provided with a familiar setting for learning
  - remain connected to school peers and supports
  - are more likely to access appropriate coursework and remain on a path to achieve college and career readiness
  - have educators and school staff who know their strengths and where they may need a little extra help



# MOBILITY

Figure 1-8. Percent of Students with Mobility, by Foster Care Status for 2015-2020.



Source: ERDC Outcomes of Foster Youth 2021

# Foster Care Liaison Duties

Make sure every school has a Building Point of Contact and coordinate with them

Serve as the primary contact person for child welfare and case workers

Attend training and professional development opportunities to improve district implementation efforts

Facilitate the transfer of records and immediate enrollment

Facilitate data sharing with child welfare agencies, consistent with FERPA

Develop and coordinate local transportation procedures

Manage best-interest determinations and transportation cost disputes

Ensure that children in foster care are enrolled in, and regularly attending school



# Building Point Of Contact Duties



Request a list of students in foster care in your building from your Foster Care Liaison



Obtain a copy of the DCYF School Notification Form from the Foster Care Liaison (an example of the form can be found [here](#)).



Check with nutrition services to make sure the student is receiving free meals (no application needed)



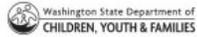
Fees and Fines – work with DCYF caseworker to have any outstanding fees and fines of the student paid



Connect with student



# School notification form



## School Notification

[Click here for a district-by-district of where to send this completed form.](#)

This is to notify the school district that the below named child has been:

Newly placed  Returned home  Changed placement

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

To: \_\_\_\_\_

From: \_\_\_\_\_

DCYF WORKER'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ FAX \_\_\_\_\_

DCYF ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

RE: \_\_\_\_\_

STUDENT'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH \_\_\_\_\_ GRADE LEVEL \_\_\_\_\_

**Statement of Confidentiality**

The information disclosed in this form is confidential and disclosed under the limitations of RCW 13.50.100. This disclosure does not constitute a waiver of any confidentiality or privilege attached to the information by operation of any state or federal law or regulation. The recipient of this information must comply with the laws governing confidentiality and must protect the records from unauthorized disclosure. RCW 13.50.100(5).

The above named student is in the legal custody of DCYF and is temporarily placed at the following location:

CAREGIVER'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ TYPE OF PLACEMENT  
 Foster care  
 Relative  
 Other:  
 ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

The above named student is in the legal custody of DCYF and the child has moved (or will be moving) to a new placement at the following location:

CAREGIVER'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

TYPE OF PLACEMENT \_\_\_\_\_ ANTICIPATED DATE OF MOVE \_\_\_\_\_  
 Foster care  Relative  Other:  
 ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

The above named student has been returned to parent / guardian care:

Legal custody regained by parent / guardian or PARENT / GUARDIAN(S) NAME(S) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Legal custody retained by DCYF

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

Per court order, the people named below cannot have contact with the student:

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	RELATIONSHIP (PARENT / UNCLE / AUNT / SIBLING, NO RELATIONSHIP, ETC.)

Please notify the DCYF worker named above immediately if contact attempts are made.

The above named student is in the legal custody of DCYF and continues to reside in the parental home:

PARENT / GUARDIAN(S) NAME(S) \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

School transportation to be arranged at new address to maintain education stability

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

Child / youth to be un-enrolled from school as of \_\_\_\_\_ (date).

SCHOOL NOTIFICATION  
DCYF 09-093 (11/2020) INT

Copy of the court order is attached.

### Best Interest Determination Participants:

- Representative from Neighborhood School  Parent  Caseworker  
 Representative from School of Origin  Caregiver  Youth

### School Selection: A Checklist for Decision Making

	School of Origin Considerations	Local Attendance Area School Considerations
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Continuity of instruction</b> <i>Student is best served due to circumstances that look to his or her past</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Continuity of instruction</b> <i>Student is best served due to circumstances that look to his or her future</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Age and grade placement of the student</b> <i>Maintaining friends and contacts with peers is critical to the student's meaningful school experience and participation.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Age and grade placement of the student</b> <i>Maintaining friends and contacts with peers in the school of origin is not particularly critical to the student's meaningful school experience and participation.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Academic strength</b> <i>The child's academic performance is weak, and the child would fall further behind if he/she transferred to another school.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Academic strength</b> <i>The child's academic performance is strong and at grade level, and the child would likely recover academically from a school transfer.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Distance of the commute and its impact on the student's education and/or special needs</b> <i>The advantages of remaining in the school of origin outweigh any potential disadvantages presented by the length of the commute.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Distance of the commute and its impact on the student's education and/or special needs</b> <i>A shorter commute may help the student's concentration, attitude, or readiness for school.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Personal safety of the student</b> <i>The school of origin has advantages for the safety of the student.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Personal safety of the student</b> <i>The local attendance area school has advantages for the safety of the student.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Student's need for special instruction</b> <i>The student's need for special instruction, such as Section 504 or special education and related services, can be met better at the school of origin.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Student's need for special instruction</b> <i>The student's need for special instruction, such as Section 504 or special education and related services, can be met better at the local attendance area school.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Length of anticipated stay in a temporary shelter or other temporary location</b> <i>The student's current living situation is outside of the school-of-origin attendance zone, but his/her living situation or location continues to be uncertain. The student will benefit from the continuity offered by remaining in the school of origin.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Length of anticipated stay in a temporary shelter or other temporary location</b> <i>The student's current living situation appears stable and unlikely to change suddenly; the student will benefit from developing relationships with school peers who live in his local community.</i>

For more information about selecting the appropriate school placement for students in foster care, please see:

[https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/fostercare/pubdocs/fostercarechooseselection\\_wa.pdf](https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/fostercare/pubdocs/fostercarechooseselection_wa.pdf)

Adapted from the *Best Practices: School Selection for Students in Out-of-Home Care* issue brief developed by the Legal Center for Foster Care and The National Center for Homeless Education: Fall 20

SCHOOL NOTIFICATION  
DCYF 09-093 (11/2020) INT



# Problem Solving

1

Contact Building  
Point of Contact  
(FCL) or Foster Care  
Liaison (BPOC)

2

Contact Social  
Worker

3

Contact DCYF  
Regional Education  
Lead

4

Contact OSPI



# Transportation



- When a BIDM indicates that it is in a student in foster care's best interest to remain at his/her SOO, the student is entitled to transportation to the SOO.
- A student in foster care is entitled to transportation to his/her SOO for the duration of his/her time in foster care
- If it is determined at the BIDM that a student should be transported, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) will cover 50% of all excess costs related to transporting students in foster care to and from home and school. This means that districts can split costs with DCYF.
- Questions? Email DCYF Education Program Administrator, Peggy Carlson, at [peggy.carlson@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:peggy.carlson@dcyf.wa.gov) or call 360-791-4912 or DCYF Foster Care Program Manager Terri Awoko, at [terri.awoko@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:terri.awoko@dcyf.wa.gov) or call 360-522-3117.

# Health Records



Federal law (ESSA) requires immediate enrollment for students in foster care:

- even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment (including immunization records)
- even without documents normally required, including health plans and/or documentation of life-threatening conditions or even meds
- Annie Heltz, School Health Services Consultant, [annie.hetzel@k12.wa.us](mailto:annie.hetzel@k12.wa.us)



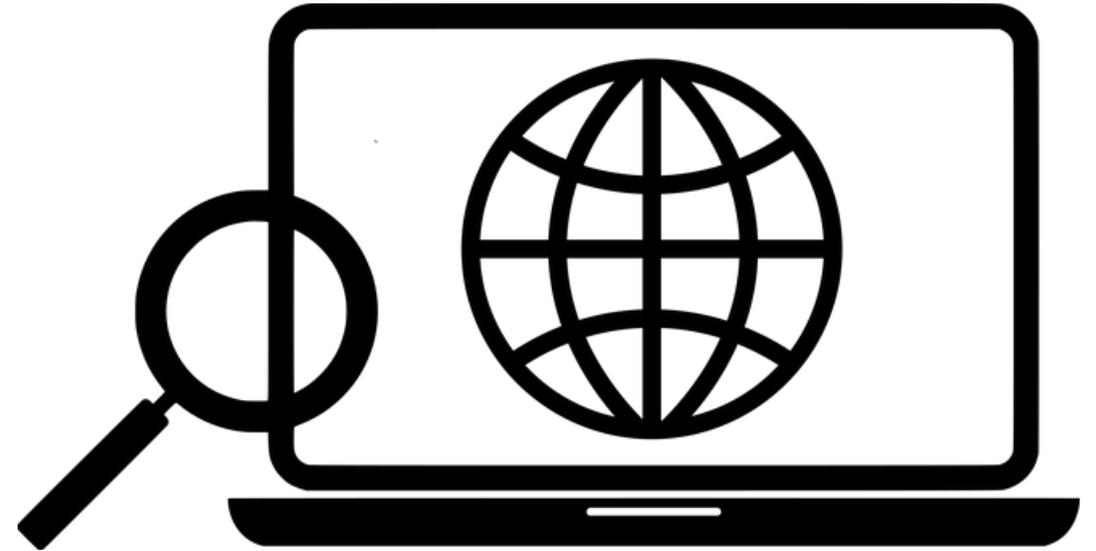
- › **Educational Advocacy**  
Educational Advocates work statewide with schools, social workers, caregivers and youth of all ages to remove barriers to school success.
- › **Graduation Success**  
Education Specialists work with middle and high school youth to provide education planning, monitoring, coaching and support to keep them on track to graduate with a plan for their future.
- › **Just-in-Time Funding**  
Treehouse helps pay for extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs, music, dance and school and summer activities.
- › **Treehouse Store**  
King County youth in foster care can shop at Treehouse's free store for new and like-new clothing, school supplies, books, toys and other essentials.
- › **Launch Success**  
Alumni of our Graduation Success program receive continued support up until they achieve stable housing, a degree or credential, and a living wage.
- › **Driver's Assistance**  
Treehouse removes many transportation-related financial burdens for youth in foster care, including the cost of auto insurance and driver's education.
- › **Holiday Magic**  
Each year, we provide more than 5,000 wrapped gifts for children and youth in foster care throughout Washington state.



## Website

[OSPI \(www.k12.wa.us\)](http://www.k12.wa.us)

Foster Care Office Hours  
Liaisons & DCYF Contacts  
State and Federal Requirements  
Resources and Training



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