Educational Resource Guide

Purpose Of Educational Resource Guide:

Children and youth who become involved in the child welfare system often experience adversity and trauma, which can lead to learning difficulties. Children may have missed a considerable amount of school or experienced frequent school changes, which can cause serious gaps in their education. According to the Colorado Department of Education, in 2020, 30.5% of students in foster care graduated or completed high school in four years. In contrast, 81.9% of students statewide have graduated in four years.

At Advocates for Children CASA, we believe that advocating with an awareness of educational needs is key in helping to ensure that children and youth receive what they need for the best possible outcomes in school. Part of this advocacy involves identification of resources that can benefit students.
Please use this guide as a resource for educational advocacy on your case!

School Stability and Foster Youth

Helpful information:
Colorado Department of Education:
Every Transition Counts for Students in Foster Care
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRwii1Q9Rnk&app=desktop

VIDEO: Best Interest Determination for Students in Foster Care:
https://youtu.be/R5XYpozMLJA

VIDEO: Foster My Education: Hear about Foster Youth Experiences with School:
https://youtu.be/49nkY6LcU1I

School Districts within the 18ᵗʰ Judicial District:

Arapahoe, Lincoln, Elbert, and Douglas counties:
Aurora Public Schools
Cherry Creek School District
Douglas County School District
Elbert County School District
Englewood Public Schools
Lincoln County School District
Littleton Public Schools
Sheridan School District

**Children and youth in our programs may attend schools elsewhere in Colorado.

Contents

Working with schools

For court appointed volunteers:

- Contact the school's main office staff or a school Principal/Assistant Principal first.
- Let them know you are a court appointed advocate for one of their students and ask to whom you can provide your credentials.
- Share your signed Court Order of Appointment with the school. Your Case Coordinator can provide you with this document.

For non-court appointed volunteers

- Relationships with parents and caregivers are the key! They will need to consent to your involvement and communication with each individual school staff member.
- An email from the *parent/guardian* to you and the school staff member is one way to open the door to communication with schools.

Find out who you can talk to about the youth's experiences at school. You may need to talk with more than one person.

- School administrators (Principal, Assistant Principal, Dean)
- School Counselor or Social Worker
- Teacher
- School Psychologist
- IEP Case Manager
- Family Liaison or Student Engagement Specialist

Possible questions to ask:

- How is the child doing academically?
- What are the youth's strengths and challenges?
- Are there any attendance or behavior issues?
- Does the child have positive connections with adults and peers at school?
- Does the youth receive any special supports at school?
- Does the school offer extracurricular opportunities or special programs?

Ongoing considerations

- Obtain a copy of the school calendar and visit the school's website to stay informed about school events and opportunities.
- Support caregivers with understanding school and classroom policies. Attend meetings or conferences with them if helpful.
- Maintain confidentiality. Never share details about a child's case with school staff.
- Remember that some school and activity fees can be waived for children in foster care.
- If there is a possibility of a school change, talk to your Case Coordinator and the professional team about your thoughts or concerns.

Special Education

Special education refers to a range of services that can be provided in different ways and in different settings. Services are tailored to meet the needs of students with disabilities. There are very specific criteria which must be met for a child to qualify for an **Individualized Education Program** (IEP). An IEP lays out the special education instruction, supports, and services a student needs to thrive in school. They may receive individualized teaching and other resources at no cost to their families.

About 30% of children/youth served by Advocates for Children CASA have an IEP.

IEP Terminology

- **Accommodations**
  Supports needed to allow the child to access the general education curriculum, such as extra time for tests, preferential seating arrangements.
- **Modifications**
  Changes to what the child is expected to learn, or what work is to be completed. An example could be completing a project instead of a written report to demonstrate understanding.
- **Services**
  Such as a specific amount of time with school support staff like a speech pathologist or math interventionist.
- **Transition Services**
  IEPs for youth over age 15 must include a plan to support the student after high school as they transition to work, college, etc.
- **ESY**
  Extended School Year may be recommended to provide summer learning to prevent regression of skills.
- **Least Restrictive Environment(LRE)**
  Federal law says that kids who get special education services should learn in the same classrooms as other kids as much as possible. This is known as the least restrictive environment.

504 plans also provide support for children in a school setting. The criteria for who can qualify for a 504 plan are less stringent than for an IEP. Children who struggle with school but don't qualify for an IEP may be eligible for a 504 plan.

Read **HERE** about the difference between and IEP and 504 plan

Child Find
Child Find Directory | CDE (state.co.us)
Child Find is part of Colorado's system for identifying children suspected of having a delay in development. If a young child is not meeting typical developmental milestones, or someone is concerned about the child's growth or learning, child find teams will evaluate how the child

plays, learns, speaks, behaves, and moves. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine if there is a significant delay or if there is a need for early intervention or special education services. Evaluations conducted by Child Find teams are at no cost to parents

Colorado Department of Education:

CDE has a list of resources in the community to provide support to families with children who have special needs**: https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/spedparents-agencylist**

El Grupo Vida
https://elgrupovida.org/en/home/ **(303) 335-9875**
A network of Hispanic/Latino families formed to provide mutual support for people with disabilities, special needs, and their families.

THRIVE Center
https://www.thrivectr.org/ **(303) 632-6840 or (303) 923-3532 (Spanish)**
THRIVE Center is a community parent resource center which focuses on reaching underserved parents of children with disabilities, such as those living in a specific area of the state, those with low incomes, or limited English proficiency. THRIVE offers workshops and resources to promote understanding and advocacy for children and youth with special needs.

Early Childhood Education
Head Start Early Learning
Head Start programs provide wide-ranging services for low-income children from birth to elementary school at no cost. The program is child-centered, family-focused, and community-based. Head Start programs build relationships with families that support positive parent-child relationships, family well-being, and connections to peers and community. Additionally, Head Start services are designed to be responsive to each child and family's ethnic, cultural, and linguistic background.
To find a Head Start program: **https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/center-locator**

The PLAYbook
The PLAYbook contains information and activities that anyone caring for young children – including parents, siblings, guardians, grandparents, babysitters, neighbors, and family friends - can use to prepare children to be successful when entering kindergarten.

English Version **Spanish Version**

Colorín Colorado
https://www.colorincolorado.org/
Bilingual resources for families of English language learners (ELLs) in Grades PreK-12. Colorín Colorado has been providing free research-based information, activities, and advice to parents, schools, and communities around the country for more than a decade.

GED and Alternative Programs

Most school districts have some type of drop out prevention program which is geared to help students earn their diploma or complete a GED. A student must be age 17 to complete their GED or have a signed waiver exempting them from the age requirement. Some students who struggle with a formal school setting can find success completing high school by earning a GED.

Aurora Public Schools: **APS Avenues**
Cherry Creek Schools: **Endeavor Academy**
Englewood Public Schools: **NEXT Program**
Littleton Public Schools: **NEXT Program**
Douglas County Schools: **DCSD GED**

GED.com website
https://ged.com/
The official online resource to prepare for and earn high school equivalency diploma.

Arapahoe/Douglas Works!
https://www.adworks.org/job-seekers/programs/future-u-young-adult **(303)636-1160**
Provides a program for youth ages 16-21 who want to reach educational goals, find a job, or need help with career planning.

 Colorado Department of Education GED Resources one pager

Vocational programs

Many school districts also offer programming for Career Technical Education to prepare for specific careers, concurrent enrollment curriculum where students can take certain college courses while in high school. Community colleges may also offer resources.

Pickens Technical College
Cherry Creek School District Career and Technical Education(CTE)
Cherry Creek Innovation Campus
Douglas County School District Career and Technical Education(CTE)
Emily Griffith Technical College

Scholarships/Assistance for Foster Youth

Youth in foster care may qualify for grants or other financial assistance to cover educational costs. Former foster youth are also eligible to apply for these programs.

Helen M. McLoraine Scholarship Program for Foster Care and Emancipating Youth
https://denverfoundation.academicworks.com/
This scholarship program provides educational scholarships for foster care youth who are

emancipated or are in the process of preparing to emancipate from the foster care system in Colorado. Awards can be up to $10,000 per year. The average award size is approximately $5,000.

Boundless Opportunity Scholarship
https://www.danielsfund.org/scholarships/boundless/overview
$500 to $5000 scholarships available for highly motivated non-traditional students, including former foster youth and former juvenile justice youth.

Colorado Education and Training Voucher
Colorado (fc2sprograms.org) **(720) 279-4135**
Up to $5,000 per year available to current and former foster youth for qualified school expenses.

Akerman Academic Excellence Scholarship
 Click **HERE** for criteria and more information about the scholarship.
Or email **scholarship@nationalcasagal.org**

$2500 per year for 4 years at accredited academic institutions and technical programs.
The award can be applied toward expenses like books, student housing, meal plans, etc.
This is a competitive scholarship---the selection committee chooses ONE recipient per year.

Forward Steps
https://forwardsteps.org **(303) 404-9966**
Scholarships for unmet financial needs for youth who have emancipated from foster care in Colorado. Up to $6,000. Applicants must reside in Colorado and going to school in Denver, Boulder, or Fort Collins.

<u>Online Learning Resources</u>

Khan Academy
khanacademy.org
Offers online tools in multiple subject areas for all grade levels. Khan academy produces short video lessons as well as supplementary practice exercises. Khan academy is free but requires users to create an account.

Dads Worksheets
https://www.dadsworksheets.com/
Free, printable worksheets and tools. This website has resources to cover a variety of math concepts for all ages, including telling time and using money.

Virtual Nerd.com
https://www.virtualnerd.com/
Find videos for math support for middle school, Pre-Algebra, Algebra 1 and 2, and Geometry.

Schoolhouse World

[Free Online Tutoring — Schoolhouse](#)

Free online tutoring resource. The platform currently offers small group lessons for middle and high school math. Tutoring is limited to students aged 13 and up.

Teach Your Monster to Read

https://www.teachyourmonster.org/

Free online reading games for emerging readers in grades Kindergarten through second grade. Must create an account.

Tutoring Programs

Advocates for Children CASA tutoring program offers in person and remote tutoring for children and youth. Tutors are volunteers who meet with a student at least once per week to assist with homework and learning concepts. Students can be referred to the program by caregivers, professional team members, volunteers. Court involvement is not a requirement.   Contact Educational Liaison Kim Diggs for more information and referral forms.
Kim_diggs@adv4children.org **(303) 407-7828**

Arapahoe Libraries free online homework help

https://arapahoelibraries.org/resource/helpnow/

HelpNow provides online homework help daily. Available in English and Spanish.
**a library account is required. Sign up for a library card

Schoolhouse World

https://schoolhouse.world/

Free online tutoring resource. The platform currently offers small group lessons for middle and high school math. Tutoring is limited to students aged 13 and up.

Whiz Kids Multiple locations in the Denver metro area

https://www.whizkidstutoring.com/   **(303) 504-9449**

this tutoring program involves a religious component. Caregiver permission is required for children to participate.

Tutoring takes place at host sites (churches, schools, or other community agencies). Each site has a Coordinator, School Liaison and a Club Leader who help facilitate the program. Tutoring is for one hour and focuses on reading, math, and homework help.

Aurora Youth Options

Aurora Youth Options provides FREE academic assistance, known as Homework Help, to Middle and High School Youth who either live in Aurora or attend an Aurora school. Currently, Homework Help is being offered virtually every Tuesday from 4-5pm via Zoom. Please reach out to **ayo@aumhc.org** or call (**303) 617-2667** to get connected to a volunteer who will support you on your specified subject matter.

Other resources

My Colorado Journey

https://www.mycoloradojourney.com/journey/students

This website contains resources for youth to explore post-secondary opportunities including career surveys and exploration tools to help youth figure out where their interests are. Other tools help youth understand the skills, education, and salaries for different kinds of jobs.

Parent University

https://www.aurorapartnersforthrivingyouth.org/courses   **(720) 200-1584**

Presented by Aurora Partners for Thriving Youth, Parent University offers online courses with topics relevant to supporting youth. Classes are geared toward parents and trusted adults, and include Youth Substance Use, Trauma Informed Care and Mindfulness, Understanding the Juvenile Justice System, and many others.

Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Centers

https://equity.dpsk12.org/family-and-community-engagement/face-centers/

 The Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Center is a community resource center that connects students, families, and our community with free services to increase their economic self-sufficiency and academic success. All services and classes are free to community members 16 and older — not just DPS parents.

Services include computer skills and GED classes, citizenship classes, health and nutrition workshops, parenting workshops, financial literacy and more.

DAVA (Downtown Aurora Visual Arts)

https://www.davarts.org/   **(303) 367-5886**

DAVA provides free after-school art classes for Aurora Public Schools students
Summer programming also available.