



New school funding could benefit Los Angeles County foster youth

- Martha Matthews,
- Public Counsel Children's Rights Project
- (213) 385-2977 x113
- mmatthews@publiccounsel.org
- www.publiccounsel.org

Foster youth have unique educational needs



- Education outcomes for foster youth lag behind those for other students – even compared to low-income and EL students.
- Foster youth face unique educational challenges:
 - Frequent school changes
 - Gaps in attendance
 - Lack of consistent adult support for education
 - Impact of trauma.

LCFF and LCAPS

- New (2013) CA school funding law is called Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)
- Districts receive “supplemental and concentration grants” based on % of students who are low-income, English Learners, and/or foster youth
- Each district must create a Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) with goals for all students and for each subgroup

How LCFF and LCAPs affect foster youth

- LCFF eliminated most categorical funding, but preserved funding for Foster Youth Services (FYS) program, run by LACOE
- LCFF gave school districts funding based on % of disadvantaged students – and accountability for improving education outcomes for these subgroups.
- LCAPs must:
 - Identify *goals* for foster youth as a subgroup
 - Describe *the specific actions* the district will take to achieve these goals
 - Include a *budget* associated with these actions

LCFF definition of foster youth

- **Youth in foster care**
 - Must have an open dependency court case (subject to WIC 300 petition)
 - Does not matter where they live (e.g., foster home, group home, relative home, with biological parent)
- **Youth on probation**
 - Must have an open delinquency case (WIC 602 petition) and be removed from home (suitable placement order)

LCFF and foster youth data

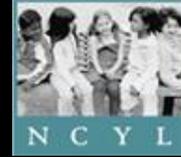
- LCFF requires state-level match of child welfare data from CWS/CMS and education data from CALPADS, to identify which students are in foster care, and address their educational needs.
- This data must be shared with each district and updated weekly.
- State-level data match may be supplemented with local data matching – LACOE and DCFS are working on a shared database.
- Key data for school site level staff:
 - Accurate identification of students in foster care
 - DCFS caseworker and Education rights holder contact information

School districts, courts, and DCFS should work together to improve education outcomes

- Not every placement change should cause a school change
- Courts should consider school calendars
- Foster youth should not be pushed out of comprehensive schools
- Placement changes should not cause gaps in attendance
- Every foster youth should have an informed and active ERH (parent, caregiver, or volunteer)



ewh.com



Los Angeles LCAPs Reviewed

How did the 80+ LA County school districts address the needs of foster youth in their Year 1 LCAPs?



Early stage of implementation

- Year 1 of a seven-year implementation process
- Districts were using an unfamiliar planning process and format, with limited guidance from CDE, for the first time and within a limited timeframe
- Districts did not have recent, reliable data on the number of foster youth students – and foster youth are a small student population (1-2% for most districts)
- Districts were facing multiple competing needs and priorities in developing their LCAPs



LA districts grouped by size

- LAUSD – about 8,500 foster youth, over 10 times as many foster youth as the next largest district in the state
- “Large” districts – 25 districts with between 100 and 650 foster youth, with a total of about 6,000 foster youth
- “Mid-sized” districts – 35 districts with between 15 and 100 foster youth, with a total of about 1,500 foster youth
- “Small” districts – 20 districts with 15 or fewer foster youth, with a total of less than 300 foster youth

LAUSD's Foster Youth Achievement Program



- LCAP includes detailed and specific goals focused on closing the academic achievement gap for foster youth
- LCAP includes district-level actions to create policy, develop MOUs with child welfare agency, and gather data
- LCAP includes goals, actions, and funding for a new “Foster Youth Achievement Program” – 60+ PSA counselors specifically for foster youth

Other large districts leading the way for foster youth



- Several other districts' LCAPs included goals, actions, and substantial funding for foster youth:
 - Pomona USD (495)
 - Compton USD (466)
 - Inglewood USD (189)
 - Downey USD (171)
 - Bonita USD (146)
 - William Hart USD (132)
 - Whittier Union HSD (100)

Examples of LCAP provisions from “early leader” districts



- **Goals:**
 - Closing education outcome gaps
 - Reducing school transfers
 - Providing counseling/planning for individual foster youth
- **Actions:**
 - Developing policies, collecting data, hiring and training designated staff
 - Increasing access to counselors, social workers, etc.
 - Increasing access to academic supports (tutoring, credit recovery, etc.)



More progress needed...

- 12 districts with large foster youth populations (between 100 and 600) included LCAP goals and/or actions for foster youth, but very little funding (\$0 to \$55K)
- 7 districts with between 100 and over 500 foster youth did not include any goals, actions, or funding specific to foster youth in their Year 1 LCAPs



Leveraging opportunities

- Our review also identified non-foster-youth-specific LCAP investments that may have important benefits for foster youth.
- Some districts' LCAPs combined plans to address the needs of foster youth, with other at-risk students (homeless, EL, etc.)



Leveraging opportunities

- Attendance support and intervention for students with chronic absenteeism
- School climate improvements through Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS), restorative justice, and other alternatives to exclusionary discipline
- Afterschool and summer enrichment programs, credit recovery programs, and other avenues for students to catch up academically



Next steps

- “Early leader” districts provide numerous examples of ways to address needs of foster youth in LCAP goals, actions, and funding
- As more disaggregated data become available, we will learn more about distribution of foster youth in schools/districts, and achievement gaps.
- Early positive indicators may include:
 - Improved attendance
 - Lower rates of suspension and expulsion
 - Fewer school changes



Toolkit of resources developed by coalition

- Year 2 Sample LCAP Provisions for Foster Youth
- Flowchart -- to help districts customize the sample LCAP

<http://cfyetc.org/publications.html>

- Los Angeles Districts LCAP Review
 - Narrative report
 - Excel spreadsheets for each LCAP

http://educationcoordinatingcouncil.org/ECC_Reports.html

Online Resources

www.cfyetf.org - **California Foster Youth Education Task Force** - Education Law Factsheets and other materials

www.lacdcfs.org/edu/default.html - **LA County DCFS, Youth Education Support**

www.foster-ed.org - **National Center for Youth Law - Foster Youth Education Initiative**

www.MyLifeMyRights.org - **Public Counsel** - easy to read, phone and tablet-friendly website for foster youth on education and ILP rights.