



Youth Welfare Approach

The Good-Better-Best Continuum of Service Provision Educational Attainment

Youth in foster care experience much higher levels of school instability than their peers. The educational impact of every school change is significant. Each time a youth enters a new school they must adjust to different curricula, different expectations, new friends, and new teachers. Keeping children in the same school provides continuity in education, improves educational and life outcomes, created an opportunity for youth to be able to maintain and foster important relationships through school

There continues to be a wide gap in postsecondary educational attainment between youth in foster care and other young adults. Youth in foster care may be unprepared for college level work because they of multiple school placements changes, are scheduled into basic education (rather than college preparatory) courses, or attended residential school placements.

Research indicates that postsecondary educational attainment is associated with increased earnings later in life and is a key factor in the achievement of self-sufficiency among youth as they transition to adulthood. Many young people with foster care experience, however, face significant challenges engaging in postsecondary education from enrollment through completion.

Think about the services your agency provides in assisting youth with foster care experiences achieve their educational goals. First, outline the local and federal policies or procedures your agency follows for services in this area. Then, consider your own work with youth and that of other caseworkers at your agency— where do the services you provide fall along the Good-Better-Best continuum. Below is an example of Educational Attainment.

Educational Definitions

Education Stability: Maintaining a child in his or her school of origin unless it is determined that is not in the youth's best interest

Postsecondary Education: is the education level that follows the successful completion of secondary education, any education beyond high school

Vocational Education: is education that prepares people to work as a technician or to take up employment in a skilled craft or trade as a tradesperson. Vocational education is sometimes referred to as career and technical education.

Educational Attainment using the Good-Better-Best Continuum

Service need: Educational attainment for all youth in foster care

Good: A Good level of service provision includes: Satisfying federal and state requirements, Federal policies/procedures: Federal Laws Related to Education Stability

- *The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008*(Fostering Connections). childwelfare.gov/laws-policies/federal/fosteringconnections
- *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015* (ESSA) (P.L. 114-95) provides a parallel mandate for state and local departments of education to provide educational stability for youth in foster care. <https://www.ed.gov/essa>
- State, county, and agency policies/procedures: The Code of Virginia reinforces Fostering Connections and ESSA for educational stability
 - Section 22.1-3.4 - Enrollment of certain children placed in foster care <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter1/section22.1-3.4>
 - Section 63.2-900.3 - School placement of children in foster care - <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title63.2/chapter9/section63.2-900.3/>
- Basing service provision on individualized planning
- Ensuring that education/vocational training goals take into account each youth's level of cognitive, social, physical, and emotional development

Examples:

- Ensuring that youth are aware for educational rights per federal and state codes and policies
- Meeting regularly with the youth and responding when the youth reaches out for advice or assistance regarding education/vocational training needs

A **Better** level of service provision includes: In addition to the service provisions listed under Good, beginning education stability planning prior to a youth entering care.

- Beginning the transition planning process early to include youth's educational goals
- Consistently following up with the youth, monitoring and keeping up to date on the outlined education/vocational training goals

Examples: In addition to the service provisions listed under **Good** workers can:

- Worker and youth connect with Great Expectation coaches at local community college to provide additional educational supports

- Informing and explaining to all youth about Education and Training Voucher-ETV funding eligibility and process to assessing postsecondary education and vocation funding
- Accessing Chafee funding for non ETV eligible(secondary education) youth

The **Best** level of service provision includes all the service provisions listed under Good and Better and include evaluating Education services provided from the youth's perspective. Engage the youth in conversation on who they believe can be permanent and lifelong connections, and explore these options.

Example: In addition to the service provisions listed under Good and Better, workers can:

- Youth initiates conversations with school professionals/education team and discuss progress and concerns with caseworker on a regular basis
- Allowing space for Youth to meet with worker annually to update ETV application for postsecondary and vocational training needs
- Exploring youth suggested education and vocational training options with youth and outline the pros and cons