Empowering School Staff to Promote Mental Wellness for Foster Youth

Jessie Krier & Maricela Godinez
Which type of educator are you?

PreK-12 Teacher
School Psychologist
School Counselor
School Social Worker or School Based Therapist (LMFTs, LPCCs, LCSWs)
Other Related Services Provider (SLP, OT, APE, PT, School Nurse)
PreK-12 Administration
College or University Staff
Other
OUR VISION: SERVING EVERY CHILD

- **CASA volunteers help change children’s lives every day.**
  - **86,995**

- **Abused and neglected children had a CASA volunteer speaking up for their best interests in the last year.**
  - **280,316**

- **Children are waiting for a volunteer empowered to find them a safe, loving, permanent home.**
  - **432,677**
Agenda

1) Demographics of California Foster Youth
2) Educational and Mental Health Needs of Foster Youth
3) How To Support Foster Youth in Schools
When you think of "foster youth" what words come to mind?
Foster Youth Population

In California there are 62,610 students in Foster Care.

(CDE, Dataquest, 2016)
Race and Ethnicity

Ethnicity of Students in Foster Care
- Two or More Races: 3.2%
- White: 18.8%
- African American: 18.9%
- Asian: 1.2%
- American Indian: 1.5%
- Hispanic or Latino: 54.4%

Ethnicity of Students in California
- Two or More: 3.3%
- White: 23.6%
- African American: 5.6%
- American Indian: 0.5%
- Asian: 9.0%
- Filipino: 2.5%
- Hispanic or Latino: 54.3%

(CDE, 2016)
**Standardized Testing Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement Level</th>
<th>English Language Arts: Foster</th>
<th>English Language Arts: Non-Foster</th>
<th>Mathematics: Foster</th>
<th>Mathematics: Non-Foster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard Exceeded</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Met</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Nearly Met</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Not Met</td>
<td>56.2%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(CDE, 2015)
Graduation Rates

Source: Authors' analysis of linked California Department of Education and California Department of Social Services administrative data, 2009/10.

(Barrat & Berliner, 2013)
Students with Disabilities

Source: Authors’ analysis of linked California Department of Education and California Department of Social Services administrative data, 2009/10.

(Barrat & Berliner, 2013)
14 Disability Categories

- Autism
- Deaf-blindness
- Deafness
- Developmental delay
- **Emotional Disturbance**
- Hearing impairment
- Intellectual disability
- Multiple disabilities
- **Other health impairment**

- Orthopedic impairment
- **Specific learning disability**
- Speech or language impairment
- Traumatic brain injury
- Visual impairment, including blindness

(National Dissemination Center for Children With Disabilities - NICHY, 2012)
High Incidence Foster Youth Disabilities

Specific Learning Disability
- 39% of foster children affected by SLD
  - Characterized by disabilities related to thinking, reading, writing, calculating

Other Health Impairments
- 11% of foster children affected
  - Defined as: “Having limited strength and vitality... resulting in limited alertness to the educational environment” (NICHCY, 2012)
  - Includes ADHD and intellectual disability

(Lightfoot, Hill, LaLiberte, 2011; NICHCY, 2012; The Stuart Foundation, 2013)
High Incidence Foster Youth Disabilities

Emotional Disturbance
- Foster children are 5x more likely than non-foster children to be diagnosed with emotional disturbance (ED) (22% vs. 4%)

ED is characterized by:
- Inability to learn unexplained by other factors
- Difficulties maintaining relationships with peers/teachers
- Inappropriate behavior/feelings
- General pervasive mood of unhappiness
- Tendency to develop physical symptoms/fears associated with personal or school problems

Lightfoot, Hill, LaLiberte, 2011; NICHCY, 2012; The Stuart Foundation, 2013)
Mental Health Needs

- Depression (49%)
- PTSD
- ADHD
- Anxiety

Disruptive Disorders

(Bronsard, 2016)
Identification of Students in Foster Care

**Foster Youth Initial Education Intake Form**

Name of Student: [Blank]  Date of Birth: [Blank]

*The youth and/or person enrolling the youth in school should fill out this intake form to the best of their ability upon enrollment.*

**Caregiver and Education Rights Holder**

Who does the youth live with?

Name: [Blank]  Phone Number: [Blank]  Relationship: [Blank]

Who has the legal right to make education decisions for the youth? (Leave blank if you are not sure)

Name: [Blank]  Phone Number: [Blank]  Relationship: [Blank]

**Other Contacts**

Does the youth have a...

- Social Worker? [YES  NO  NOT SURE]
- Probation Officer? [YES  NO  NOT SURE]
- Legal Representative in Dependency Court? [YES  NO  NOT SURE]
- Public Defender? [YES  NO  NOT SURE]
- Court Appointed Special Advocate (“CASA”)? [YES  NO  NOT SURE]
Keys to Mental Wellness

1. Build rapport and relationships by keeping promises and routines
2. Know the laws to protect students in foster care
3. Foster coping skills to deal with transitions and emotions
4. Identify and enhance protective and resilience factors
Key 1: Keep promises and routines
Key 2: Know the laws

AB 490
- School of Origin
- Foster Youth Liaison
- Immediate Enrollment
- Records Transfer
- Partial Credit
- Extracurriculars

AB 167/216
- State versus local graduation requirements

Ed. Rights Holders
- Assigned by the court
- Signs IEPs, decides school placement, signs assessment plan
Key 3: Fostering Coping Skills

- Help foster students understand the connection between thoughts, feelings, and behavior.
  - Identify feelings
  - Provide coping strategies
    - Meditation (deep breathing exercises,
    - Stress Balls
    - Taking breaks
Key 4: Identify protective and resilience factors

(Futures Without Violence, 2016)
Repacking the Invisible Suitcase
Case Study

Andres is an 11 year old, 6th grade student in foster care whose suspected areas of disability are Specific Learning Disability, Emotional Disturbance, Other Health Impairment, and Autism. He loves to draw comics and listen to music. Andres has a 1st grade reading level, with difficulties in decoding. He is seen alone at lunch, and often has emotional outbursts at adults and peers. He also refuses to complete work. Teachers report that Andres doesn’t try and does not pay attention.

In your role, what would you do to help Andres be successful?
When you think of "foster youth" what words come to mind?
Questions?!
Thank you!
References


