

# Foster Care Education in Washington State

Training for Building Points of Contact



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**



# Meet the Team



**STACEY KLIM**  
**Foster Care Program  
Supervisor**



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**Foster Care Program  
Specialist**



## **Vision**

*All students prepared for post-secondary pathways, careers, and civic engagement.*

## **Mission**

Transform K–12 education to a system that is centered on closing opportunity gaps and is characterized by high expectations for all students and educators. We achieve this by developing equity-based policies and supports that empower educators, families, and communities.

## **Values**

- Ensuring Equity
- Collaboration and Service
- Achieving Excellence through Continuous Improvement
- Focus on the Whole Child



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# Equity Statement

Each student, family, and community possesses strengths and cultural knowledge that benefits their peers, educators, and schools.

Ensuring educational equity:

- Goes beyond equality; it requires education leaders to examine the ways current policies and practices result in disparate outcomes for our students of color, students living in poverty, students receiving special education and English Learner services, students who identify as LGBTQ+, and highly mobile student populations.
- Requires education leaders to develop an understanding of historical contexts; engage students, families, and community representatives as partners in decision-making; and actively dismantle systemic barriers, replacing them with policies and practices that ensure all students have access to the instruction and support they need to succeed in our schools.



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# ***Tribal Land Acknowledgement***

***I would like to acknowledge the Indigenous people who have stewarded this land since time immemorial and who still inhabit the area today, the Steh-Chass Band of Indigenous people of the Squaxin Island Tribe.***



# FUN WITH POLLS!



How long have you been a Building Point of Contact?

How familiar are you with the responsibilities of a Building Point of Contact?





# FEDERAL AND STATE LAW



# Which Students Qualify as Foster Care?

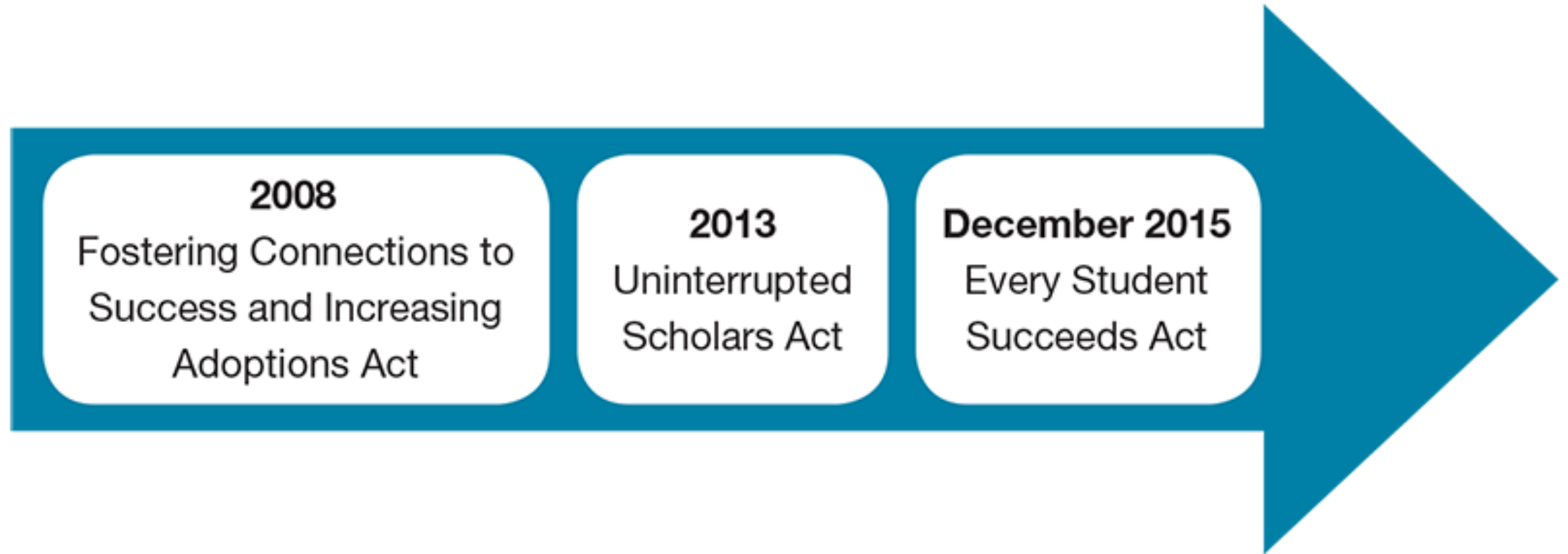
Students who are the “subject of a dependency proceeding”:

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

\*Including Tribal Child Welfare and Unaccompanied Refugee Minors



# 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.



**STUDENT SUCCESS**

Resources by Subject Area ▶

Learning Standards & Instructional Materials ▶

Graduation ▼

Graduation Requirements ▶

Waivers and CIA

Career Guidance

## 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.

How do I find a Foster Care Liaison?

How do I find a Building Point of Contact?

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



# Foster Care Building Points of Contact – Washington State Law



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.



# Foster Care Liaison and Building Points of Contact

## [RCW 28A.320.148](#)

Every school must have a building point of contact appointed by the principal and liaison.

- Responsible for coordinating services and resources for students in foster care.

Each school district must designate a foster care liaison responsible for:

- Training building point of contact.
- Facilitating district compliance with state and federal laws related to students in out-of-home care.
- Collaborating with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to address educational barriers.

OSPI responsible for:

- Providing best practices for choosing and training building points of contact to each school district.





# 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

School in which child is enrolled at time of placement change

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

Includes LEA preschool and designated feeder schools



# Moving Students & Best Interest Determinations

- Best interest determination meetings **should be made as quickly as possible** in order to prevent educational discontinuity for the student
- **The student must remain in his or her school of origin** while a best interest determination is made
- 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*

[Best Interest Determination Toolkit](#)



# 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

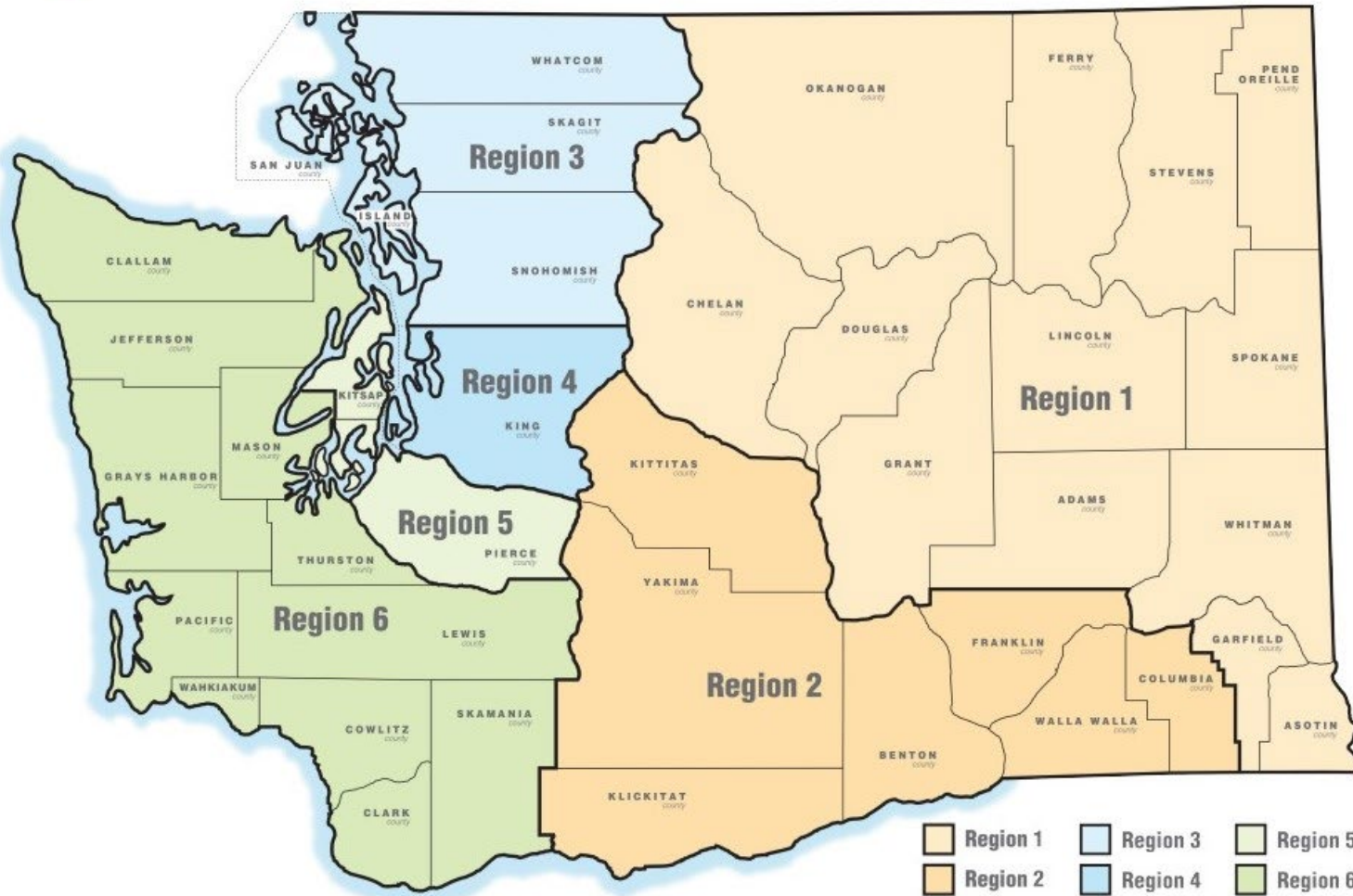
Schools/OSPI must collaborate with Child Welfare Agencies.



# Department of Children, Youth, and Families Regional Structure



WASHINGTON STATE  
Department of  
Children, Youth, and Families



Find your DCYF  
Regional Education  
Lead at:

[Foster Care  
Liaisons/DCYF  
Contacts/School  
Contacts | OSPI  
\(www.k12.wa.us\)](#)



# 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



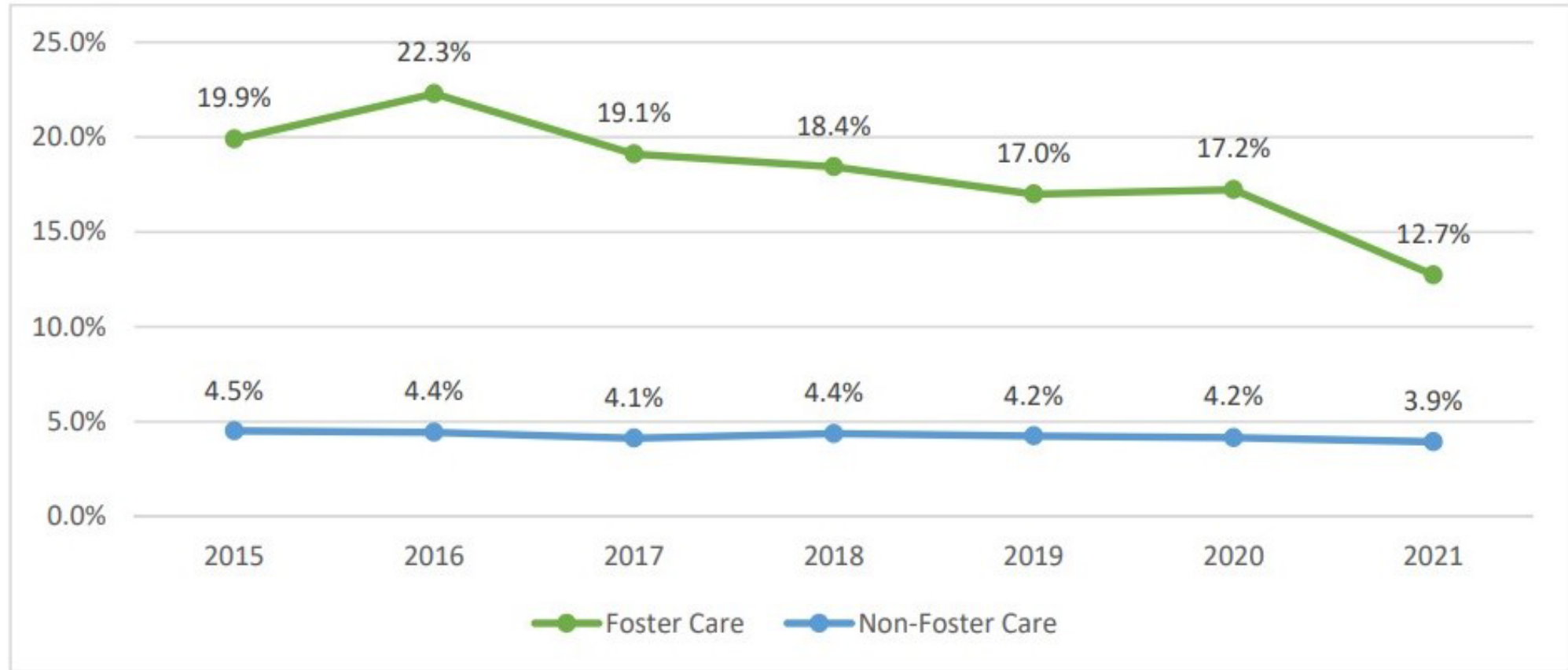
# Why Is School So Important for Foster Care Students?



- 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**

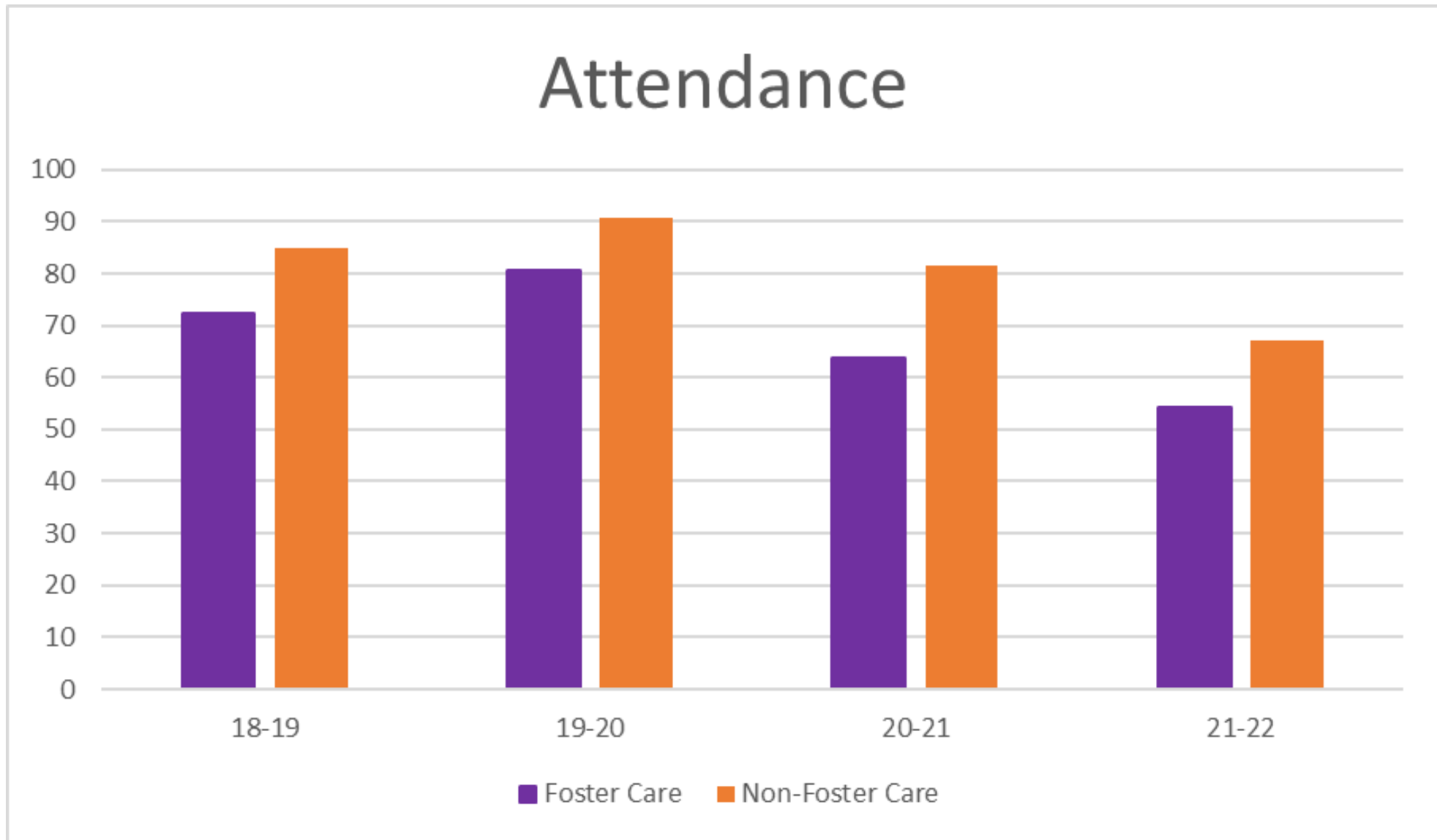


**FIGURE 3-2: SCHOOL MOBILITY FOR STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE COMPARED TO PEERS**

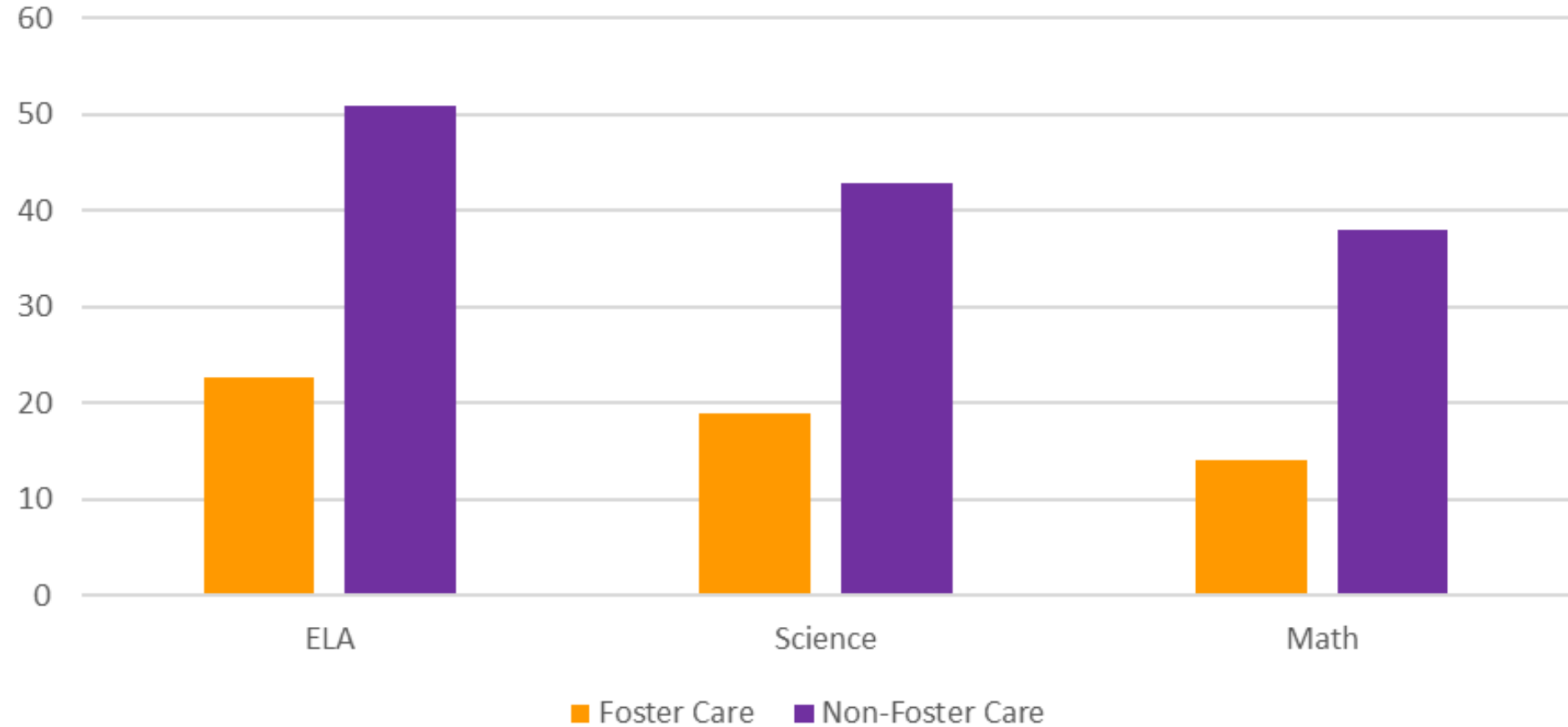


Data source: OSPI-SRC.

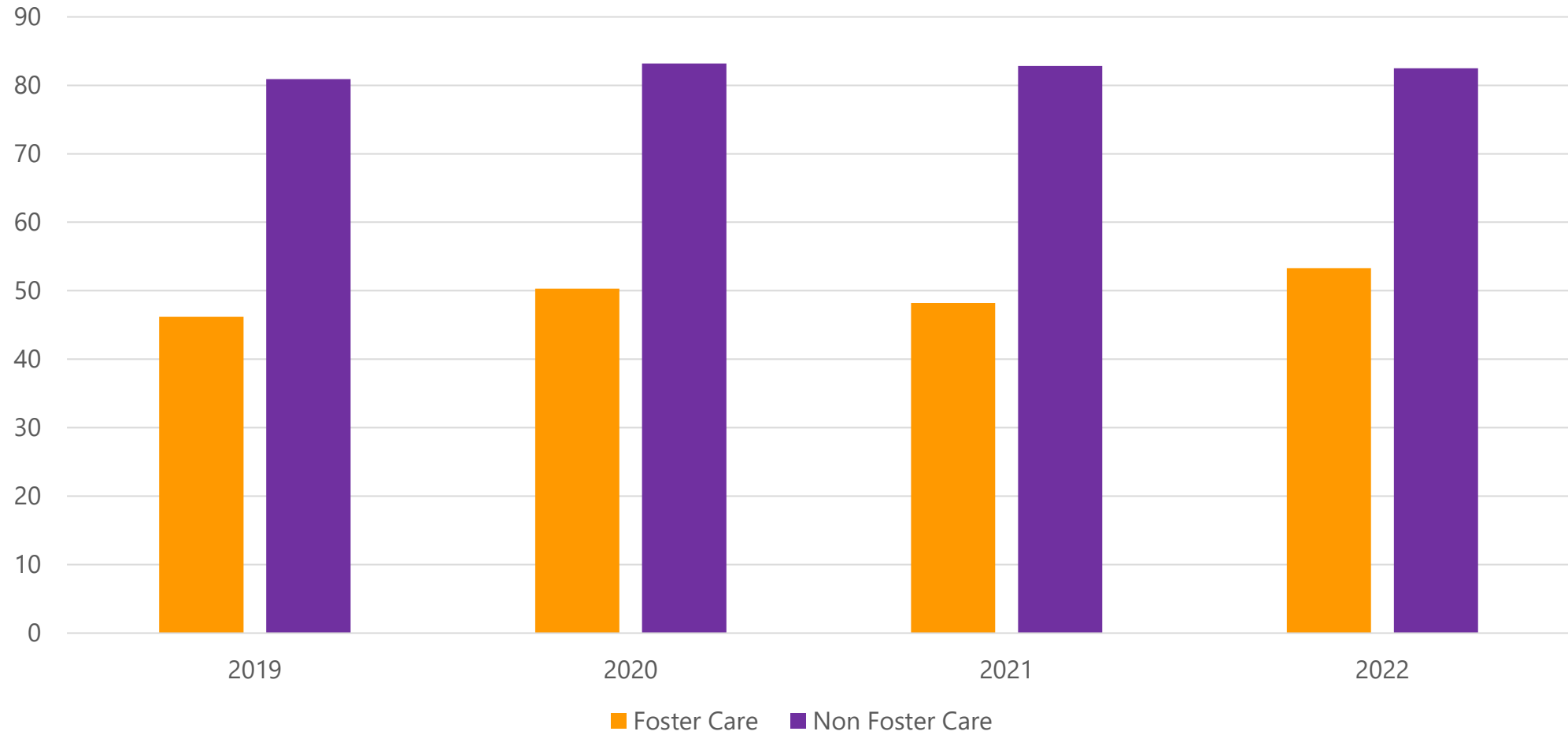
# Attendance



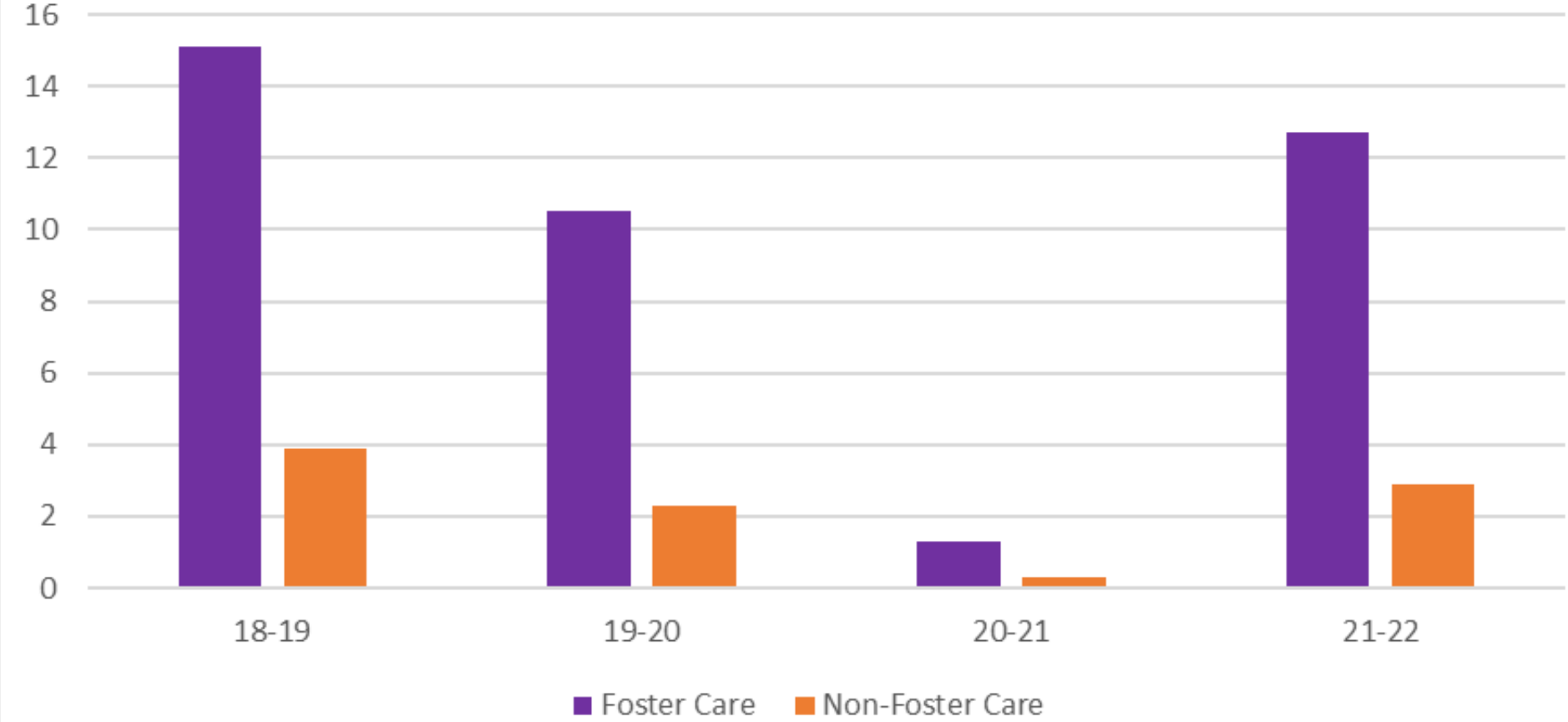
# Assessments 2021-2022



# 4 Year Graduation Rates



# Discipline





# Educational Challenges for Students in Foster Care

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) conducted discussion groups with youth currently or formerly in foster care in selected states. They identified the following challenges they faced when changing schools including:

- repeating classes because they were not in classes long enough to receive credit
- repeating grades or not graduating on time
- adapting to new teaching styles and class schedules
- leaving friends and having to make new ones
- losing relationships with teachers and staff

<https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-19-616.pdf>



# 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 and build relationship



The student's social worker is to notify the school district foster care liaison that the below-named child:

Entered Placement    Changed placement    Returned home

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 To: \_\_\_\_\_  
 From: \_\_\_\_\_  
 DCYF WORKER'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX: \_\_\_\_\_  
 DCYF OFFICE: \_\_\_\_\_ DCYF SUPERVISOR: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 RE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 STUDENT'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_ GRADE LEVEL: \_\_\_\_\_ SCHOOL OF ORIGIN/SCHOOL DISTRICT: \_\_\_\_\_  
 NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT: \_\_\_\_\_

IEP OR 504 PLAN  
 IF CHECKED: EDUCATIONAL DECISION MAKER NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

**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  
 has moved (or will be moving) to a new placement at the following location  
 resides in the parental home  
 is placed in a trial return home

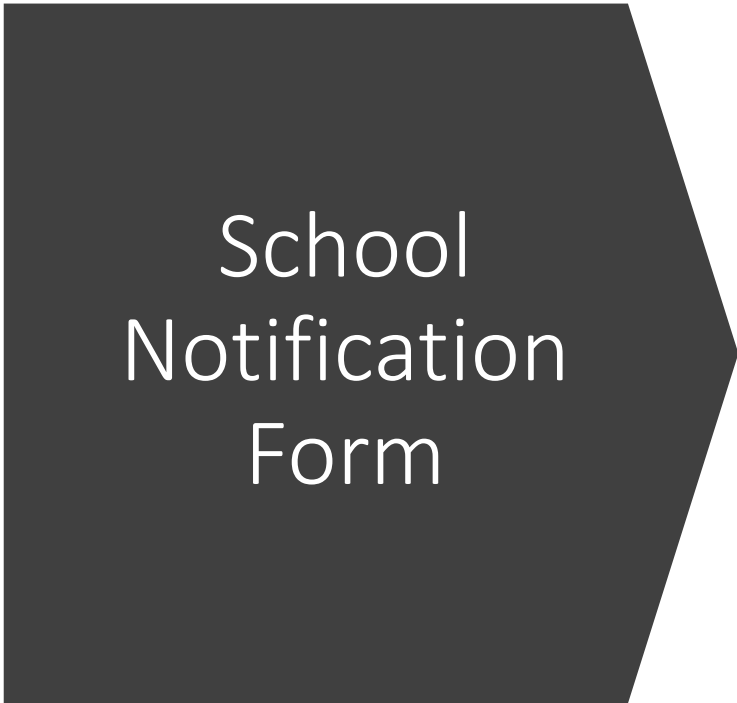
TYPE OF PLACEMENT <input type="checkbox"/> Foster care <input type="checkbox"/> Relative <input type="checkbox"/> Parent <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	ANTICIPATED DATE OF MOVE _____
CAREGIVER NAME(S) _____	PHONE _____
ADDRESS _____	
EMAIL _____	
EDUCATION LIAISON (COURT APPOINTED—PLEASE ATTACH COURT ORDER) <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO _____	

**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.**

School transportation is required to maintain school of origin.  
 Child/youth to be un-enrolled from school of origin on \_\_\_\_\_ (date). A best interest meeting finds that the student should change school placement.  
 Copy of the court order is attached.



# School Notification Form

[School Notification | Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families](#)

Date of Best Interest Meeting:  Decision:

Best Interest Determination Participants:  School District Foster Care Liaisons

Representative from Neighborhood School (required)

Parent

Caseworker

Representative from School of Origin (required)

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 their past</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Continuity of instruction</b> <i>Student is best served due to circumstances that look to their 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 student's academic performance is weak, and the student would fall further behind if transferred to another school.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Academic strength</b> <i>The student's academic performance is strong and at grade level, and the student 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 their 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 their 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/Best Practices School Selection for Children and Youth in Foster Care.pdf](https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/fostercare/pubdocs/Best_Practices_School_Selection_for_Children_and_Youth_in_Foster_Care.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 Form



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
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# Student Information System Recommendations

Family 1 – Foster  
parent/caregiver

Family 2 – Caseworker

Family 3 – Bio family –  
Biological parents  
retain rights unless  
they've been restricted  
by the court

# 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



# Problem Solving

1

Contact Foster  
Care Liaison  
(FCL)

2

Contact Social  
Worker

3

Contact DCYF  
Regional  
Education Lead

4

Contact OSPI



# Why Building Points of Contact?

Students in foster care need extra support



Foster Care Liaisons focus on educational stability



Building Points of Contact focus on:

- Connection
- Confidentiality
- Immediate needs of students





# What are other ways to help students in foster care?



Extra Curricular Activities – Band, sports, clubs



School Pictures



Post Secondary Applications



Be on their team!



# Advice from Former Foster Youth

“Less of a handout, more of a hand up.”

“Do what you say you will do. If you don’t, we won’t ask for help again.”

“Kids know what they need and know when they aren’t safe.”

“Listen to understand instead of listening to respond.”

\* Excerpts from the May 2023 Passport Conference



Make a referral here:

[Treehouse - Make a Referral for Treehouse Services \(treehouseforkids.org\)](http://www.treehouseforkids.org)

### Graduation Success & Educational Advocacy – What’s the Difference?

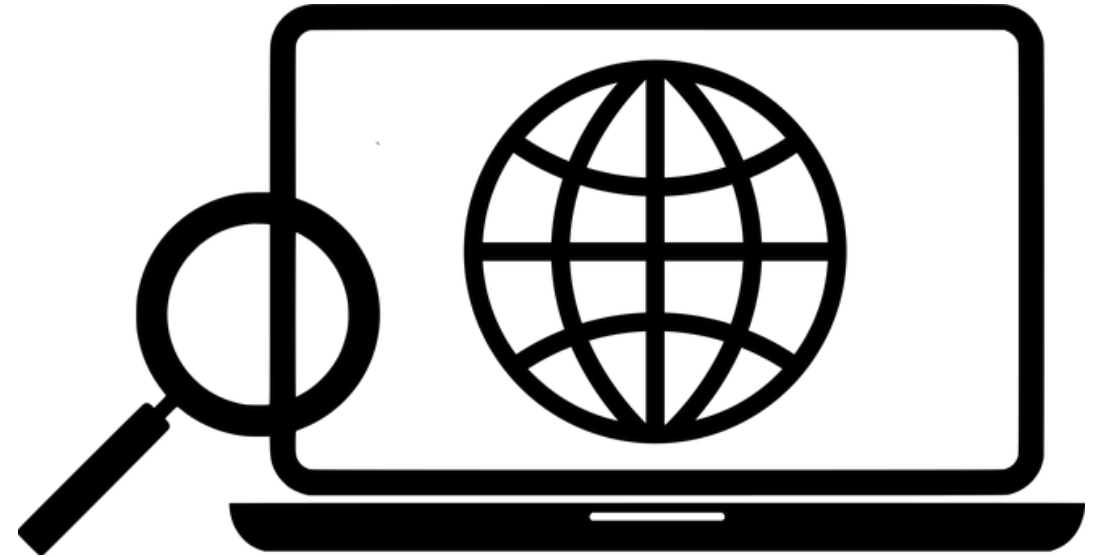
Treehouse provides a range of supports to help students in foster care experience success at school and have access to resources and support systems that all kids need to graduate from high school with a plan for the future. It takes all of us in coordination, with consistent positive adult presence and collaboration between foster parents, caseworkers, school staff, mentors, and Treehouse. Treehouse approaches this work with two academic support programs--**Graduation Success** and **Educational Advocacy**.

Program	Graduation Success	Educational Advocacy
<b>Description</b>	Treehouse Education Specialists work directly with youth. They partner with social workers, caregivers, schools, and community partners to help youth graduate from high school with a plan for their future.	Treehouse Educational Advocates work with social workers, caregivers, and schools to resolve difficult issues at school and to remove barriers to kids' school success.
<b>Who do we serve?</b>	This program serves middle and high school aged youth throughout the state.	This program serves shelter care and dependent youth (including trial-return-home) in Pre-Kindergarten through 12 <sup>th</sup> grade (high school completion) in <u>all</u> Washington state schools.
<b>Eligibility</b>	Youth must be in out-of-home care (foster, kinship/fictive, group home) at time of <b>initial</b> referral and enrolled in 8 <sup>th</sup> through 12 <sup>th</sup> grade anywhere in the state.	Youth must currently have an open DCYF, tribal, or federal case, (or be in shelter-care) Advocacy serves youth between the ages of Pre K – 12th grade.
<b>Referral Process</b>	Referrals for Graduation Success may be made by DCYF caseworkers, foster care case managers, CASAs, attorneys and OSPI Foster Care Liaisons. Referrals must be made through Treehouse's online referral process: <a href="http://www.treehouseforkids.org/our-services/make-a-referral/">www.treehouseforkids.org/our-services/make-a-referral/</a>	Referrals to Educational Advocacy can be initiated by the DCYF social worker or CHET screener, OSPI Foster Care Liaisons, or CPA case workers through Treehouse's online referral process: <a href="http://www.treehouseforkids.org/our-services/make-a-referral/">www.treehouseforkids.org/our-services/make-a-referral/</a>
<b>Length of Service</b>	This program is designed to be long term and once a youth is referred, Treehouse can continue serving them regardless of dependency status.	This program is generally short-term, (1 day to 6 months), but can be longer if the needs of the youth necessitate continued involvement.
<b>Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with youth to set and achieve their own goals through a Student-Centered Plan</li> <li>• Daily monitoring of student's ABCs (attendance, behavior and course completion)</li> <li>• Timely and individualized interventions on ABCs</li> <li>• Coach students on academic mindset, self-determination, self-advocacy and perseverance</li> <li>• Remove barriers to school success in enrollment, school transitions, special education needs, and discipline. At times a dual enrollment with Advocacy may be necessary to address these barriers.</li> <li>• Connect youth to community and school-based education services</li> <li>• Support youth's efforts to explore and pursue college and career options</li> <li>• Help pay for extracurricular and school activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help students access education-related support services including addressing special education needs and avoiding school changes when students' home placements change, if possible</li> <li>• Pave the way for seamless transitions when school changes are unavoidable</li> <li>• Minimize the effects of disciplinary actions that keep students out of school</li> <li>• Assist youth in advancing to the next grade level by identifying appropriate education placements or by identifying and making connections to credit retrieval programs</li> <li>• Train and/or coach social workers, parents, and caregivers to work with schools in advocating for students' educational rights</li> </ul>
<b>Questions?</b>	For general information on these programs, please call our front desk at 206-767-7000 For information about eligibility or making referrals, please contact our Intake Coordinator: 206-267-5144	

## Website

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

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





Thank

You

Graphic by Prawny

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