Foster Care Remediation Plan

July 2019

Indiana DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

House Enrolled Act 1314 (2018)
Foster Care Remediation Plan

Background

Pursuant to HEA 1314 (2018), the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) has developed this Foster Care Remediation Plan and respectfully submits it to the following:

- The State Board of Education;
- The Department of Child Services; and
- The Legislative Council.

This plan took into consideration the Annual Report on Foster Care Youth Educational Outcomes created by the Indiana State Board of Education (SBOE), in consultation with IDOE and the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS), in April 2019. The Foster Care Remediation Plan is a collaborative effort between IDOE, DCS, and a cross-sectional stakeholder working group comprised of representation from both public and private organizations and individuals involved with foster care in Indiana.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which was signed into law in 2015 by President Obama, is a federal statute requiring an increased focus on youth in foster care, recognizing them as an at-risk population in need of special supports designed to promote educational stability and success. ESSA requires states to collect and report data on student achievement and graduation rates for students in foster care. Subsequently, in 2018, Indiana passed legislation in the form of HEA 1314 expanding the collection and reporting of data on foster students and requiring that information to be disaggregated by the foster youth subset. The confluence of the aforementioned federal and state legislation paved the way for the distillation of this information.

According to the 2019 Indiana Youth Institute's Data Book, Indiana ranks 47th nationally in the number of children in foster care. It is clear that Indiana struggles in not only addressing the number of foster youth, but also the manner in which these students perform at lower educational levels than their non-foster peers. For those directly involved in work connected to foster care, these facts confirm long suspected assumptions. However, the 2019 SBOE Foster Care Youth Educational Outcomes report places this issue at the forefront of public awareness.

Stakeholder Group

A stakeholder group was assembled to analyze the 2018 foster care data. The SBOE report acknowledged the importance of maintaining a perspective that the Indiana data collected in 2018, representing data from the 2017-2018 school year, was the first time this data was collected. This group has been formed with a longitudinal perspective in mind and will be an

ongoing group, evolving to meet the needs of this critical work. Participants of the first iteration of the stakeholder group have been identified in the following table along with their affiliation.

Name	Affiliation
Angela Jordan	Indiana Department of Child Services
Steven Takacs	Indiana Department of Child Services
Kelly Hargett	Indiana Department of Child Services/
Melaina Gant	Indiana Department of Child Services
Gina Moran	Indiana Department of Child Services
Jami Nickerson	Indiana Department of Child Services
Travis Stahl	Indiana Department of Child Services
Heather Kestian	Indiana Department of Child Services
Heidi Monroe	Indiana Department of Child Services
Erin Murphy	Indiana Department of Child Services
Alicia Kielmovitch	Indiana State Board of Education
Chad Ranney	Indiana State Board of Education
Doug Thieme	Paddock View Residential Center
Donna Walker	Child Advocates
Mary Jo Dare	Child Advocates
James Taylor	Warren Township Schools
Demetrees Hutchins	Hutchins Consulting, LLC
Kristi Cundiff	Foster & Adoptive Parents Association
Brent Kent	Foster Success
Charles Brown	Contractor with Warren Township Schools
Joshua Christian	National Network for Youth in Foster Care
Guenevere Kalal	Damar Services, Inc.
Shannon Wheeler	Choices Coordinated Care Solutions
Robin LeClaire	Indiana Department of Education
Jeff Wittman	Indiana Department of Education

Data Analyzation

There are data challenges that limit the complete understanding of the impact of foster care on student achievement and on the progress of this population at the present time. However, it is also important to keep in consideration the fact that despite the questions surrounding the completeness of the data records, the picture of academic outcomes for students in foster care compared to state averages is unequivocal. This opportunity to review, analyze, and plan represents a beginning, not an end in itself. This work will help to further develop Indiana's capacity to effectively serve and support foster youth.

Items identified in the Foster Care Remediation Plan can be grouped into five areas identified below:

- *Items and Issues Requiring Further Study:*
  - The Tree House program from Seattle, Washington could serve as a possible model for Indiana.
  - Learning more about federal foster care priority documents as they become available is a priority.
  - It will be important to keep the foster care remediation workgroup in place, understanding the membership may change according to needs identified through the annual SBOE foster care report.
  - Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) must be properly implemented so students are provided an educational program best meeting their social, emotional, and academic needs. IEPs, 504 plans, individual learner plans, functional behavioral assessments, and behavior plans should also be appropriately applied to support student learning.
  - Indiana must be aware of and ready to respond to the anticipated increase in US Department of Education monitoring and oversight of individual states for ESSA accountability.
  - IDOE and DCS will continue to participate and represent Indiana through work with the Serve Center. Based at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, the center has been a valuable resource in supporting ESSA implementation in relation to foster youth. These efforts emanate from the US Department of Education.
  - Regular review and consideration of new yearly foster care educational data will be necessary to compare with previous data to highlight trends and inform further work.
- *Items and Issues Requiring IDOE Guidance and Training:*
  - Ways to streamline enrollment of foster youth in relation to the Point of Contact (POC) Checklist and data reporting should be studied for possible

implementation, including collaboration with parties serving and supporting student educational needs.

- o Guidance and training should be created and provided to appropriate school staff on services available to help support the unique needs of foster youth.
- o Additional information and resources related to trauma, including addressing how trauma impacts learning and responsive interventions, should be provided to appropriate school staff.
- o Improving connections for collaboration with local mental health services to support student needs should be explored and guidance provided for implementation.
- o Continuing to increase awareness of the importance of social and emotional learning as it relates to providing improved support for the whole child is critical. This includes the utilization of the Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework, principles of educational neuroscience, and the development of anti-stigma groups and supports.
- o Highlighting the role of foster parents (caregivers) as educational advocates for foster youth, and identify needed training opportunities to enhance knowledge and resources in this area (i.e. DCS Education Liaisons, Child Advocates' Education Advocates, etc.) is important in supporting students.
- o Alternatives may be required for different student information systems to provide consistent information across all available platforms.
- o Foster care should be included as part of the McKinney-Vento homeless audit process.

- *Items and Issues Requiring Resources:*
  - o The Foster Success program has available financial resources. The program has offered to provide financial assistance to support the training of local education agency (LEA) Foster Care POCs.
  - o Partnering with the Indiana Youth Institute to develop a web-based orientation for LEA Foster Care POCs should be explored for possible collaboration.
  - o Developing regional peer support groups for those doing the work of Foster Care POCs could be a useful resource. These regional groups can also serve as a vehicle through which to provide further training and other outreach efforts.
  - o Improving and creating additional access and participation of youth voices in this work is critical.
  - o Identify school practitioners to participate on the foster care stakeholder group.

- *Items and Issues That May Require Legislation:*
  - o Non-public schools currently do not submit an Additional Data (AD) Report which is how foster care data is shared with IDOE; nor do they report on

discipline data. Avenues for collecting this information from non-public schools must be explored in order to fully account for all children in foster care, regardless of school setting.

- o There is a need to identify and advocate for additional funding to support foster youth.
- o Connecting with the National Foster Care Youth & Alumni Policy Council may help stakeholders stay informed about the development of federal foster care priority documents.

- *Items and Issues That May Require Changes in the Existing Indiana Child-Serving System:*
  - o Develop the relationship with Family and Social Services Administration, who oversee the On My Way Pre-K program in order to acquire better data on foster youth in Pre-K.
  - o Continue to enhance collaboration and data sharing between IDOE, DCS, and LEAs to provide the most accurate data on foster youth and how they perform.
  - o Explore ways to utilize the Management Performance Hub (MPH) as a potential partner to compile data from IDOE and DCS.
    - ▪ All information created would need to be in compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
  - o Better define how to use and leverage the monthly data pull between DCS and IDOE.
  - o Review Student Testing Numbers (STNs) as a strategy to assist with identifying and mining for foster youth education data.
  - o Continued collaboration with DCS regarding the evolution of a consistent process for the notification to schools of foster youth participation is necessary.
  - o Explore ways to address and minimize the issue of transiency of foster youth.
  - o Identify ways to reduce the stigma associated with being a foster youth.
  - o Work with appropriate partners to identify causes, influences, and other factors leading to foster youth involvement with the juvenile justice system.
  - o Review the impact of forfeiting 21st Century Scholar financial support for youth in the foster care system as a consequence of their involvement with the juvenile justice system.
  - o Consideration of both qualitative and quantitative data, including how to gather qualitative data, needs to occur to create a complete and accurate picture of the foster cares system in Indiana.

Timeline

Efforts of the foster care stakeholder group will be guided by the articulated timeline provided.

Target Timeframe	Task
October 2018 – ongoing	As required by HEA 1314, DCS will provide information to IDOE on foster youth sufficient to identify students in foster care.
March 2019 – ongoing	Develop a formal system to equip, train, and support LEA foster care points of contact to serve foster youth within ESSA guidelines.
May 2019 – ongoing	IDOE and DCS begin regular meetings to discuss data share agreement and ways to improve how data is collected, shared, and analyzed. This provides the foundation for completing the yearly date report.
July 2019 – ongoing	Stakeholders begin regular meetings, starting on at least a bi-monthly basis. Sub-committees are formed to analyze the report data, data collection issues, explore promising practices and programs, identify opportunities for IDOE / DCS guidance and training with LEAs, and identify legislation that may be needed.
August 2019	Present recommendations to the Commission on Improving the Status of Children.

Conclusion

This remediation plan represents a starting place for the work to improve services and educational supports for foster youth in Indiana moving forward. Indiana is committed to bridging the gaps in educational performance for students in foster care, as they compare to those not involved in the foster care system. The Indiana Department of Education, in collaboration with the Indiana Department of Child Services, is charged with the creation and implementation of this Foster Care Remediation Plan. However, the stakeholder group working on the Foster Care Remediation Plan has the continued obligation to embrace the challenge of identifying and removing barriers, thus enabling students in Indiana's foster care system to perform according to their fullest potential.