A Foster Parent's Guide to

EDUCATION

NYC™
**Administration for
Children's Services**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A THANK YOU TO OUR EDUCATION PARTNERS

ACS wishes to acknowledge our critical partnerships with the New York City Department of Education, The New York State Education Department, The City University of New York, The State University of New York, and well as our work with the New York State Office of Children and Family Services and the Higher Education Services Corporation, which are all helping to improve educational outcomes for children in foster care.

Dear Foster Parents and Caregivers:

Thank you for your service to our most vulnerable children and your commitment to their health, safety and well-being. While children are in care, foster parents play a tremendous part in supporting them, advocating for them, and making sure they can experience childhood as "normal" as their peers. All children deserve to reach their full potential and thrive in all areas of their life, especially at school where they spend a significant amount of time.

As you know, education has a big impact on our children—it can open doors of opportunity and provide a source of stability against the trauma and other negative experiences in their lives. For many children, school is an important place they feel safe and have a sense of belonging. Given the challenges they experience, children in foster care need special attention and an extra lift to support their success.

This Foster Parent's Guide to Education is a valuable guide written for foster parents and has information to help you navigate the school system and the many services and resources available for you and the children in your care—from birth to high school, college, and beyond. It also lets you know of certain rights and policies that are designed to help children in foster care succeed in school and maintain their stability.

ACS and your provider agency are committed to assisting and supporting you. With our new Home Away from Home initiative, we are striving to improve the foster care experience for both our young people and our caregivers. This guide is just one resource. I encourage you to reach out to your agency or to the ACS Office of Education Support & Policy Planning by e-mailing Education.Unit@acs.nyc.gov. More education resources can be found on ACS' website: www.nyc.gov/acs.

We want to express our gratitude for everything you do for our children and hope you find this guide helpful.

With appreciation,

David A. Hansell
Commissioner
Administration for Children's Services

Julie Farber
Deputy Commissioner, Family Permanency Services
Administration for Children's Services

OBJECTIVES OF THIS MANUAL INCLUDE:

1 Helping foster parents and caregivers understand developmental milestones

2 Providing a better understanding of the Pre-K, Kindergarten, Middle School and High School admission processes and enrollment in New York City schools

3 Supporting application to college and/or vocational programs after high school

4 Increasing knowledge of alternative high school programs and schools for students that may need academic or social/emotional support services

5 Providing information on other education related topics such as advocacy for LGBTQ students, services for pregnant/ parenting teens and students with language barriers

MANUAL TIPS

- General information for ALL students is at the beginning of this guide and then specific information for certain grades and student populations. **It is important that you read the introduction AND any special sections.**

- Look for the sections that correspond to the age/grade of the child(ren) in your home and read the entire section.

- When you can, also read the section for the next grade, which can help students plan ahead after promotion.

- Symbol Key:

    STOP SIGN: When you see this symbol, you MUST review this information. It is critical to your responsibility as a foster parent.

    CAUTION SIGN: When you see this symbol, it is important to review this information as it relates to the education subject in that section.
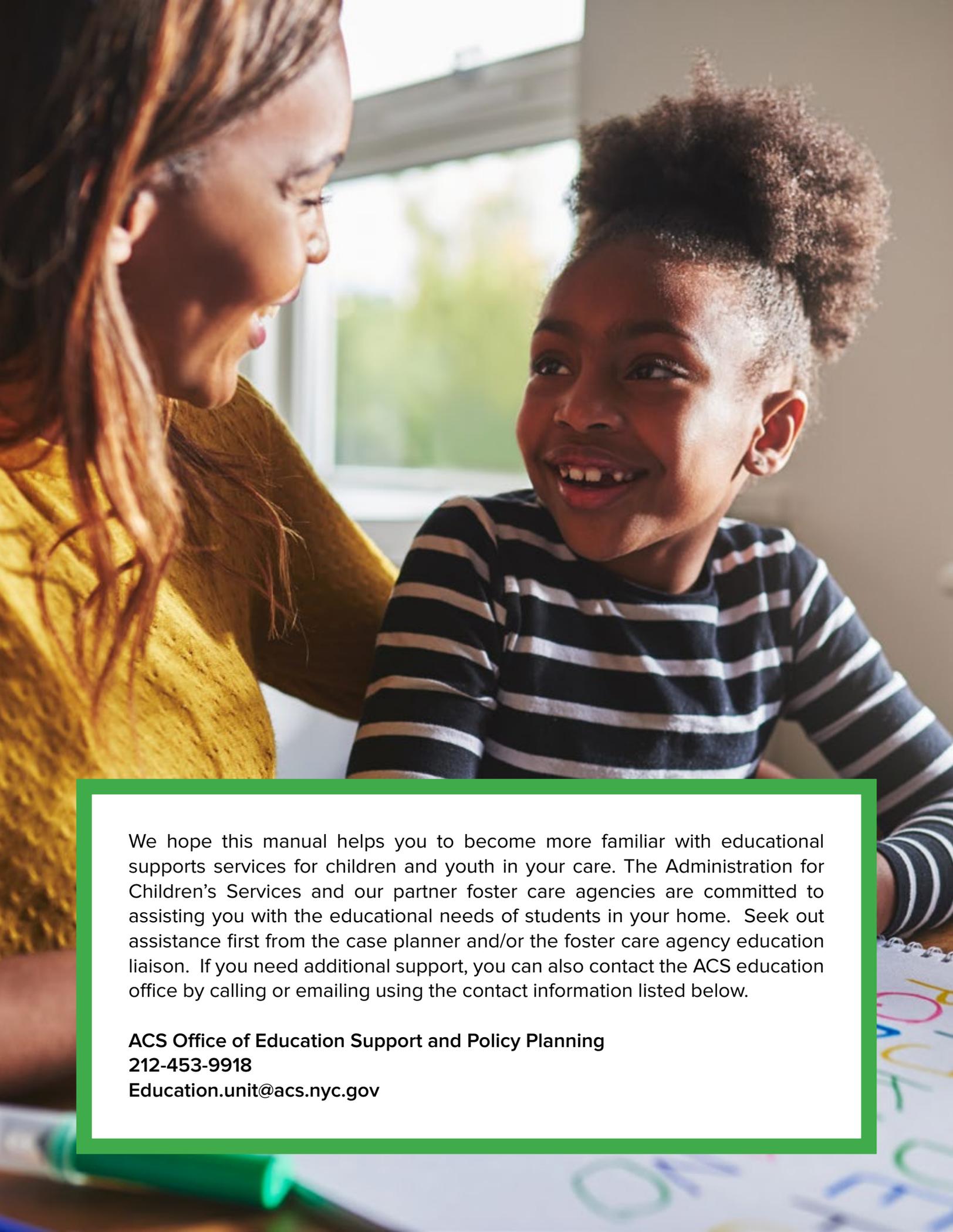
We hope this manual helps you to become more familiar with educational supports services for children and youth in your care. The Administration for Children's Services and our partner foster care agencies are committed to assisting you with the educational needs of students in your home. Seek out assistance first from the case planner and/or the foster care agency education liaison. If you need additional support, you can also contact the ACS education office by calling or emailing using the contact information listed below.

ACS Office of Education Support and Policy Planning
212-453-9918
Education.unit@acs.nyc.gov

INTRODUCTION

Foster parents promote care, trust and security by providing safe and stimulating home environments for the children in their care. Foster parents play a critical role in a child's education through the support they provide at home and at school. This manual is to help foster parents support the educational needs of the children in their care and details tools to support foster children from birth through college.

Including the student's birth parent(s)/guardian in educational decision-making is critical to the student's success. Foster parents can advocate for services but it also important that you discuss the student's educational needs with the case planner and the birth parent(s) or guardian. Most educational services will need a birth parent's/legal guardian's consent so it is important that you include them in the discussion.

Education involvement from a foster parent leads to improved student attendance, grades and test scores; higher graduation rates; and higher rates of college enrollment.

- As a foster parent, you are a vital member of a team that includes the birth parent, case planner, and agency education specialist who are expected to support every child's education planning goals.

WHENEVER A CHILD ENTERS FOSTER CARE OR MOVES TO A NEW FOSTER HOME DO NOT IMMEDIATELY TRANSFER THE CHILD TO A DIFFERENT SCHOOL LOCATED CLOSER TO THE FOSTER HOME.

- The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act is a law which **REQUIRES** students to remain in the school they attended before they came into foster care unless it is not in their best interest to remain at that school. The foster care agency will consult with ACS and DOE to make any final decisions about whether student should change schools.

Inform the agency case planner or education specialist if:

1. You get a phone call or mail from teacher, school or department of education related to behavior issues or academic progress.

2. A student is not receiving mandated special education services or if you think the services need to be changed in order to meet evolving student needs.

3. A student is suspended from school (include child's attorney as well).

4. The student is refusing to attend school.

5. You believe the student can benefit from additional academic support services.

6. To celebrate a successfully completed educational milestone.

7. When students are reaching graduation from elementary, middle, or high school.

The Education Specialist for my agency is:

Name: _____

Phone _____ Email _____

FOSTER PARENT ACTION WHEN CHILD(REN) ARE PLACED IN YOUR HOME

Ask what school/Pre-K/Head Start/Early Learn site the student attends

- Head Start/Early Learn—students 3-5 years old

- Special Education Preschool – Students with disabilities ages 3-5

- 3-K for All—students 3 years old in select school districts

- Pre-K for All—students 4 years old

- School—Kindergarten through high school (5-21 years old)

  - If the agency does not know the school information, you can contact the ACS Office of Education Support (Page 7)

  - If the student is NOT enrolled in school, instructions for enrollment can be found in the age/grade sections of this manual.

Ensure ACS or the foster care agency provides the student backpack/bookbag/books

- If a student does not come with their bookbag, please request that it be picked up and delivered to the foster home.

- If the student does not have a bookbag or school materials, make a request for the agency to purchase necessary supplies for the student.

Notify the school/early education provider and provide your contact information to update student records

- Inform the school/provider the student now resides in your home and that you are the foster parent.

- Ask whether there are any school issues that are impacting the student's school work or attendance and report that information to the agency.

> " *Education is important to me because it will be my ticket to a successful future.*
> *- I.G., FOSTER CARE YOUTH*

Request transportation services from the agency

- **Students in foster care are entitled to stay in the same school they were attending before they entered foster care.** It is important that the school is given the new address of the student after they are placed in your foster home. The new address will determine transportation options.

- NYC DOE provides transportation services based on grade, distance and, if applicable, if a student has it as a special education service. If school transportation is not an option, the agency may be able to arrange for private transportation. Foster parents should reach out to the agency to determine all private transportation options.
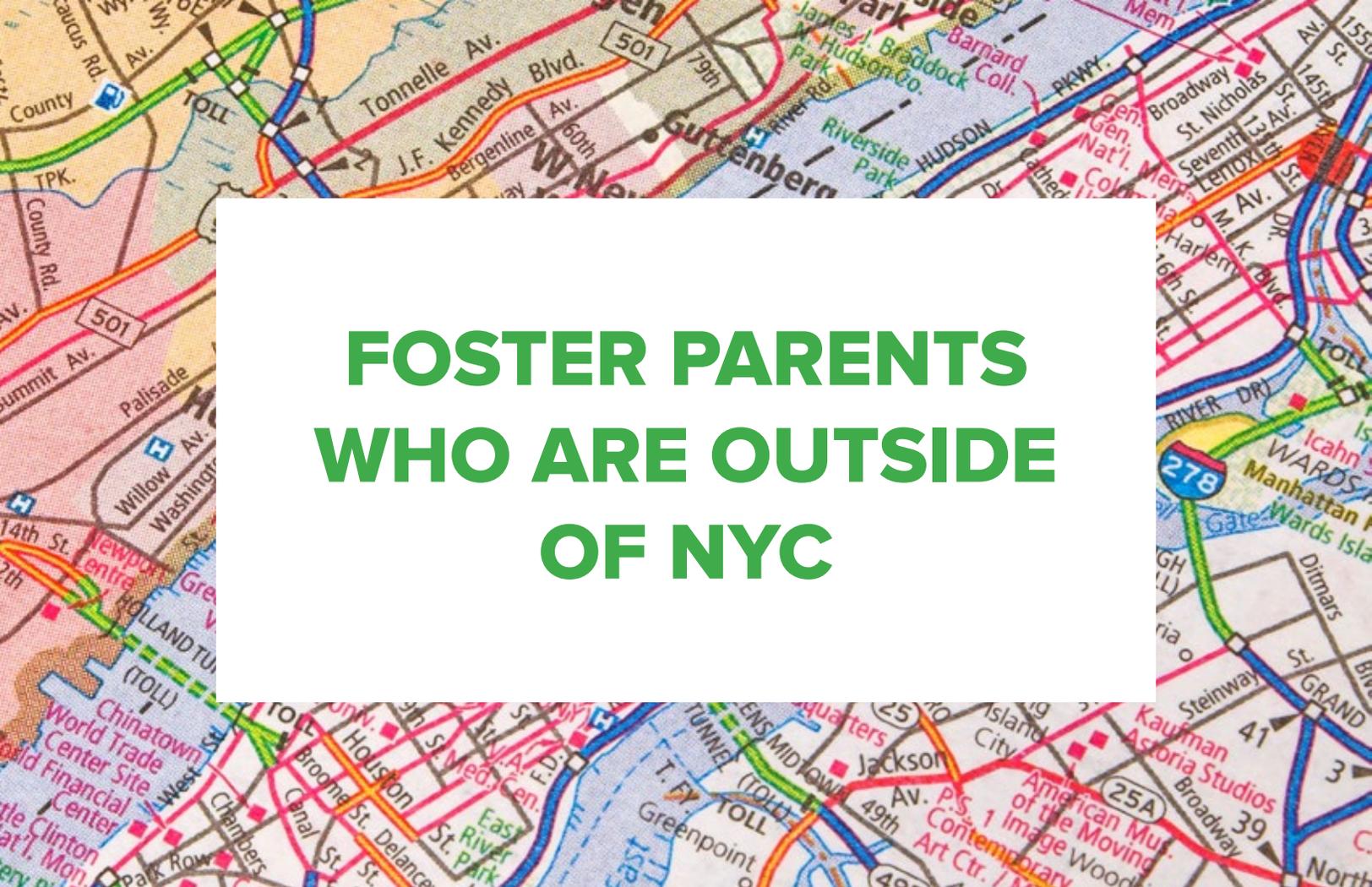
FOSTER PARENTS WHO ARE OUTSIDE OF NYC

While this Guide is geared toward foster parents and students living in New York City, this Guide is still useful for you!

- Most sections of this guide will supply you with helpful information, although some processes may be different, such as school admissions and enrollment.

    Only NYC has a "school choice" procedure where families can apply to multiple schools across the city. Outside of NYC, middle and high school students are usually assigned to the school in their district.

Please be aware that students placed in a foster home outside of NYC are still entitled to attend the NYC schools they were enrolled in when they entered foster care or changed foster homes.

- For example, a student placed in foster care in Westchester or Long Island can attend their NYC school. The foster care agency can facilitate train tickets (Metro North or Long Island Rail Road) or car service to transport the student to/from school.

WHAT IF THE FOSTER CARE AGENCY DECIDES THE STUDENTS SHOULD CHANGE SCHOOLS CLOSER TO MY HOME?

If the foster care agency determines that it is in the student's best interest to leave the NYC school system, the student is entitled to immediate enrollment in their new school district, even if the student does not have all the required paperwork.

⚠️ • The new school district is required to immediately enroll the student in foster care and then work with the foster care agency to obtain any outstanding school registration documents. Ask your agency for ACS's **School Enrollment Letter** that should be provided to the new school upon the student's enrollment.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES OUTSIDE OF NYC

For special education students in foster care who move outside of NYC and it has been determined they will change schools, their documents and records related to their special education needs will be transferred to the school district the student is residing in and they will provide the services listed on the student's NYC Individualized Education Program (IEP).

BOCES PROGRAMS

What is BOCES?

Some students may require a full time special education program that cannot be provided in a community schools. In some school districts the school placement will be handled by BOCES, the Boards of Cooperative Educational Services. BOCES partner with school districts to provide a broad range of services that help meet educational needs of students such as alternative education programs, adult education, arts programs and special education.

• If you reside in Nassau, Suffolk or Westchester, or elsewhere in NY State where a BOCES is located, check out the BOCES webpage for programs and resources that can assist your student: www.BOCES.org.

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CREATING A CULTURE OF EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT IS CRITICAL FOR SUCCESS!

As a foster parent, you have a valuable opportunity to improve upon the educational trajectory for students in your home. Even for students that only reside with you for a short time, there are still opportunities to make a direct positive impact on education outcomes.

The information in this section applies to students of all ages from Birth through 21 years old and lists general ways to best support education goals with close collaboration and planning with birth parents, schools, and foster care agency staff. It also provides critical information for specialized populations of students; including special education information, pregnant and parenting teens, students with language needs, and students transitioning from juvenile justice programs.

It is important to review this section in its entirety and then also review the sections that correspond to the specific age(s) of the students in your home. By doing so you will have the most complete picture of how to support the educational needs of children in your home.

For more information on education-related support programs, please visit the ACS website Education Page at: http://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/education.page.
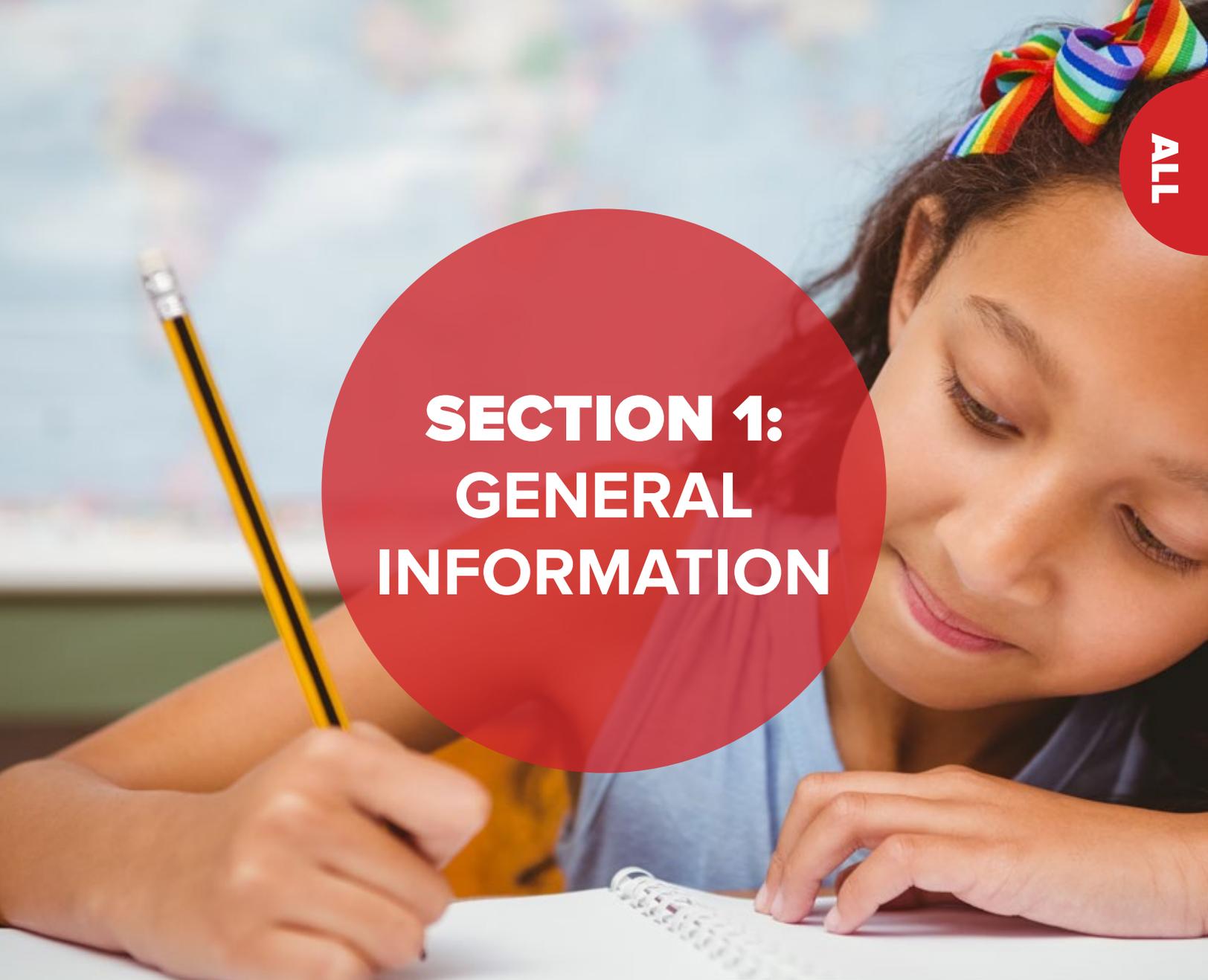
SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

ALL AGES

IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL LEARN:

- General tips on how to successfully support student academic achievement

- Specific information about education protections for special populations of students, such as parenting students and students transitioning out of juvenile justice

- Special education services available for students from Birth to 21 years old

HOMEWORK

Students at any age can have homework—even young students. Completing and reviewing homework is a crucial to a student's success in school. It's important then that foster parents pay attention to homework assignments, make sure students complete them and, as much as possible, provide students with the resources they need to successfully complete the work.

GENERAL HOMEWORK TIPS

Students need a quiet, well-lit place to do homework	Avoid having homework completed with the television on or in places with other distractions
Obtain appropriate school materials	Ask if special materials will be needed for projects and get them in advance, such as specialized paper, pencils, markers, etc. Older student may also need calculators and special math-related instruments.
Help with time management	Establish a set time each day for doing homework. Don't leave homework until right before bedtime. Use weekends for working on big projects, especially if the project involves getting together with classmates.
Be positive about homework	Talk about how important homework is to being a successful student. The attitude you express may be the attitude the student acquires.
Provide guidance, not answers	Resist giving answers to homework. Too much help teaches that when the going gets rough, someone will do the work for him or her.
Stay informed	Talk to the teacher(s). Make sure you know how often homework is assigned and what class rules are about submitting homework.
Watch for signs of failure	Let students take a short break if they are having trouble keeping focus on an assignment and contact the foster care agency case planner or education specialist if the student needs support, such as tutoring.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

During the school year, usually in the Fall and Spring, teachers will invite parents to come to parent-teacher meetings. The **birth parent should attend these conferences** and the foster parent can attend when the birth parent is unable.

Parent-teacher conferences are an important part of the student's education planning. Knowing what is being taught at school helps you direct the conversation in your home to subjects being studied in school. The conference is also a time for the teacher to learn about what the student is like at home. When you tell the teacher about the student's skills, interests, needs, and dreams, the teacher can help the student progress in the classroom.

PRIOR TO THE CONFERENCE

- Ask the student how she or he feels about school and listen closely.
- Prepare a list of questions such as:
    1. What are the student's strongest and weakest school subjects?
    2. Does the student hand homework in on time?
    3. Does the student participate in class? Are they happy in class?

DURING THE CONFERENCE

- Ask to see information about your student's attendance, grades, and test scores. Ask the teacher whether the student is meeting school expectations and academic standards.
- Ask how the student gets along with peers and adults, and whether he or she is experiencing any social issues that the teacher is aware of.
- Exchange information. Let the teacher know about any situation at home that may affect the student's school work. **Please remember to maintain confidentiality and be mindful not to share sensitive case information about the student and their family.**

AFTER THE CONFERENCE

- Talk about the conference with the student and what was discussed.
- Talk about the positive points, and be direct about problems.
- Tell the student, birth parent and/or foster care agency about any plans you and the teacher created.
- Keep in touch with the teacher during the school year.

PROMOTION PROCESS

Schools base promotion decisions on a variety of measures of student progress, which may include report cards, samples of student writing, projects, assessments, assignments and other student work along with state tests. If the student is a special education student or an English Language Learner, talk to the student's school about how this promotion process applies.

1 **TEACHERS & PRINCIPALS IDENTIFY STUDENTS WHO MAY NOT BE PROMOTED**

Close to the end of the school year, teachers and principals will identify the students they believe may be at risk of not being able to succeed in the next grade. Schools will usually send a "promotion-in-doubt" letter home with the student. You can also ask about student progress during parent-teacher conferences.

2 **SCHOOLS COMPLETE STUDENT PORTFOLIO**

For students who are in danger of not being promoted, schools complete their promotion portfolios in May through early June. These promotion portfolios contain a review of student work and assessments from throughout the year, including course grades, writing samples, projects and state exam scores.

If a student's promotion portfolio does not show the student has met the criteria for promotion, the student may not be promoted in June.

3 **STUDENT RECEIVES NOTICE & OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND SUMMER SCHOOL**

In mid-June, students receive written notice indicating that the student may not be promoted and the student is given the opportunity to attend summer school.

4 **SCHOOLS COMPLETE ANOTHER PORTFOLIO IN SUMMER SCHOOL**

Summer school is intended to support students in developing the skills and knowledge needed for the next grade level. At the end of summer school, schools will complete another review of the student portfolios based on summer school work and assessments. Students must meet the required benchmarks to be promoted.

5 **PRINCIPALS MAKE FINAL RECOMMENDATION**

In mid-August, at the end of summer school, principals make final promotion recommendations based on whether the student portfolios and summer school work demonstrate readiness for the next grade level. This written decision is mailed to the student's family.

6 **FAMILIES MAY APPEAL DECISION**

During the last week of August, families may appeal promotion decisions by submitting a written appeal to their student's principal.

7 **SUPERINTENDENT WILL REVIEW & MAKE FINAL DECISION**

The district superintendent will review the principal's decision and make a final determination.

DO STUDENTS NEED TO ATTEND SUMMER SCHOOL?

Not attending summer school will limit a student's ability to supplement their portfolio in advance of a superintendent review. If you have been notified the student needs to attend summer school, **the student MUST attend. It is not optional.**

OTHER SUMMER PROGRAMS

Even for students that are not required to attend summer school, it is important to engage is some academic programming to prevent "summer slide," which is when students lose some of the knowledge they learned in school because they are not doing any school work in the summer. Keep students actively learning in the summer! Contact your case planner for more information about summer programs, camps, and activities.

> " *My foster parent made it very clear that school is important...and she supported my academic goals the entire time I was present in her home.*
>
> **- J.E., FOSTER CARE YOUTH**

HOME INSTRUCTION/HOSPITAL INSTRUCTION/HOME SCHOOLING

At times, there can be confusion about the differences between Home Instruction, Hospital Instruction, and Home Schooling. Below are definitions of these different types of educational services.

If you believe a student in your home requires one of these services, please coordinate with the case planner or agency education liaison to determine eligibility and the application process.

WHAT IS HOME INSTRUCTION?

Home Instruction is instruction provided by the school district in a student's home when a student has a medical/physical condition or psychological/emotional disability issue that prevents them from attending their assigned school. Home instruction is provided for one hour a day (K-6th grade) for a total of 5 hours a week and two hours a day (7th-12th grade) for up to a total of 10 hours a week.

In order to receive home instruction, families must work with the school the student attends and submit medical documentation for the approval of home instruction.

WHAT IS HOSPITAL INSTRUCTION?

Hospital Instruction is provided to students by the school district while admitted into the hospital due to medical or psychiatric need. The NYC DOE provides hospital instruction for one hour a day (K-5th grade) for a total of 5 hours a week and two hours a day (6th-12th grade) for up to a total of 10 hours a week, or for as long as the student can attend while hospitalized.

If medically necessary, when students are discharged from the hospital, they can transition into home instruction.

WHAT IS HOME SCHOOLING?

Home schooling is the education of children at home by a parent or guardian. When families choose to home school their children, a set of policies apply that require parents to submit a notification of an intent to home school as well as reports during the school year regarding student progress during home schooling. For more information, see the NYC Office of Home Schooling by typing "home schooling" in the search bar on the NYC DOE central webpage.

Foster parents cannot make a decision to home school a student without permission from the birth parent and the agency. If approved, foster parents will have to submit all the required documentation to the corresponding school district and adhere to the regulations.

Be advised that home schooled children do not earn a HS diploma and may want to consider completing the high school equivalency diploma (TASC).

BULLYING, HARASSMENT, AND INTIMIDATION

If your foster child is being bullied, harassed, or intimidated, immediately notify his or her case planner. The case planner should obtain specific information about the allegations, find out if the child has been skipping school, and assess if the child should be referred for counseling to address any trauma caused by the bullying. Every foster care agency has an Educational Specialist that the case planner can consult with to deal with school-related issues.

There are several steps that can be taken to address bullying:

- Report the incident to the school's Respect for All (RFA) Liaison.

- Report the incident to the school's principal, dean, or other school official

- Submit complaint anonymously by emailing RespectForAll@schools.nyc.gov

Once the school is notified, an investigation must be conducted within 5 days. Both the victim and the bully or bullies will be interviewed. After the investigation is completed, the school is required to take steps to stop the bullying from continuing.

If the student fears for his/her safety, a Safety Transfer request is an option. The child's case planner should consult with the agency's Educational Specialist about exploring this option.

New York City Department of Education: Respect for All
http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/RespectforAll/StudentResources/Helpful+Resources/default.htm

The New York City Department of Education has compiled a listing of helpful resources to help combat bullying.

United Federation of Teacher (UFT): The Brave Campaign
The BRAVE campaign of the UFT provides a hotline, The Braveline (212)709-3222, M-F 2:30-9:30 p.m. for students to seek support and report bullying.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS

1. **English Language Learners**

2. **Expecting and Parenting Youth**

3. **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth**

4. **Youth Returning From Detention or Juvenile Justice Placements**

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Some children who are new to the country or whose first language is not English may need additional help with reading, writing, speaking and listening in English. Students who meet this definition are known as **English Language Learners** or "ELL" students. If you think that your foster care student needs these services, please talk to your agency case planner or agency education liaison to contact the school and request the services.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF A STUDENT NEEDS ELL SERVICES?

When a child first enters the public school system, parents fill out a Home Language Identification Survey. If the survey indicates that a language other than English is spoken in the child's home, then a language test will be given to evaluate a student's speaking, reading, listening and writing abilities in English.   Students are tested every year to determine if they are still eligible for ELL services. It is important that you check with the school to determine whether the test has been given to the student.

If a student is identified as ELL, there are **three types of programs** the student can receive:

- **DUAL LANGUAGE PROGRAMS**—where students are taught in both English and their home language. The goal of the program is for students to be able to read, write, and speak in both English and their home language.

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- **TRANSITIONAL BILINGUAL EDUCATION**—where students are taught in their home language with an emphasis on learning English so students can move into classes taught only in English.

- **ENGLISH AS A NEW LANGUAGE** "ENL" (formerly known as "ESL")—students are provided instruction in the English language with support in students' home language to read, write, and speak English.

  NOTE: for older students that are new to the country, there are high schools that are designated "international" schools that can assist with transition into high school and provide appropriate language services.

ELL STUDENT RIGHTS

If a student has been determined to need ELL services and the parent (or foster parent) has chosen a program, the school must to do the following:

- The student must be placed in an ELL class within 10 school days of enrollment.

- If there aren't enough students to form a bilingual class, the student can go to another school in that district, or stay in the ENL program at his or her current school.

- If the school does not have a bilingual program in the home language of the student, parents are given a choice of another school where such a classroom exists.

- If parents do not select a program, the student is automatically placed in a bilingual class, if it is available, or an ENL class.

- At minimum, all ELLs must receive ENL classes.

If you believe a student in your home is entitled to these services, please reach out to your caseworker for support in contacting the school and getting the services the student needs.

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND ELL STUDENTS

If an ELL student is suspected to have a disability and may require special education services, foster parents can request that the agency request a referral for special education services for that student. However, birth parents must consent. (See *Special Education* section on pg. 36 for more information on how to make a referral.)

ELL students are given special education evaluations with a bilingual evaluator. If a student is found to be eligible for bilingual services, the school will create an Individualized

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Education Program (IEP) with bilingual services recommended. Those services can include bilingual-related services or special education instruction in a bilingual class. If a bilingual class is not available, ELL students can be recommended for an "alternate placement" paraprofessional, who can act as a translator for the student in a non-bilingual class. The paraprofessional translator is intended as a temporary solution until a bilingual special education classroom becomes available.

HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY AND ELL STUDENTS

Students who are 18 years old or over who do not wish to enter a public high school can be connected to courses for the high school equivalency examination in their native language. For more information, please contact your case planner or agency liaison.

POST-SECONDARY/COLLEGE SUPPORT PROGRAMS

ELL students who have completed high school can enroll in colleges and universities that also offer language-based support classes at the college level. Undocumented student information is located on pg. 113.

At **CUNY**, there is the **CLIP program** (CUNY Language Immersion Program) which offers ESL classes to help students master the English language. CLIP is for any student who has been accepted to a CUNY college but needs additional language help before starting college classes. There is a small fee for the program that may be covered by the foster care agency. Please talk to the agency caseworker if your foster care student is interested in these types of programs.

At **SUNY** schools, there are both Intensive English Programs (IEPs) and English as Second Language (ESL) Programs.

- IEP programs give instruction in the English language to prepare students for full-time academic study. IEPs are year-round, full-time programs and admission to the university or college is not required to register for an IEP. Some SUNY campuses will provide conditional admission to their university based on successful completion of the IEP program.

- ESL supports are different at every school: Some may have summer courses, full ESL classes, tutoring in native language, and translation services. Contact the SUNY school the student is interested in attending to find out more about what they provide.

Some private colleges offer similar support services. It is important to discuss these with the case planner and agency education liaison.

For more information on education-related support programs, please visit the ACS website Education Page at: http://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/education.page.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, AND QUESTIONING YOUTH

LGBTQ is an acronym commonly used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth. We have defined some of those terms below. As a foster parent, you have a duty to take some action when students feel unsafe in school. This section will discuss some protections that LGBTQ students have as students, so that you can advocate on their behalf for a safe enjoyable school environment.

Sexual Orientation

- **Lesbian** refers to a female who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to other females.

- **Gay** refers to a person who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to an individual of the same sex.

- **Bisexual** refers to a person who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to males and females.

- **Questioning** refers to a person, often an adolescent, who is exploring or questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Gender Identity

- **<u>Transgender</u>** refers to a person whose gender identity does not "match" the biological sex (male/female) they were assigned at birth; that is, the sex recorded on the birth certificate.

> Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Student Guidelines:
> http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/TransgenderStudentGuidelines/default.htm

LGBTQ YOUTH AND SCHOOLS

New York City Department of Education's (NYC DOE) policy is to maintain a safe and supportive school environment that is free from discrimination due to actual or perceived race, color, creed, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship/immigration status, religion, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, or weight.

While all schools should be welcoming to students, there are some schools that high school students can transfer into if they are having difficulty in their high school. You should reach out to your case planner or agency education liaison for more information.

Below are some NYC DOE antidiscrimination policies and guidelines that can protect the rights of LGBTQ children and youth and make their educational journey a more enjoyable experience.

NYC DOE'S TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NONCONFORMING STUDENT GUIDELINES

Transgender and Nonconforming (TGNG) youth and children are more visible due to changes in appearance, so there's a higher probability that they'll be targeted for bullying, harassment, and intimidation, not just by students but by school staff as well.

NYC DOE's **Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Student Guidelines** provides guidance to DOE staff to ensure that TGNG can learn in a safe environment free from discrimination and harassment. Below are just a few terminology and definitions that you should become familiar with:

<u>Gender,</u> in its simplest terms, refers to socially created roles, behaviors, activities and characteristics that a given society considers appropriate for boys and men or girls and women.

<u>Gender</u> has numerous components, two of which are gender identity and gender expression.

> **<u>Gender Identity</u>** refers to a person's internal view of their gender; one's innermost sense of being male, female, a combination of both or neither.

Gender expression refers to the way a person expresses gender to others in ways that are socially defined as either masculine or feminine, such as through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, name, pronouns (he/she, her/him), activities, voice or mannerisms.

Transgender refers to a person whose gender identity does not "match" the biological sex (male/female) they were assigned at birth; that is, the sex recorded on the birth certificate if such a record was provided at birth.

Below are some of the policies detailed in the TGNG *Guidelines*:

Names and Pronouns
Transgender students are entitled to be referred to by the name and pronoun that corresponds to his/her gender identity. For example, if your foster child's assigned birth sex is male but has requested that "she" be referred to by a specific female name, school staff must comply with this request.

Records
Schools must use the name and gender preferred on Student ID's, yearbooks, and graduation programs that reflects a student's gender identity. Legal documents may be required for other records to change the student's name on permanent school records.

Sports and Physical Education
Transgender students must be allowed to participate in physical education and intramural sports (e.g., kick ball, dodge ball) in accordance with their gender identity. Participation in competitive and contact sports (e.g. football, basketball) will be addressed on the case-by-case basis.

Access to Restroom and Locker Rooms
Transgender youth must be given access to restrooms and locker rooms consistent with their gender identity. If the student prefers using a separate restroom or use of private area to change clothes for gym, the school must provide reasonable alternatives.

Dress Codes
Schools dress code policies allow students to dress based on gender identity and expression.

ACS LGBTQ SUPPORT FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES

ACS Webpage Resources for Youth: http://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/about/for-youth.page

ACS Webpage Resources for Families and Foster Parents:
http://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/about/for-families.page

For community-based resources for LGBTQ students, please reach out to the LGBTQ liaison at your foster care agency.

For information about other support services available for LGBTQ youth, please contact the LGBTQ Support Page at: http://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/about/lgbtq-support.page

EXPECTING & PARENTING YOUTH (EPY) EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS & SUPPORTS

This section has resources and information on how to best address the educational needs of expecting or parenting youth in foster care. This information can be used for both parenting mothers and fathers.

Expecting or parenting students have rights. These students cannot be asked to leave school due to a pregnancy. If this happens, please immediately talk to the agency education liaison or case planner.

If a student cannot attend school due to medical issues related to the pregnancy, discuss other educational options with the foster care and education liaison, including applying for home instruction. (See page 22 for information on home instruction.)

WHAT IS NEEDED TO HELP?

A system of supports and services must be provided so that expecting and parenting youth can receive appropriate education planning to make well-informed decisions about their future education plans. Foster parents are key to making sure expecting and parenting youth know every educational path so they can choose wisely. Foster parents can:

- Encourage expecting or parenting youth to continue school before the child is born and after.

- Explore services to help overcome barriers to attendance, such as obtaining child care services within the community or through schools and considering night school and/or admission into alternative programs.

- Help new parents to make sound decisions for themselves and their child. A meeting between agency, foster parent and parents should include a "Shared Responsibility Plan." This plan can include important educational resources available from the Department of Education.

- Inform parenting students that they can go to college or trade-based schools after they complete their high school diploma or high school equivalency examination. There are several colleges in New York City and New York State that offer child care services for students.

USEFUL EDUCATION RESOURCES FOR FOSTER PARENTS WHO PROVIDE SERVICES TO EXPECTING & PARENTING YOUTH:

- **Department of Education Living for Young Family through Education** (LYFE) program provides free childcare and support for student parents. You can access the website to find the nearest LYFE center http://lyfenyc.org/.

- **Department of Youth & Community Development (DYCD) Fatherhood Initiative Program:** For young fathers aged 16 – 24 years. Program helps fathers by providing them with services such as parenting skills development, effective co-parenting with the child's mother/guardian; employment/education; and child visitation/placement http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/family/fatherhood.shtml

- For expecting mothers, explore **Early Head Start Programs** in your community which provide services for parents through a child's 3rd birthday. To find those programs use the link for Office of Head Start Programs and choose "early head start" as program type. https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices

- The **City University of New York** (CUNY) offers college students free or reduced cost child care. To learn more about the colleges and universities that offer these services, please see the CUNY website at http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/sa/services/child-care-1/campus-centers.html

- The **State University of New York** (SUNY) offers parenting college students both child care and single-parent housing where students can live on campus with their child(ren). To find out more about programs geared to the success of parenting students at SUNY colleges, please visit the college websites or to find out more about the SUNY child care centers please visit: http://system.suny.edu/university-life/child-care/suny-campus-child-care-centers/

For more information on education-related support programs, please visit the ACS website Education Page at: http://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/education.page.

For information about other support services available for EPY youth, please contact the Teen Specialist Unit at 212-676-6001 or tsu@acs.nyc.gov.

YOUTH RETURNING FROM DETENTION OR JUVENILE JUSTICE PLACEMENTS

Students that are in foster care and are incarcerated are sometimes referred to as "crossover youth." For some, returning to one's home school or starting at a new school after spending time in detention or placement may be stressful. Below are tips for what to do to in common situations students may encounter as they return to their old school or go to new one after incarceration.

ENROLLMENT AFTER RELEASE

- The NYC DOE is committed to ensuring that students returning from incarceration are supported in transitioning back to the public school system.

- In preparation for the student's reentry to NYC DOE schools, the Office of Student Enrollment will work with the student's transition counselor, the student, and the family to determine whether the student should return to the previous school or may benefit from a new school placement.

- If it is jointly determined that the student should return to his or her previous school, that school is responsible for accepting and welcoming the student back into their school, providing reentry and transitional support services.

- Don't hesitate to ask for support from guidance counselors at the school the student attended in detention or placement or foster care agency case planner or education liaison.

- When students leave detention or placement, the foster care agency can assist in obtaining additional services to help transition back into the community.

ONCE THE STUDENT RETURNS BACK TO SCHOOL

- Getting the right classes and services at school is important to the student's ability to stay on track to graduate.

- Work with the guidance counselor at the school he or she attends after detention or placement and ensure the student receives a program schedule with the right classes. If you have a copy of the most recent transcript (and an IEP, if applicable), share them with the school. The guidance counselor should also be able to get those documents if you don't have them.

- Ask the student if he or she worked on an **Individual Learning Plan** while in detention or placement. This is an online document containing his or her personal educational and career goals. Is the student interested in joining some after school activities or sports? Or getting job training in a particular line of work or pursuing an internship? All of these are good things to bring up with school or aftercare staff so they can help make it happen.

COUNSELING/ADVOCACY

If the student is ever feeling down or overwhelmed about school, you may want to reach out to the guidance counselor, agency case planner/aftercare provider, or therapist (if he or she has one). If the student would benefit from having a counselor to talk to during the school day, ask the school whether that can be arranged. It may also be great for the student to have a peer mentor or someone from outside school to be able to talk to.

Is the student having problems with specific students or staff at school? Does it seem like the school is not a good fit? If so, you should bring that up with the school or foster care agency. And if they cannot help you, feel free to call the ACS Office of Education Support and Policy Planning at (212) 442-4320 for assistance.

CHILDREN WITH DISABILTIES AGES BIRTH TO 21 YEARS OLD

Special Education is instruction and/or services designed to meet the individual needs of a child with a disability. Special education is free for students no matter where they attend school and they receive services throughout the school year in which they turn 21 years old or when they graduate with a high school diploma.

In NYC, most students receive special education services in their own "community" schools. A smaller number of students in need of intensive or specialized services attend "City-Wide Special Education", or District 75 schools. District 75 schools are located throughout the city in all five boroughs. They provide educational, vocational, and behavior support programs for students who are on the autism spectrum, have significant cognitive delays, are severely emotionally challenged, sensory impaired and/or have multiple disabilities.

It is important to remember that for any students who require special education services, *the birth parent/guardian must be involved and must consent to an initial evaluation and to initiate special education services, as well as request any changes to a students existing special education plan.*

- Foster parent cannot consent
- Foster care agencies cannot consent

There are special rules for students when birth parents/guardians cannot be located or when their parental rights have been terminated. Talk to the agency education liaison if this is the case for the student in your home.

Students who have delays that substantially limits one or more major life activities but do not meet the eligibility criteria for special education services may still be eligible for services and/or accommodations at school.

SECTION 504

Refers to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Section 504 is a federal anti-discrimination law that protects the rights of students with disabilities and provides for services and program modifications necessary to meet the needs of such students.

SECTION 504 PLAN

A plan for providing services and program modifications necessary to meet the needs of students with disabilities who qualify for Section 504 accommodations and includes a description of accommodations, services and placement.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

Reasonable accommodations are modifications or adjustments to the tasks, environment or to the way things are usually done that enable individuals with disabilities to have an equal opportunity to participate in an academic program or a job. Section 504 requires school districts to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities.

DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS PERTAINING TO CHILDREN OR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

As a foster parent of a student receiving special education services, you will be exposed to many new terms. Here are definitions of some of the key special education terms. Ask your agency case planner or education liaison for clarification if there is special education terminology being used that you are not familiar with.

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA OR IDEIA):

The Federal law that establishes the rights of children with disabilities to special education and describes how services are to be delivered.

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM OR "IEP"

A document that describes the needs of the student, the goals, and the special education services that a student with disabilities will receive. The IEP is specific to each student and tailored to his or her educational needs.

IEP TEAM

A group of people made up of education professionals, student's parent or guardian, and others who have information about a student and his or her needs. Every student with disabilities will have an IEP Team that is responsible for creating and reviewing the student's IEP and determining where the services will be delivered.

- IEP team at the school is sometimes called the "School Based Support Team" or SBST, or school Committee on Special Education (CSE).

- IEP team can also be at the district Committee on Special Education or "CSE." The district CSE usually only handles special education services for students who attend charter schools, private schools (including religious schools), or special private schools funded by the DOE.

LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT OR "LRE"

LRE or least restrictive environment is used to describe the requirement in special education law that children with disabilities be educated, to the maximum extent possible, in classes with students who do not have disabilities (also referred to as "general education").

FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT OR "FBA"

An FBA is an assessment that is done by the school when a student exhibits behavior that disrupts his or her learning or that of others. It is done to determine why the student engages in behaviors that disrupt learning and how the student's behavior relates to the learning environment. The student is observed in different environments on different days in order to determine what could be causing behavior problems. This assessment **MUST** be done to create a behavior intervention plan ("BIP").

BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION PLAN OR "BIP"

After an FBA is completed, a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) may be created. The BIP will describe the student's behaviors and will include intervention strategies to address the behavior. This plan should be provided when requested and should be given to the parent or guardian with the individualized education plan.

RELATED SERVICES

These are services that supplement a student's learning to help them while they are in school. These services may include speech/language therapy, occupational therapy, counseling, and physical therapy, among others. A prescription is required to initiate occupational therapy and physical therapy. Related services can also include transportation services.

AGES BIRTH-3

WHAT IF I THINK THE CHILD IN MY CARE IS NOT DEVELOPING AS HE/SHE SHOULD?

It's important to keep in mind that all children develop differently and at their own pace. As a foster parent you should first speak to the case planner and the child's doctor if you have concerns about his or her development. However, children in foster care are especially at risk of developmental delays, so there are special provisions to make sure they get the services they need. Review the developmental checklists on pages 58-61.

ALL CHILDREN AGES 0-3 WHO ENTER FOSTER CARE MUST BE REFERRED FOR EARLY INTERVENTION ("EI") SERVICES

When children experience neglect or abuse, it can affect their development and their ability to learn. Early intervention services help to overcome the negative effects of abuse or neglect and are designed to help eligible children with developmental disabilities from ages birth to 3 years old.

The Early Intervention Program has a hotline dedicated to handling referrals from foster care agencies. The child's case planner can contact this hotline to begin the EI program referral process. You can check with your case planner to see whether a referral for Early Intervention services has been made and the status of that referral. ACS EI Hotline is: 1-877-885-5439 (KIDZ).

Early Intervention Services are provided by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. A referral can be made at any time after a child is born up until the child turns 2½ years old. After 2½ years old, referrals should be made to the NYC Department of Education Committee on Pre-school Education (See Special Education ages 3-5 on pg. 44).

TURNING 3 PROCESS

Children can begin receiving preschool special education services during the year in which they turn 3 years old. If a child receiving Early Intervention Services may need preschool special education services, the Early Intervention Services Coordinator should assist in making a referral to the child's Committee on Preschool Special Education to determine the child's eligibility for preschool special education services. Those services are arranged by the New York City Department of Education. If you need assistance to make sure there is no break in services, please contact your case planner or contact the ACS Office of Education Support at 212-453-9918.

EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM

If you believe the child in your care has a developmental disability or delay, you **MUST SPEAK WITH YOUR AGENCY CASE PLANNER** to determine whether the infant/toddler has been referred to the Early Intervention Program. Birth parents have to give consent for evaluations and services. If the child already has services in place, you should coordinate with the agency to ensure the services are continued while the child is in your home.

1 REFERRAL

- The case planner will make the referral

- The Early Intervention Program will decide if the child will get an evaluation or just be monitored

- If there are evaluations, you will be notified by the EI Service Coordinator

- If the child will be only monitored, you will receive a form to fill out (ASQ form) every 3, 6 or 9 months. If you need help with that form, the case planner will assist you. If you don't receive the form, let your case planner know.

2 INITIAL SERVICE COORDINATION

A representative from Early Intervention calls the foster family to schedule a time to explain the EI program, parent rights and arranges evaluations for the child. This will include discussions with the birth parent.

3 EVALUATION

- An agency will evaluate the child's thinking and learning (cognitive), self-help (adaptive), speech, social-emotional and physical (includes hearing and vision) skills

- Evaluations are used to determine the child's eligibility for services

- Reports are prepared and provided to the birth parent prior to IFSP meeting (Individualized Family Service Plan)

4

INDIVIDUALIZED FAMILY SERVICE PLAN (IFSP) MEETING

- If the child is eligible, the parent, evaluation agency, Service Coordinator and EI Official Designee develop the written service plan (IFSP)

- IFSP lists services the child will receive along with therapy goals to help the child develop

- Family chooses a Service Coordinator at the meeting who will monitor services

- Review of the IFSP will take place every six months

5

SERVICES

IFSP services usually begin within two weeks but no more than 30 days after the IFSP is signed by the parent

Services available in EI can include:
- Physical Therapy
- Speech Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Special Instruction
- Parent Training
- Vision Services

6

TRANSITION

- Children can receive services up until the day before their 3rd birthday

- A transition plan is developed at the IFSP meeting closest to the child's second birthday

- The Ongoing Service Coordinator can help the parent explore other early childhood services as needed

- Children who require additional services will be transitioned to preschool special education at NYC Department of Education.

MAINTAINING EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES AFTER A MOVE

There are times when a child receiving EI services moves from one foster home to another. or returns home to their parent Foster parents MUST contact the EI service coordinator and your case planner so the child's services can be transferred to the child's new location.

AGES 3-5

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES FOR 3-5 YEAR OLDS: PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

If you believe the toddler has a developmental delay, please talk to the agency case planner or child's pediatrician. Please also review the developmental checklists on pages 66-67.

Special education evaluations and services are available to children ages 3-5 with disabilities through the **Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE)** at the New York City Department of Education. You should check with the case planner to confirm if the student already has a special education program.

If it is determined the child needs an evaluation through the DOE, *the agency case planner MUST contact the "child's parent" for consent to initiate the evaluation.* If the parent is unavailable, a foster parent can be assigned as a surrogate parent to sign consent. Please consult with the case planner before signing any consent.

Most pre-school special education services can be provided within the child's day care or Pre-K program, including Head Start programs. If a child's needs are severe enough to require a special education-only program, the CPSE will assign the child to a special education early education site, which will include a Pre-K class.

If the child has received Early Intervention services between ages Birth-3 years old and has an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), the child will need to be evaluated by the CPSE that works with families in the district in which the child resides. The CPSE can evaluate the child before the child turns 3 years old. After the evaluation, the CPSE will determine if the child is eligible for preschool special education and will develop a preschool IEP that recommends appropriate services or supports for the student.

A CPSE REFERRAL HAS BEEN MADE, WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP?

Once the CPSE receives the initial referral, the CPSE will mail the parent a referral packet, which includes:

- A notice that the referral was received
- A list of approved preschool evaluation sites
- A consent for initial evaluation form
- Information about the Parent's rights, among other materials

The parent must select an evaluation site and schedule an appointment. Some children may require a bilingual evaluation. Agencies that offer bilingual evaluations are identified in evaluation agency list in the referral packet, along with the specific languages they offer. The evaluator will request the parent's consent to the evaluation. The initial evaluation will consist of a psychological assessment, a social history interview (which provides background on the child's development and family history), a physical evaluation, an observation, and other assessments, which will be provided to the CPSE.

CPSE MEETING

MEET BEFORE DEADLINE
The CPSE meeting must be held within 60 calendar days from the date the parent signs the consent form.

INVOLVE BIRTH PARENT
The birth parent should attend all CPSE meetings and the foster parent should play a supportive role. The agency case planner should also be present at CPSE meetings.

SCHEDULE MEETING
After the evaluations are complete, the CPSE will notify the parent that a meeting has been scheduled to discuss the results of the evaluations.

SERVICES AVAILABLE
The CPSE will determine whether the student is eligible for special education services. Examples of services include: related services, special education itinerant teacher (SEIT), special class in an integrated setting, and special class.

START IEP QUICKLY
The recommended services/ programs should start within 60 school days of the date the parent signed the consent for initial evaluation or 30 school days from the date of the initial CPSE meeting, whichever is first.

TRANSPORTATION
Transportation needs must be considered and noted on the IEP.

If you are concerned that the process is taking too long, or when students need to transition from pre-school to school age special education services, please reach out to the agency education liaison at the ageny.

AGES 5-21

INITIAL REFERRALS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

For students who are in grades Kindergarten through 12th grade and attend a public school, referrals may be made by parents or persons authorized to act as the parent, or by authorized school officials and submitted to the student's current school. Foster care agencies can also make a request for a referral to schools. These requests must be in writing!!!

If the student is attending a charter school or a private school, then the request has to be submitted to the Committee on Special Education. For a list of the Committee on Special Education sites, please see the NYC Department of Education Website or reach out to your agency education liaison.

After the school or CSE receives an initial referral, the parent's consent will be requested. Prior to beginning the evaluation, the **BIRTH PARENT** must provide informed written consent to evaluate the child.

CONSENT

Even when students are in foster care, the **BIRTH PARENT** is the only one that can sign consent. Consent is required twice for special education services—once for evaluations and once for services after the IEP is created.

The rules about when consent is required and who may give consent are strict legal requirements contained in state regulations. There are some limited exceptions to consent that are detailed below but your foster care agency will have to determine whether those exceptions can be used.

CONSENT EXCEPTION — when you do not need a birth parent's consent for special education:

- If the student is in foster care and his or her parents' rights have been terminated, a foster parent is authorized to sign consent.

- If student is in foster care and his or her parents can't be identified, is deceased, or the parent(s) whereabouts are unknown despite reasonable efforts to locate them, a "surrogate parent" must be appointed by the New York City Department of Education. This person may be and usually is the foster parent.

NOTE: The parent has the right to refuse special education services. If this happens, the foster care agency can explore next steps. Consent exceptions DO NOT apply in this case.

IF THE PARENT OR GUARDIAN GIVES CONSENT TO EVALUATE or an exception applies, the student then receives a series of evaluations to determine whether s/he is eligible for special education services. Evaluations must be completed by the school. Part of the evaluation process includes a social history assessment, where the IEP team will meet with the birth parent, the foster parent, and sometimes the student (if old enough) to assess how the student performs in other environments.

- The IEP team may ask for additional information from the parent/agency about the student, including immunization (if not already provided to the school), vision/hearing screening information, and a physical.

IEP MEETING

When all the required evaluations are completed, a meeting to discuss the findings of those evaluations will be held. That is usually called the IEP meeting. All necessary assessments must be completed and the "**IEP Meeting**" must be held no later than **60 calendar days from the date the parent consent** (or surrogate parent consent if appropriate) is received by the IEP team to start the evaluations. Calendar days include all of the weekend and school breaks.

At the IEP meeting, the IEP team will review the evaluations and other available information and will determine if the student has a disability and is eligible for special education services. If the student is eligible, the IEP team will create an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP will contain detailed information about the student and the special education programs and services recommended to meet the student's unique needs.

If the school does not hold an IEP meeting within 60 calendar days, please contact the case planner or agency education liaison.

AFTER THE IEP MEETING

If the student is found to be eligible for services after the IEP meeting, those services have to be in place **within 60 school days** from the date of consent. The date that services must begin is calculated by school days (only count the number of days that school is in session—does not include the weekend or school holidays).

- The agency case planner or education liaison will be able to determine whether there are any issues with services being provided on time.

Once services are in place, foster parent should observe to determine whether services are working to help the student's academic and social/emotional needs. If they are not, please address with the case planner or the agency education liaison.

ANNUAL/TRI-ANNUAL REVIEWS

Every year, the IEP team will meet to discuss the student's IEP and review the student's progress. This meeting is called an **Annual Review**.

Additionally, at any time the student may be referred for a **Reevaluation**, which can be requested by the school or the parent, to determine if the student's educational or related services need to be reassessed.

> *Education is vital to me. It provides you with a better future. My foster mother did everything in her will to support my education.*
>
> *- S.S., FOSTER CARE YOUTH*

At least once every three years, the IEP team will conduct a reevaluation of the student, which may include additional evaluations or assessments. This is called a "**Three Year Reevaluation**" or "**Tri-Annual Review**").

Following a request or any three year Reevaluation, an IEP meeting will be held to discuss the evaluations and any additional information, and to update the programs and services recommended on the student's IEP if necessary.

REQUESTING IEP REVIEWS (STUDENT ALREADY HAS AN IEP)

IEP meetings may be requested at any time for any reason after the initial meeting or annual review. Sometimes special education plans have to be adjusted when a student's circumstances change or services need to be changed.

Request an IEP review in writing and send the request to the principal or IEP team at the student's school or the Committee on Special Education.

Parent must also provide consent for any re-evaluations, unless any of the consent exceptions apply (see pg. 47).

WHAT TYPES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS ARE CONTAINED ON IEPS?

DISTRICT SCHOOL WITH RELATED SERVICES ONLY	Students can remain in their current class and are provided with related services throughout the school week. Related services are provided during the school day and can be provided inside or outside the classroom.
INTEGRATED CO-TEACHING CLASS IN A COMMUNITY SCHOOL WITH/ WITHOUT RELATED SERVICES	Students are in a class with both students with disabilities and general education students as well as two teachers; one general education and one special education. Students can be taught by either teacher, depending on the subject(s) they need the most support with and can interact in the classroom with their general education peers. Related services are provided in-school.
SPECIAL CLASS IN A COMMUNITY SCHOOL WITH/ WITHOUT RELATED SERVICES	Students are in a class with only other students with disabilities, and usually these classes are small, with only 12 students (15 for high school students) and sometimes one teacher or one teacher and a paraprofessional. These students are taught with special education accommodations in the classroom but can interact with their peers during more social events like lunch and recess. Related services are provided in-school.

SPECIAL SCHOOL (D75 SCHOOL)	Students are placed in a school building usually with only students with disabilities. Sometimes a D75 school can be inside a community school where the two schools share space and students are able to do some activities together. Depending on the student and the class, there may be multiple teachers or multiple teacher aides in one class. Students with severe disabilities may be placed together in the same class to maximize supportive services to all the students. Class sizes are usually small; elementary schools may have only 8 or less students in a class and high school can have as many as 12 students in a class. D75 students also receive their related services at school.
PLACEMENT IN A DAY TREATMENT PROGRAM	Day treatment is an extremely restrictive special education program that offers on-site mental health services – including psychiatric care. Day treatment programs may be hospital-based, located in a community site, or public school and are licensed by the NYS Office of Mental Health. Students attending a day treatment program receive therapy and psychiatric services in the program.
RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM	If students in foster care require residential placements, those placements have to be made by ACS.

OTHER SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITION PLANNING FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Special education youth in foster care face particular challenges as they transition into adulthood. Special education transition services in school can help prepare for life after high school. All students with disabilities should receive transition planning.

- Transition services might include teaching students independent living skills like balancing a checkbook, paying bills, cooking, cleaning, or even basic self-care. They are very similar to "independent living skills" that the foster care agency gives the student.

- Transition services from the schools should include vocational education if appropriate. Vocational education might be anything from learning pre-vocational skills (i.e. how to prepare a resume, interview for a job, or get along with co-workers) to supported work experiences.

- School districts must start transition planning. Transition needs must be considered in the IEP meeting no later than the IEP in effect the year the student turns 15 years old. The foster care agency and foster parent can participate in the process. Students should also participate.

HOW DO YOU PLAN FOR STUDENTS WITH SEVERE DISABILITIES?

Students with severe disabilities, once they turn 21 years old, will most likely transition into services with the **Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)**, which can include them moving out of their foster home into an independent living or supportive housing program.

- The foster care agency should be planning with biological and foster parents to ensure that students that need these services have applied for them.

- For more information the agency can contact the ACS Office of Development Disabilities at (212) 442-2081.

COLLEGE AND VOCATIONAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Please see the Post-High School Section on pg. 98 of this guide for special program information and post-secondary options, including vocational programs for students with disabilities. Be advised that every college campus has an Office of Disabilities where students can request academic or physical accommodations.

"Now it [education] is important to me because I have seen statistics in salaries.....I wish I would have been asked [by my foster parent] if I needed help with any of my homework.

- A.J., FOSTER CARE YOUTH

BABIES CAN LEARN!

During the first few years of life, a child's brain develops faster than at any other time. 80% of brain development happens between the ages birth-4 years old.

Children who begin learning at a young age are more likely to succeed in school, graduate from high school and go to college.

Children also learn best from the adults and family members with whom they spend the most time. Many children who enter foster care may not have had many regular learning experiences. Praise and positive reinforcement can help children catch up—especially in learning positive behaviors, experiencing language growth and social skill development. Extra support from foster parents can make a big difference in a child's future school success.

COMMUNITY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Enroll infants/toddlers in a group learning activity, such as day care or an Early Head Start/Head Start program.

- Check with your local library for free events to help infants and toddlers expand their natural curiosity to read and explore.

- Museums and other cultural institutions have free or low cost programs. Contact 311 for more details.

For more information on education-related support programs, please visit the ACS website Education Page at: http://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/education.page.

SECTION 2:
BABIES & TODDLERS

AGES BIRTH-3

IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL LEARN:

- Early Education options for students from birth-3 years old

- How to promote learning for infants and toddlers

- How to identify developmental delays and what steps to take to address those delays

HOME LEARNING ACTIVITIES

READ

READ FOR AT LEAST 20 MINUTES EVERY DAY

Choose colorful books with big, bright pictures. Infants and toddlers will begin to recognize letters, numbers, colors and shapes.

Caregivers who have trouble reading can use the photos in books and their imaginations to tell a story about the pictures they see. Pick books based on a child's interests: animals, cars, trucks, etc.

TALK

TALK OFTEN

Babies will mimic the sounds you make so it is important to use adult language when you speak to infants and toddlers. When bathing, feeding or soothing, talk to them about the activity. Always use uplifting and positive tones when speaking.

SING

MUSIC IS MAGIC

Singing is a great opportunity to develop a child's vocabulary. Learn their favorite songs and sing to him or her often! Make up songs about everyday activities—for example: "Now it's time to dress ourselves, dress ourselves, dress ourselves…." Regularly introduce new songs for new experiences.

LEARN

USE HOUSEHOLD ITEMS TO LEARN

For infants, hold a toy out of the baby's reach to encourage him or her to grasp it, or roll a ball back and forth to call attention to the motion. Make your own musical instruments, for example using containers as shakers. For toddlers, use different sized shoe boxes as building blocks. Draw pictures to display around the house or allow toddlers to assist with simple chores such as stirring or pouring during meal preparation.

EarlyLearn NYC

ACS administers a program called EarlyLearn NYC, which provides child care and early education for low cost or at no cost throughout the five boroughs. The mission of EarlyLearn NYC is to provide social and intellectual development for children from birth to age 5, preparing children for Kindergarten and future success.

Programs in EarlyLearn are for low-income families who qualify, and children in foster care can also qualify for these services. To find out more information about these programs, you should reach out to your case planner or visit the ACS website.

CHILDCARE

If you are a foster parent who works or who has regularly scheduled activities during the day, you may be eligible to receive a voucher to enroll a child in an ACS EarlyLearn program for child care ages birth-3. Your agency case planner must make a referral.

HEAD START

Head Start offers educational programs for children age 3-5, and a wide variety of opportunities and support services for their families. Learn more about Head Start in the ages 3-5 section of this manual at page 62.

NON-ACS PROGRAMS FOR BIRTH-3 YEAR OLDS:

Early Head Start is a program funded by the federal government that serves pregnant women, infants, and toddlers. Early Head Start programs are available to families until their children turn 3 years old and are ready to enter Head Start or another education program. Please work with your case planner to connect to an Early Head Start program in your area.

3-K for All brings free, full-day education to 3-year olds in NYC. 3-K programs lay a critical foundation to learn, grow, and explore the world around them. For more info, see the **ages 3-5 section** of this guide.

It is important for you and your case planner to discuss accessing these services provided by early learning programs. Some will require your case planner to complete a written referral to enroll.

DEVELOPMENTAL CONCERNS CHECKLISTS

Children in foster care may have experienced environmental difficulties that can delay their growth and development. It is important to have a general idea about "typical" stages of development and know when to seek support so that every child can reach his/her potential.

If you are not sure whether a child in your home is developing properly, you can use the following checklists to help determine if the child needs additional support services. If you have concerns, the foster care agency can consider an Early Intervention (see page 42).

2 MONTHS

At 2 months the child should:
- ☑ Begin smiling at people
- ☑ Calm himself/herself by doing things like sucking on fingers and hands
- ☑ Turn head toward sounds
- ☑ Track with the eyes (follow people and things visually)

You should express concerns to case planners if the baby:
- ☒ Isn't following objects and people visually
- ☒ Never brings hands to mouth
- ☒ Doesn't make any sounds at all
- ☒ Is either very stiff or floppy when picked up

4 MONTHS

At 4 months the child should:
- ☑ Smile often and spontaneously at people
- ☑ Babble more frequently
- ☑ Begin to use different crying sounds that mean different things: hunger, pain, boredom
- ☑ Move eyes from side to side when "tracking" things
- ☑ Seem to study faces more intently
- ☑ Seem to be able to hold head more steadily
- ☑ Begin to roll over from stomach to back

You should express concerns to case planners if the baby:
- ☒ Doesn't watch things as they move
- ☒ Doesn't smile at people
- ☒ Can't hold his/her head up

6 MONTHS

At 6 months the child should:

- ☑ Enjoy playing with others, especially caregivers
- ☑ Seem to respond to other's emotions and often seems happy
- ☑ Seem to recognize himself/herself in the mirror and enjoy that experience
- ☑ Become more vocal by responding vocally to other sounds
- ☑ Constantly reach for things
- ☑ Roll over in both directions
- ☑ Sit without support

You should express concerns to case planners if the child:

- ☒ Still doesn't respond to sounds
- ☒ Displays difficulty getting objects to mouth
- ☒ Makes no simple sounds
- ☒ Isn't rolling over
- ☒ Doesn't laugh
- ☒ Seems stiff with tight muscles
- ☒ Seems very limp with no muscle tone

9 MONTHS

At 9 months the child should:

- ☑ Show some fear when seeing a stranger
- ☑ Understand the meaning of "no"
- ☑ Say words more clearly like "mama" and "dada"
- ☑ Become more skilled at copying sounds and gestures of others
- ☑ Point at objects
- ☑ Look for things you have hidden
- ☑ Enjoy "Peek-a Boo"
- ☑ Use the thumb and index finger to pick up small objects like cereal
- ☑ Pull up to a standing position

You should express concerns to case planners if the child:

- ☒ Can only sit or stand with support
- ☒ Doesn't babble more frequently
- ☒ Doesn't respond to his/her name
- ☒ Doesn't recognize or react to familiar faces

1 YEAR

At 1 year old a toddler should:

- ☑ Show shyness with strangers
- ☑ Cry when caregiver leaves
- ☑ Use sounds or actions to get attention
- ☑ Attempt to help getting dressed by offering you an arm or leg
- ☑ Follow simple one-step directions, "Give Mommy the toy"
- ☑ Use gestures like shaking head for "no" or waving "bye-bye"
- ☑ Say "mama," "dada" and simple exclamations like "uh-oh"
- ☑ Use familiar objects correctly: drinking from a cup, brushing hair
- ☑ Stand without holding on some of the time

You should express concerns to case planners if the toddler:

- ☒ Doesn't crawl
- ☒ Can't stand with support
- ☒ Doesn't search for things when you hide them
- ☒ Doesn't begin to say simple words like "mama"

18 MONTHS

At 18 months a toddler should:

- ☑ Play pretend games like being the parent of a doll
- ☑ Say several single words
- ☑ Understand the function of simple objects: telephone, eating utensils, and hairbrush
- ☑ Walk alone
- ☑ Begin to walk up steps
- ☑ Help undress himself/herself
- ☑ Drink from a cup
- ☑ Eat with a spoon

You should express concerns to case planners if the toddler:

- ☒ Doesn't point to show things to others
- ☒ Can't walk
- ☒ Doesn't know what familiar things are used for
- ☒ Doesn't have at least 6 words

2 YEARS

At 2 years old children should:

- ☑ Enjoy being with other children
- ☑ Show more independence
- ☑ Play beside other children but more and more is including other children in play
- ☑ Point more frequently to pictures and objects as they are named
- ☑ Know the names of familiar people and body parts
- ☑ Say short sentences with 2 to 4 words
- ☑ Follow 2-step instructions: "Pick up your toys and put them in the box"

You should express concerns to case planners if the child:

- ☒ Doesn't use 2-word phrases like "eat cookie"
- ☒ Doesn't follow simple instructions
- ☒ Loses already learned skills

3 YEARS

At 3 years old children should:

- ☑ Copy adults and friends
- ☑ Take turns
- ☑ Show empathy and concern for crying friends
- ☑ Understand the concepts of "mine," "his" and hers"
- ☑ Use 2- and 3-word sentences
- ☑ Turn book pages one at a time
- ☑ Walk up and down stairs one foot at a time

You should express concerns to case planners if the child:

- ☒ Falls down frequently and has trouble with stairs
- ☒ Drools and has difficulty with speech
- ☒ Can't work simple toys
- ☒ Doesn't speak in sentences
- ☒ Doesn't play with other children or with toys
- ☒ Doesn't make eye contact

EARLY EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AGES 3-5

Early education occurs in the home, school or daycare where experiences and relationships enhance a young child's development and learning.

Foster parents can be nurturers and teachers. If a child has been in your home since before their 3rd birthday, you should continue to encourage interactive activities as listed in the Birth-3 section of this manual. Be sure to include activities that promote a child's brain development such as play, talking in adult language, singing, and reading together.

Ages 3-5 is the time when children begin to learn reading and writing as well as responsibility. Let them help with simple chores, such as setting or clearing the dinner table, small trash and recycling removal, making their beds, and cleaning their rooms.

Preparation for 3-K, Pre-K and Kindergarten should be a focus, as should interacting with other children. Supervised play helps children learn the value of sharing and friendship. Children should socialize with peers, solve problems, and have classroom experiences that build self-confidence.

Programs that help prepare children for Kindergarten and excite them about learning include Head Start, 3-K for All, Pre-K for All/Universal Pre-K (UPK) and special needs interventions during the preschool

For more information on education-related support programs, please visit the ACS website Education Page at: http://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/education.page.

SECTION 3: AGES 3-5

AGES 3-5

IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to access ACS Early Learn NYC programs and 3-K for All programs

- The application process for Pre-Kindergarten programs

- Development milestones for children ages 3-5 years old

WHAT IS HEAD START?

HEAD START

Head Start is a FREE federally-funded program that offers child development and health programs for children ages 3 to 5 years old, including a wide variety of support services for their families.

The Administration for Children's Services (ACS) sponsors more than 250 Head Start centers through its EarlyLearn NYC programs.

Children in foster care are automatically eligible to attend the ACS Head Start programs.

In order to request a child in your care be placed in a Head Start program please reach out to your case planner or agency education liaison.

Through the Early Learn Program, ACS also provides UPK programs. If the student was in a Head Start program, that Head Start program might offer UPK.

WHAT IS 3-K for ALL?

3-K PROGRAMS

3-K for All provides free, full-day, high-quality education to 3-year-olds in New York City. It began in Fall 2017. As of Spring 2018, 3-K is currently offered in Districts 4, 5, 7, 16, 23 and 27. The program will expand to more school districts in the coming years. Students from any district can apply for the available seats.

Foster parents should apply for admission with help from the foster care agency. To find out more about the schools and seat availability, foster parent should discuss with the case planner or education liaison. Foster parents can call 311 or visit the DOE website at nyc.gov/3K

WHAT IS PRE-K for ALL?

PRE-K PROGRAMS

Pre-K for All is a free, full-day education program for 4 year olds. Schools and programs partner with the DOE to support all learners in building strong foundations for success in school and beyond. Students with disabilities and those whose first language is not English may also enroll.

If you live outside of NYC, you should contact your case planner for instructions about Pre-K enrollment. Students may be eligible to attend ACS Pre-K sites within NYC.

What to look for in a Pre-K program
To find a program that is a good fit, you should visit Pre-K programs before applying. When searching for a program, consider:

- Proximity to your home or to your place of employment; and birth parent home
- Program hours and services offered
- Expectations for learning
- Family engagement practices

⚠️ Birth parents need to be part of the decision on where to enroll students.

PROGRAMS IN OTHER LANGUAGES

Programs in Other Languages
Pre-K students who speak languages other than English may attend dual-language or Enhanced English Instruction programs. Speak to your agency case planner and contact schools for more information about available services and programs that meet the specific language needs of your child.

⚠️ **IMPORTANT:** you MUST go through the application process in order to enroll students in Pre-K. Contact your agency case planner or Education Specialist to begin the application process or visit nyc.gov/preK

WHEN DOES KINDERGARTEN BEGIN?

AFTER PRE-K

After Pre-K, children typically transition into Kindergarten. **In New York City, children must attend Kindergarten the school year in which they turn 5 years old.** Outside of NYC, Kindergarten is not mandatory but it is highly recommended. If you live outside of NYC, please contact your case planner to determine how to register a child for Kindergarten.

KINDERGARTEN APPLICATIONS

In NYC during the school year **before** the start of Kindergarten, an application must be submitted for the coming school year. All children, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners, are guaranteed a Kindergarten placement. To begin the application process, contact your agency case planner or Education Specialist.

HOW CAN YOU FIND OUT MORE ABOUT KINDERGARTEN SCHOOLS?

The NYC Department of Education's website includes a link to the Kindergarten Directory that lists all the schools you can apply to. Your agency case planer can assist you in viewing the Directory if you do not have a computer.   **It is important that birth parents are included in this decision.**

HOW TO APPLY FOR KINDERGARTEN

Once you have selected the schools to put on the application, you can apply:

1. Online at nyc.gov/schools/kindergarten
2. Over the phone by calling 311
3. In person at a Family Welcome Center (8am – 3pm, Mon – Fri)

What happens after the application is submitted? You will be notified of the Kindergarten school placement in the Spring after you apply. That letter will inform you on how to register the student. If the child is returned home with their parent, or in another foster home, you should give the letter to the agency immediately.

HOW DO I KNOW IF THE CHILD IN MY CARE IS DEVELOPING CORRECTLY?

Below is a list of Development Milestones you should look for when assessing whether a child is on track developmentally.

Developmental Milestones List:

3 YEARS

By the time the child is 3 years old, they should be able to:

- ☑ Dresses and undresses themselves
- ☑ Can follow instructions that have 2-3 steps
- ☑ Say their first name and their age
- ☑ Knows how to take turns in activities
- ☑ Can copy the movements of adults and friends

4 YEARS

By the time the child is 4 years old, they should be able to:

- ☑ Learn and sing simple songs
- ☑ Use child-safe scissors to cut out pictures
- ☑ Have a vocabulary of 1500 words
- ☑ Form four-to-six-word sentences
- ☑ Play cooperatively with others
- ☑ Brush their teeth
- ☑ Correctly name colors (red, blue, green, yellow, orange)
- ☑ Go up/down stairs independently
- ☑ Dress/undress independently, including tying their shoes

5 YEARS

By the time the child is 5 years old, they should be able to:

- ☑ Shows independence
- ☑ Likes to sing, dance, or act
- ☑ Can tell what is real and what is make-believe
- ☑ Can tell a simple story
- ☑ Knows their name and address
- ☑ Can count to 10; write some letters of the alphabet
- ☑ Can use the bathroom
- ☑ Can draw a person/stick figure

If the student exhibits any of the signs of a possible developmental delay listed below, contact your case planner to discuss arranging an evaluation:

- ☒ Doesn't show a wide range of emotions
- ☒ Shows extreme behavior (unusually fearful, aggressive, shy or sad)
- ☒ Unusually withdrawn and not active
- ☒ Is easily distracted, has trouble focusing on one activity for more than 5 minutes
- ☒ Doesn't respond to people, or responds only superficially
- ☒ Can't tell what's real and what's make-believe
- ☒ Doesn't play a variety of games and activities
- ☒ Can't give first and last name
- ☒ Doesn't use plurals or past tense properly
- ☒ Doesn't talk about daily activities or experiences
- ☒ Doesn't draw pictures
- ☒ Can't brush teeth, wash and dry hands, or get undressed without help
- ☒ Loses skills he/she once had

FOUNDATION OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

As a foster parent, education support and advocacy is very important to academic success. Moving from Pre-K to a more structured elementary school setting can be challenging to foster children so it is important to support and encourage students during this transition.

Elementary school sets the foundation of education so it is a very important time for students. Without a solid foundation students can struggle in middle and high school.

Research has shown that children who have adult support to help with education perform at higher levels than those that do not. As a foster parent, the educational support and advocacy you provide to students is very important and makes a positive impact on student's overall academic success.   Elementary school is when statewide testing begins so it will be important to understand how students are doing academically in early grades (Kindergarten, first and second grades) before students begin testing in 3rd grade.

Elementary school can often provide a lot of school events and other opportunities for supporting parents/caregivers. Please be sure to share these events with birth parents so that they may participate in any special events at schools.

For more information on education-related support programs, please visit the ACS website Education Page at: http://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/education.page.
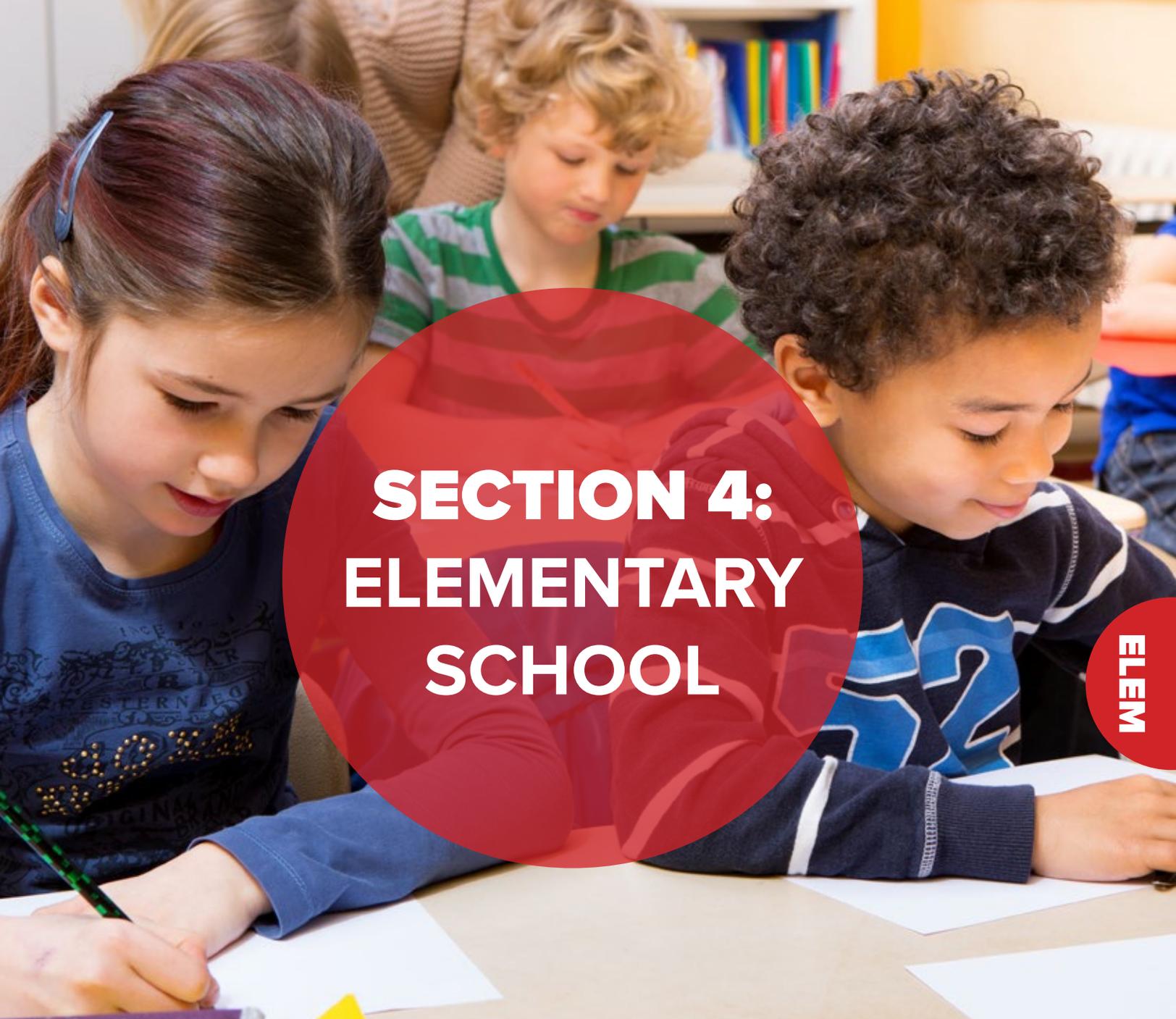
SECTION 4: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

ELEM

KINDERGARTEN - 5TH GRADE

IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to create at home learning experiences

- Tips to increase reading levels for students

- Different elementary school options

SUPPORTING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

READ WITH STUDENTS

Read to and with students

Let students see you reading every day to demonstrate the importance of reading.

- Make regular trips to the public library.

- Encourage daily writing in a journal.

- Whenever possible, help her or him connect what happens in the world to what they read.

- Monitor reading progress. Many schools use letters to detail reading levels.
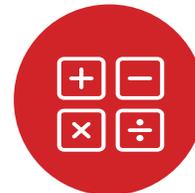
ASK FOR HELP

Get help right away if your student struggles in math or reading

Children who still struggle with reading or math by third grade are more likely to drop out of school. Ask the teacher and agency case planner about tutors or other services at school.

SET ASIDE A STUDY SPACE

Make sure your student does each day's homework assignment

Set aside a quiet place for homework and set a regular time each day to complete it. See more homework suggestions in the introduction section of this guide (pg. 18).

ENCOURAGE YOUR STUDENT

Compliment your student's work and success in school

It is important that students feel supported. Point out student's strong subjects and use encouraging language to support subjects where they may need more assistance.
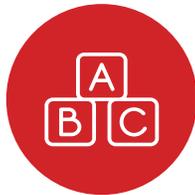
WORK TOGETHER

Work closely with your agency case planner or agency education specialist

Let this person/people know:

- When a child is not making academic progress

- When a child is having behavioral difficulties in school

- When a child is not receiving mandated special education services

- If a child is suspended from school as soon as you receive notification

ENHANCE LEARNING

Provide a range of experiences

Childhood is a time for exploring many areas and doing new things.

- Your student may try new sports, arts, or specialized academic pursuits. Ask schools or agencies for recommendations

- Visit museums, zoos and city art exhibits

- Look for community and/or religious activities

ELEM

> " *I'm focusing on making sure I interact with my youth in care and being more of an active listener in regards to being able to meet them where they are at emotionally and academically. If I cannot give them the help they need academically, I make sure I advocate for them at the agency for tutoring or speech or good medical treatment.*
>
> **- FEDCAP PREPNOW! FOSTER PARENT**

KIDS SPEND QUITE A BIT OF TIME OUTSIDE SCHOOL. ENHANCE THEIR LEARNING BY CONNECTING THEM TO AFTER-SCHOOL, SUMMER AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES.

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Most schools offer an after-school program. These programs offer academics, arts and music, sports, and other recreational and cultural activities. For contact information for after-school programs in your area, talk to your agency case planner, or call 311.

Foster parents _may be_ entitled to after-school program vouchers if there are no free after-school programs at the school the student attends. You need to contact your agency case planner for more information on how to access these services.

HOW TO REGISTER FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN NYC

Once a student enters foster care or changes foster care placement, they must remain in their original school unless it would be in the best interest of the student to change schools.

DO NOT automatically change a student's school once they enter your home. Talk to your agency case planner if school placement issues arise and you believe it might be in the student's best interest to change schools. The foster care agency has the final decision as to whether a student's school should change.

If a student has never been enrolled in school, foster parents should register them at their zoned school, which is based on your home address. If you are not sure where your zoned school is, you can call 311 or go to the **_DOE Family Welcome Center_** that serves the school district in which you reside. The Welcome Center will then locate the school closest to the student's home that has available seats.

•   To find the nearest Welcome Center - visit the NYC DOE Website or call 311.

When possible, foster parents should also consider gifted and talented programs or charter schools. A brief description of these programs is on the following page. Please seek out assistance from your agency case planner or education liaison and discuss these options with them before submitting any applications. **_Birth parents will need to have input on these choices as well._**

> *Education defines [part of you] as a person. It opens the door to success.*
>
> *- F.A., FOSTER CARE YOUTH*

GIFTED & TALENTED PROGRAMS

Gifted & Talented (G&T) programs are offered by the NYC Department of Education to support the needs of exceptional students. G&T programs are designed to deliver a more rigorous and specialized instruction to academically gifted students who need more advanced instruction.

If you think a student should be considered for a G&T program, discuss with your agency education liaison.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

Charter schools are public schools that are independently run by non-profits. While charter schools must follow state educational performance standards and high school graduation requirements, their independent charter allows them greater flexibility in how the school operates.

Each charter school has its own application process. *If deemed appropriate and agreed to by the birth parent(s),* foster parents may apply directly to as many schools as they would like, and students are admitted through a lottery. For more information, visit the NYC DOE Office of Charter Schools website. Students with disabilities can receive the recommended special education services and programs in charter schools or in G&T programs.

STUDENTS RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Please see the **_Special Education_** section of this guide for more information (pg. 46).

STUDENT WHO REQUIRE LANGUAGE SERVICES

Please see the **_English Language Learner_** section of this guide for more information (pg. 26).

START PLANNING FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL!

Each fall, every 5th grade student attending a New York City public elementary school receives a middle school application. Students must apply to middle school, including those who want to stay at schools that may go up to the 8th grade. Just because a student already attends an elementary school that has a 6th-8th grade does NOT guarantee them a space for middle school. They still must apply!

The Middle School choice program requires students to apply to middle schools and rank their school choices by preference.

Things you should remember about Middle School Choice:

- Each school district has a Middle School Directory which families should review to learn about the school admissions process and all the schools in the district.

- Some schools require students to apply AT THE SCHOOL instead of on the middle school application so read the directory carefully!!

- Decision letters for applications are sent to families in May.

⚠️ If you need help or want someone to review the middle school application before submitting it, please reach out to your case planner, the agency education liaison, or the ACS Office of Education Support and Policy Planning.

ELEM

MIDDLE SCHOOL BRINGS CHANGE!

When a student is placed in your home, they are entitled to stay in the school they were attending prior to foster care placement or a foster home move. You must contact your case planner to discuss a school change BEFORE you change a student's school.

If a student comes to your home without a school placement, please advise the agency so the case planner can determine where it is best to enroll the student in school.

MIDDLE SCHOOL BASICS

Middle schools are usually grade 6 through grade 8. Other middle schools can be combined with elementary schools, where there is Kindergarten through grade 8. Lastly, you can have schools that combine middle school and high school together and have grades 6 through grade 12.

Middle School is considered the beginning of the student's secondary education. Being in middle school comes with changes!

Changes can include:

- Middle school students usually get more homework, classes are more difficult, and the behavior expectations of students increase.

- Middle school students change classes instead of staying in one classroom, which means different teachers for different subjects.

- Middle school allows for students to be on sports teams, clubs, and to participate in many other extra-curricular activities.

Sometimes the change in middle school can be overwhelming to students. Youth in foster care may express frustration which can be misinterpreted as bad behavior. Foster parents should be aware of these changes to better help students adjust.

For more information on education-related support programs, please visit the ACS website Education Page at: http://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/education.page.
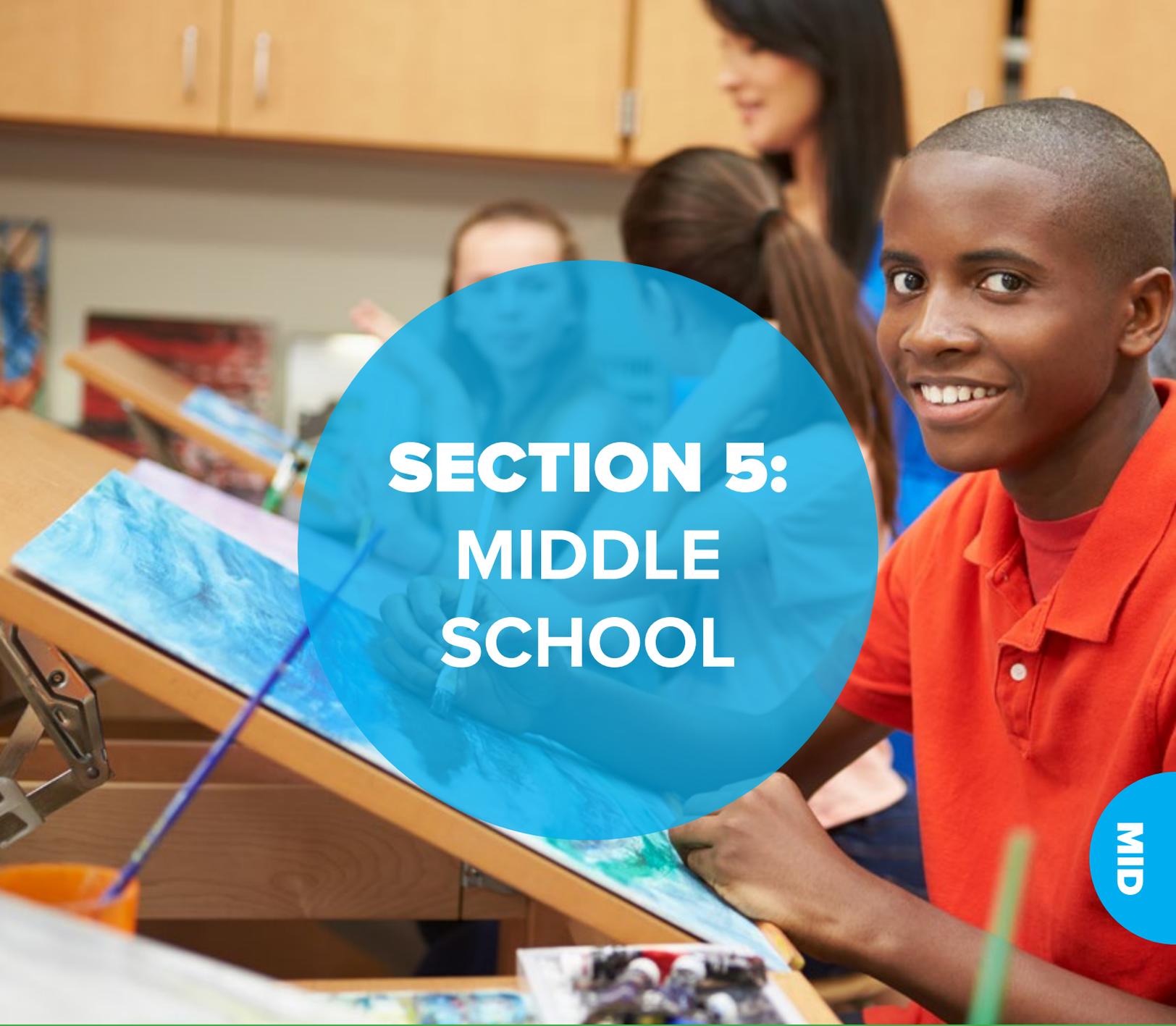
SECTION 5: MIDDLE SCHOOL

MID

6ᵀᴴ GRADE - 8ᵀᴴ GRADE

IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL LEARN:

- Changes in learning environment in middle schools

- Constructive ways to support students in grades 6 through grade 8

- How to apply for high school while in the 8th grade

SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

TIPS TO HELP

Helpful tips to help your Middle school student achieve academic success:

1. Set up a regular time to study complete homework, and review that it is done.

2. Use a calendar to record school events, parent-teacher conferences, state exam dates and other important benchmarks for middle school students.

3. Stay in touch with the student's teachers either through email or by attending parent-teacher conferences. As there may be more than one teacher per subject, budget appropriate time to see all teachers or at least subjects where the student may need additional support.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Helpful questions to ask Middle school students:

1. What are his or her classes like; what are their interests; what are they studying?

2. What kind of environment does he or she need to be comfortable and successful studying and completing homework – for example, a quiet room to study or does she/he feel more comfortable completing assignments while listening to music?

3. Are there activities outside school or home that would be helpful additions to the school curriculum?

STRUGGLING MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

Sometimes students struggle with the transition to middle school including traveling to school, more classes, more teachers, more students, more academic demands, more sensitivity to peer judgments — all things that can be overwhelming to students.

- **If you find out that a student is cutting class or school**, call your agency case worker or agency education specialist so that a plan can be worked out to correct truancy.

- **If your student is struggling academically**, ask the foster care agency if they provide tutoring or if they can find an academic support program in the community.

- **If you believe a school change is necessary,** the foster care agency can discuss that with the biological parent and advocate for the school change.

NOTE: If you think a student may need special education services, please see the Special Education Section of this Guide (pg 46).

EXTRA-CURRICULAR EXPENSES

Please talk to the foster care agency case planner to obtain funding for any additional expenses for children in middle school programs.

These expenses can include:

- Sport Teams/Art/Music/Dance expenses (6th, 7th and 8th grade)

- Club participation expenses (6th, 7th, & 8th grade)

- Prom expenses (8th grade)

- Senior Dues—including cap and gown, senior trip, and class photos (8th grade)

APPLYING FOR HIGH SCHOOL

Students' grades, attendance, and statewide test scores in middle school, especially in 7th grade, will determine what high school students get admitted to, so it is important to stay on track.

6TH + 7TH GRADERS

- Start talking to students about high school in 6th grade. Talk to students about their interests because certain high schools have special programs based on a student's career choice.

    - For example, there are schools that have medical programs—so students take their regular classes and also take some medical classes while in high school.

    - Some classes in high school can be used for college credit depending on what school the student attends!

- Students should begin researching high schools by the beginning of 7th grade.

- Use the schoolfinder on-line search tool for high schools. It can help you search for schools that match the student's academic interests, are located in a certain borough, etc. Contact the school parent coordinator for more information.

- Encourage students to join academic clubs and/or sports teams, and to participate in community service activities.   Not only do these activities help middle school students learn, but they can help with deciding what they are truly interested in pursuing as a high schooler.

Once you receive the high school directory at the end of the 7th grade, review the directory with your student over the summer to prepare for completing their high school applications in 8th grade.

- Learn about the ways to apply for specialized high schools that require testing to gain admission and/or arts and music high schools that may require an audition or a portfolio of student work. ***Many of these application deadlines are very early in the start of the 8th grade!*** Students should begin preparing for testing or creating portfolios/routines during the summer months between 7th and 8th grade.

  - For information on special programs to help students prepare for specialized high school examinations or requirements for arts/dance schools, please contact the case planner or agency education specialist in the Spring of the 7th grade year. **Many programs require applications BEFORE summer.**

<div style="background:#29ABE2;color:white;padding:10px;display:inline-block;font-weight:bold">8TH GRADERS</div>

8th grade is a time to plan for transition to high school!!! Fun things like prom and graduation planning will happen BUT students in 8th grade also need to focus on applying for high school by December of their 8th grade year and also passing their statewide examinations in April to ensure they are prepared to enter high school!

- Biological parents should be included in ALL planning, including 8th grade transition planning like high school applications and prom/graduation. If possible, foster parents should discuss all options with parents or ask the case planner to set up a meeting to get the parents' input on all these decisions and to be included in activities when possible.

HOW TO COMPLETE HIGH SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

The High School application allows a student to choose 12 high schools in the city. They can choose ANY high school and it doesn't matter where the student lives. On the high school application, it is important for students to rank their 12 high school choices in order of preference; so the one they really want to attend should be first, etc.

- Every school has different programs and some are specialized according to career choices.

- Some schools have only one program for all students.

- Some schools have more than one program in the same building. For these schools, a student can choose multiple programs in one school on the application.

- All programs are listed in the New York City High School Directory. Students should have received a copy of the directory in the summer before 8TH grade.

THINGS TO CONSIDER IN THE HIGH SCHOOL APPLICATION PROCESS

It is important that the programs students choose are ones they are interested in and for which they meet the admissions criteria. Some programs have very specific requirements and it is important that students review what those requirements are.

For example:

College Courses

There are high schools that provide college level classes where students can graduate high school with a two–year college degree. These schools often require an 85 or over for grades in all subjects and a score of 3 or 4 on the ELA and Math state examinations.

Recent Immigrants

There are schools that help students who have recently immigrated and do not have a full understanding of the English language and have lived in the United States less than 3 years. (See the _English Language Learner_ section of this manual on pg. 26 for more details).

Vocational Programs

There are vocational schools that allow students to learn auto mechanics, culinary arts, or aviation so they can receive a certification that can help them get a job after high school graduation.

- These schools are known as "CTE schools"—career and technical education schools. In the high school directory you will see those schools listed with a "CTE" designation.

Performing Arts Schools

There are performing arts schools that require the student to audition or "try out" by singing, dancing, or showing their artwork.

- Auditions are usually completed in the beginning of 8th grade and each school has its own schedule. The school usually lists the schedule in the high school directory but you can also call the school.

There is a school program that can be a good fit for every student. If a student is unsure of choosing a specific program, they can choose a general program. General programs help students complete their required subjects and help with deciding what to do after high school.

MID

To help students make their 12 choices, students must attend either the Citywide or Borough High School Fairs. These events are very similar to college fairs with tables set up with information about the school. Students can ask current high school students questions and sign-up for school tours. The DOE also hosts information sessions about how to apply for specialized schools, art and dance schools, and other special programs.

NYC DOE CITYWIDE HIGH SCHOOL FAIR & BOROUGH BASED HIGH SCHOOL FAIRS

- The Citywide High School Fair is the largest fair where all the high schools in NYC can be visited. It is held in **September of 8TH grade**. This is the best fair to attend.

- Students should also attend Borough based High School Fairs held on the same day in each borough. Only high schools located in the boroughs you attend will be at these fairs. They are held in **October of 8TH grade**.

It is HIGHLY ENCOURAGED that foster parents escort students to these high school fairs if the biological parent and/or agency staff are not able to attend.

- The summer before 8th grade, students should review the high school directory they received at the end of 7th grade and be provided opportunities to ask questions and discuss their preferences before the fairs begin.

- If the student does not have a directory, you can request one from the agency or review if on the DOE website.

OTHER TIPS FOR HIGH SCHOOL APPLICATION CHOICE

- Go to high school open house tours and visit schools.

- Don't limit choices to the neighborhood. There are great high schools in all 5 boroughs.

- Visit high schools to measure travel time.

    NOTE: students who are in the process of returning home to their parents prior to their entrance into high school should consider the location of where they will be living once they enter high school and the travel times and distances relative to those home locations.

WHAT ARE SPECIALIZED HIGH SCHOOLS?

There are 9 Specialized High Schools in New York City that serve the needs of academically gifted students. Students that apply to these schools typically have high level grades and high scores on statewide examinations.

- For admission to these schools, admission is based on the score attained on the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (SHSAT).

  - EVERY student should register and take the specialized high school examination (SHSAT). DO NOT assume a student cannot get into a specialized high school if they have had some academic issues in the past.

  - Specialized high schools **do NOT count toward the 12 choices** that students have on their high school application. Students "choose" their specialized high school when they apply to take the SHSAT examination.

  - **NOTE:** There are other academically competitive high schools that DO NOT require the specialized high school examination. They may not require a test at all (only review student grades, attendance, etc.) or the school may have their own test that is ONLY for their school.   It is important to read high school qualifications in the directory for information on these schools. If a student is recommended to have testing accommodations on his/her IEP or 504 plan, he/she may be entitled to those accommodations on the SHSAT. See your child's guidance counselor for more information.

WHAT ABOUT PERFORMING ARTS SCHOOLS?

The most well-known high school for performing arts, is Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts. Acceptance is based on an audition and a review of a student's academic records. All students can audition.

  - Applying to LaGuardia High school **DOES NOT count toward the 12 choices** that students have on their high school application.

- There are other arts schools in each borough that students can apply to that also require an audition/review of student work. These schools **must be listed as part of the 12 choices** that students have on their high school application. Please see the high school directory for more information.

- There are specialized programs that can assist students with preparing their dance routines, instrumental songs, or art portfolios for auditions. Please reach out to your foster care agency education liaison for more information.

HIGH SCHOOL ADMISSIONS PROCESS - 8TH GRADE

AUG

SEPT

OCT

AUGUST - OCTOBER

- Read the DOE's High School Directory and Specialized High Schools Student Handbook.
- Look at school admission qualifications and make sure the student meets those criteria before choosing.
- The middle school may have high school admission information days—if so please attend.
- The foster care agency may also have events, so please ask the case planner.
- Attend the Citywide and Borough High School Fairs with the student or ensure the student attends with the agency or birth parent if appropriate.

NOV

DEC

JAN

OCTOBER - DECEMBER

- Complete any admissions requirements, including attending school open houses. Students can get a priority in admission if they attend a school open house or event.
- Register to take the specialized **high school examination** and/or register for your **dance/singing/art auditions.**
- Submit the Round 1 high school application to your guidance counselor by the December deadline.

**FEB**

MAR

APR

MARCH

Receive Round 1 results, including specialized high schools and audition results. Students that accept their Round 1 choice have completed the process.

- Students who did not receive a Round 1 high school offer because they were not matched to a school must apply in Round 2.
- If students are matched in Round 1 but don't like their match, have changed their mind, or their circumstances have changed, they can choose to give up their Round 1 match and apply for Round 2.

MAY

JUN

MAY - JUNE

Receive Round 2 results, including specialized high schools and audition results. Students that accept their Round 2 choice have completed the process.

> One of the main pathways from poverty or just to secure a form of stability mentally, physically and financially is education.
>
> *- J.H., FOSTER CARE YOUTH*

HIGH SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

- Students with disabilities may apply to all schools and/or programs listed in the high school directory subject to the same admissions requirements as their general education peers.

- Having an IEP will not affect a child's placement in a choice school.

- High Schools are expected to implement the programs and provide all related services recommended on a student's IEP.

NOTE: Students that attend a **specialized District 75 program** are not required to participate in the high school admissions process. These students will learn their school placements in May or June through the District 75 placement office. If you are unsure whether a student attends a D75 school, you can contact the school to verify or talk with the foster care agency case planner or education specialist.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER (ELL) STUDENTS

See **General Section** for ELL students in this guide regarding the rights and high school options of ELL students (pg. 26).

OTHER HIGH SCHOOL OPTIONS

CHARTER SCHOOL HIGH SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

Charter school applications are governed by a lottery process. If a student is already accepted into a charter school that has 6th grade through 12TH grade, she or he is given first priority for that school in the high school admissions process. The charter school will review this with you and the student.

If such a student is currently in a charter school, they can still complete the public school high school application process detailed above. They are not required to stay in the charter school.

If a student wants to enter charter high school for the first time or wants to apply to

a different charter school for high school, she or he can apply in early Spring when the charter school application is released. Charter school applications are usually due on or about April 1st.

NOTE: Charter high school admission is not guaranteed unless the student has been a middle school student there. Even if a student is interested in a charter school, it is recommended the student also complete a public high school application in order to have a back-up choice.

PRIVATE HIGH SCHOOL AND/OR RELIGIOUS-BASED HIGH SCHOOLS ADMISSIONS

There are some non-public schools and programs that offer students in foster care partial or full scholarships if they meet the criteria for admissions.

If a student is interested in a **Catholic high school,** he or she must take the Test for Admission into Catholic High School (TACHS) examination in October of 8th grade. There is a fee for this examination, but students can apply for a fee waiver or request that the foster care agency cover the cost of the examination.

- Once accepted into the school, students should be connected to the **Student Sponsors Program**, which provides financial support for low income students and students in foster care are eligible. Please visit their website for more information. http://sspnyc.org/

For students with strong academics, private schools offer scholarship programs to make their schools available for such students. There is also a general exam for private high school -- the **Secondary School Admissions Test (SSAT)**, but some schools may have special admissions programs that do not require students to take the examination.

Admission to private school can be very competitive and time-consuming so it is recommended that this option be discussed with the case planner and the biological parent before exploring admissions to any private schools.

COMPLETING HIGH SCHOOL IS KEY!

Every youth should finish high school, receive a high school equivalency diploma, (TASC) or be connected to appropriate educational transitional services by 21 years old.

Every youth who finishes high school should move on to college or a vocational program that will prepare him or her for a job and independent living.

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT YOUR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT?

Help your student understand his or her high school graduation requirements.
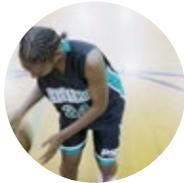
Allow students to take part in extra-curricular activities, not only to develop skills and talents but to have fun and have activities to put on college applications.

If student is suspended from school, immediately contact your agency case planner, agency education specialist and the student's Family Court attorney.

The agency education specialist and the PYA specialist (preparing youth for adulthood) is there to help you with college/career planning.

At the end of 12th grade there may be additional costs for senior year activities, including graduation, prom, senior photos, senior trip, etc. Foster parents should talk to the foster care agency about those fees to be covered by the foster care agency.

For more information on education-related support programs, please visit the ACS website Education Page at: http://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/education.page.

SECTION 6: HIGH SCHOOL

9TH GRADE - 12TH GRADE

IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to support students when they enter high school and after they graduate to post-secondary options

- High school alternatives, if necessary and appropriate

- Preparing students for college or a vocational program while in high school

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS FOR EARNING A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA IN NEW YORK CITY AND STATE?

There are three diploma types offered in New York State. For all three types of diplomas, students have to earn 44 credits in subject areas and pass specific assessments (typically Regents exams or other Department approved alternatives) in English language arts (ELA), math, social studies and science. The minimum passing scores for testing is 65 but can be different for certain Students with disabilities.

- If a student is having trouble passing a class or a Regents examination, please follow up with your foster care case planner or education liaison to determine if tutoring is available.

All students should be encouraged to earn the highest diploma they can, but all three diplomas are valid within and outside the State:

ADVANCED REGENTS DIPLOMA

Requires a score of 65 or above on 9 specific assessments/Regents exams and earning 44 required credits including at least 6 credits in languages other than English (LOTE). Tests can be waived for schools that have performance-based assessment tasks (PBATs) instead of Regents examinations.

REGENTS DIPLOMA

Requires a score of 65 or above on 5 specific assessments/Regents exams and earning 44 required credits. Tests can be waived for schools that have performance-based assessment tasks (PBATs) instead of Regents examinations.

LOCAL DIPLOMA

Can be earned by (1) Scoring 55 or above on 5 specific assessments/ Regents exams, (2) Being enrolled as a special education student, or (3) Successfully appealing Regents exam outcomes to graduate with lower scores.

"Safety Net" students are eligible for a local diploma. The "Safety Net" provides additional flexibilities to support students with disabilities in earning a diploma. Eligible students include:
- Students with IEPs
- Students with Section 504 plans that specify Safety Net eligibility
- Students with disabilities who were declassified while in grades 8-12 whose last IEP specified Safety Net eligibility

WHAT IF A STUDENT CANNOT MEET THE REQUIREMENTS FOR ANY OF THE 3 TYPES OF DIPLOMAS?

Students who are unable to earn a high school diploma may earn a non-diploma commencement credential and/or a high school equivalency diploma after completing the TASC (formerly the "GED") examination.

- For more information about high school equivalency diploma programs, please explore the Pathways to Graduation (P2G) program. You can request information from the school guidance counselor.

There are also two types of non-diploma commencement "exiting credentials," the Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) commencement credential and the Skills and Achievement commencement credential.

CDOS	SKILLS + ACHIEVEMENT
CDOS is available to all students, including students with disabilities and is designed to recognize students' mastery of certain career readiness skills.	The Skills and Achievement credential can only be awarded to students with a disability who participates in the New York State Alternate Assessment in place of standardized testing. **This credential is for students that do not take Regents examinations.**

IMPORTANT: Both of these non-diploma commencement existing credentials are NOT equivalent to a high school diploma and do not have credit or exam requirements.

- Students are entitled to stay in school to complete their diploma or the high school equivalency diploma through the school year they turn 21 years old.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities have some additional services they can receive in high school to ensure they have a good transition into college, trade school, or workforce. To learn more about these services and supports, please see the "Special Education" section of this manual (pg. 46).

WHAT IF YOUR STUDENT WANTS TO CHANGE HIS OR HER HIGH SCHOOL?

FOR STUDENTS IN 9TH GRADE

Students are eligible to participate in the high school choice process again if they want to transfer to a new high school. They will have to complete a new high school application just like they did when they were in the 8th grade BUT they can only choose schools that offer space for 10th graders. You can find that information in the high school directory. Ask the educational liaison at the agency or case planner for assistance with that application process.

FOR STUDENTS IN 10TH GRADE AND ABOVE

Alternative Schools/Additional Ways to Graduate

In NYC, there are several options for youth who are either not attending school or are at risk of dropping out because they are struggling academically and not on track to graduate with a diploma.

There is a _Referral Center for High School Alternatives_ in each borough to help students find their best pathway to a diploma or the high school equivalency (formerly the GED) exam.

- Students should contact a Referral Center if they want to attend school in New York City and don't have a high school diploma, and need additional support to re-connect with school. Families can call 311 to find the nearest referral center. If you live outside of NYC, please contact your agency case planner.

ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

Pathways to Graduation (P2G): is a free DOE District 79 program that prepares students ages 18 – 21 to take the high school equivalency TASC exam (formerly known as the GED test), earn their high school equivalency diploma, and advance to college and career opportunities. There are 65 program sites located throughout the five boroughs.

There are other community-based high school equivalency programs that students can access if the P2G program is not appropriate. To explore these programs, please see your case planner or education liaison for the agency.

The School of Cooperative Technical Education, called "Co-op Tech," is a half-day vocational program that offers students hands-on training in a variety of vocational areas, such as the building trades, health field, services industry and information technology.

- Co-op Tech serves students who are 16 to 21 years of age and students can either be part-time while they continue to attend their high school or be a part of the Pathways to Graduate (P2G) High School Equivalency programs. **Even students that have graduated can access vocational training through co-op tech.**

TRANSFER SCHOOLS

Transfer Schools are small, full-time high schools designed to re-engage students who have dropped out or who have fallen behind in credits. Students **must apply DIRECTLY** to the school to be considered for admission. For a list of transfer schools in each borough, please refer to the Additional Ways to Graduate Directory that can be found on the DOE website or go to the Referral Center for the guide.

YOUNG ADULT BOROUGH CENTERS

Young Adult Borough Centers (YABCs) are afternoon-evening academic programs designed for high school students who are behind in credits, considering dropping out, or have adult responsibilities in the daytime. Students can go to the Referral Centers for more information. Students must be 17.5 years old or older, have at least 17 credits, and be in 5th year of high school.

LEARNING TO WORK

Many Transfer Schools, High school equivalency programs, and Young Adult Borough Centers are supported by the Learning to Work (LTW) initiative. LTW offers in-depth job readiness and career exploration activities designed to enhance the academic component of select Transfer Schools and Young Adult Borough Centers (YABCs). Schools and programs with LTW include a paid internship.

PATH TO COLLEGE TIMETABLE

9

In freshman year, everything "counts" toward college admissions. All freshman courses, grades and credits will be on the student's transcript and freshman grades will be used to determine the student's grade point average (GPA).

- Freshman activities, honors and awards can be listed on college and scholarship applications. It is important for students to become involved in extra-curricular activities. Meet with the guidance counselor to determine if the school has any specialized college planning programs.

10

Look for opportunities to further develop skills and talents. Encourage your student to take the PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test) a free test which helps students prepare for the SAT and can be taken in their high school.

- Students can take the PSAT as many times as possible to increase their knowledge and test-taking skills.

9TH GRADE **10TH GRADE** **11TH GRADE**

11

This is a crucial year when students should take college tests such as the ACT or SAT, make college visits and start searching for scholarships. To register for the ACT go to www.actstudent.org. To register for the SAT go to www.collegeboard.com. Vist https://www.khanacademy.org/sat for free SAT prep.

- If you have questions about these tests, see the school counselor or your agency's education specialist. Most students take the SAT or ACT once in the spring of their junior year. They can take the test again in the fall of 12th grade to see if they can improve their scores.

  - Ask the school counselor about ACT and/or SAT examination fee waivers or apply for a fee waiver when the student registers for the examination. 11th grade students can take the test for free in their high school.

Help students complete college applications in the Fall and be aware of application deadlines. If the student is applying to City University of New York (CUNY) or State University of New York (SUNY) schools, ask your agency education specialist how to apply for the _**application fee waiver.**_ Others schools may also offer fee waivers but you must contact them directly.

• Start the financial aid process in October. See the Q & A in this section as well as the _**College and Career section**_ of this manual for more information on financial aid. Most students in foster care can attend college for free or with limited student loans, depending on the school they choose to attend.

• Retake the ACT and/or SAT in _**October and November,**_ if necessary.

• _**By November,**_ complete college admissions, financial aid and scholarship applications.

> **TIP:** Please make sure students are also applying for any **"Education Opportunity Programs"**. Check **YES** on the college application where is asks if the student is interested in education opportunity programs. For more information about education opportunity programs, please see the **College and Career** section of this manual.

• _**In April,**_ the student should receive admission decisions and can then decide which college to attend. Student should make their final decision and notify the school they wish to attend.

> **NOTE:** If students are not admitted to any of the schools they can start in a community college to bring their grades higher, and then reapply to the school of their choice after completing an associate's degree.

• _**In late April or early May,**_ students should receive financial aid information from the colleges they were accepted to in order to determine what aid they may be receiving. These letters are sometimes called "financial aid award" letters. Please review those with the agency education liaison to ensure that all student financial aid is correct.

HIGH

PAYING FOR COLLEGE

In addition to information below—please see the *College and Career* section of this guide for more information. There are exceptions for undocumented students that should be reviewed on pg. 113.

■ ARE STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE ELIGIBLE FOR FINANCIAL AID?

YES!! Students in foster care can apply for federal financial aid, state financial aid (if they are attending school in NYS), and an additional federal aid program just for students in foster care called the Education Training Voucher (ETV) Program.

FASFA

Federal Financial Aid is received after the student completes the FAFSA form. Students can submit the FAFSA starting October 1 at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Students in foster care do not need to enter information regarding their birth parent or foster parent financial information. Student can skip those questions.

⚠ • When asked on the application whether the student is in foster care or was a "ward of the court" the student MUST check "yes".

TAP

State Financial Aid for NYC/NYS schools is received after the student completes the TAP application. Usually when a student completes the FAFSA on the computer, they will be directed to complete the TAP at the same time. If that does not happen, then the student can access the TAP application at: https://www.tap.hesc.ny.gov/totw/. Try to complete the application at the same time.

ETV

The Education Training Voucher Program is available only for students in foster care. In order to receive these funds, the student must apply at: http://www.fc2sprograms.org/new-york/

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WHEN DO STUDENTS APPLY FOR THAT FINANCIAL AID?

Students MUST apply every year for financial aid. The FASFA and TAP applications open every October, and ETV opens in July.

The first time students apply for financial aid is in their SENIOR YEAR of high school or after they complete their high school equivalency diploma.

CAN A STUDENT IN FOSTER CARE GO AWAY TO COLLEGE AND LIVE IN A DORM AND WHO PAYS FOR THAT?

Many foster care students attend "away" schools and live on campus during the semester.

When students live on campus, their foster care agency will pay for their room and board and meal plan fees, up to the amount that they would pay a foster parent to house a student in their home

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE IN FINANCIAL AID WHEN A STUDENT ATTENDS A SCHOOL IN NEW YORK OR OUTSIDE NEW YORK?

Students that attend college out of state are NOT eligible to receive the New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) grant.

CAN STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE APPLY TO STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS? ARE THEY COVERED BY FINANCIAL AID?

YES!! Student must receive permission from the agency. Discuss with the student case planner and the foster care agency education liaison.

WHAT DO STUDENTS DO IF ALL OF THEIR FINANCIAL AID DOES NOT COVER THEIR COST OF THE SCHOOL?

Students should seek out scholarships from the school when they apply and explore if the foster care agency has any scholarship programs. If there is no additional aid, students have the option of taking out student loans.

HIGH

For more information about all post-secondary options, including vocation training programs and financial aid information, please see the College and Career section and ACS website.

PATHWAYS TO THE FUTURE

Postsecondary education is a term to describe any education and training that a student completes after she or he graduates from high school or earns a high school equivalency diploma. It is very important for students who have the ability to complete one of these tracks because postsecondary education has a very significant effect on students' future employment and life-time earnings.

- For more assistance on how to support youth in obtaining either a high school or high school equivalency diploma, please see the High School section of this manual.

Not all students are interested in attending a traditional college program. This section of the guide will help you understand some of the other pathways that students can explore so that you can help guide them to the best option based on their interests, learning styles and goals.

TIP: For students who are unsure of which route to take (college or career certificate or other training), work with the foster care agency case planner and education specialist to help determine the best pathway for your student.

In this section, we will address college admission first, and then discuss other post-secondary options.

For more information on college support and scholarships, please visit the ACS Website at http://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/education.page.

SECTION 7: POST HIGH SCHOOL

COLLEGE & CAREER PLANNING

IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL LEARN:

- Effective ways to help students plan for post-secondary education choices

- Differences between colleges and vocational training programs

- Financial Aid availability for students in foster care

- Goal development for career planning

COLLEGE ADMISSION

Attending college is an achievable goal for youth in foster care! Whether they want to stay in NYC, attend a college upstate, or attend a college in another state—all of these options can be explored and their choices should be explored based on their high school grades, their area of study, their age, and planning goals.

For students who are interested in applying for college, they have two main options: Community Colleges and Four-Year Colleges and Universities.

2-YEAR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

- Community colleges offer students associate degree programs. Associate degrees typically take 2 years to complete.

- There are community colleges within NYC, which are run by City University of New York (CUNY) and some outside of NYC, run by either the State University of New York (SUNY) or other states.

- Students are encouraged to attend community colleges within the state to maximize their eligibility for financial aid. Community colleges within NYC tend to be the least costly, but have limited on-campus housing. However, there are special housing programs for students that attend community colleges in NYC, which are mentioned later in this section (see **Fostering College Success Initiative** on pg. 110). Also, for community colleges outside of NYC, there are opportunities to live on campus.

- Most community colleges have trade-based programs that students can complete in two years and start working after graduation. For example, some community colleges have culinary arts, respiratory therapy, audio engineering, and other job training options that provide students with specific employment skills. Vocational programs at community colleges tend to be less expensive than private vocational schools.

- Community colleges admit students on a rolling basis, so an application can be made at any time, and students can start at the beginning of the next term. Some community colleges also offer pre-college programs such as High School Equivalency TASC (formerly known as GED) or high school completion classes. They may be free, with the credits applying towards a college degree.

- Students do not have to take an entry test such as the SAT or ACT to enroll in most community colleges.

4-YEAR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

- 4-year colleges and universities can offer both associate and bachelor degree programs, but most only offer bachelor degree programs and more advanced degrees. Students who earn an associate degree at a community college can explore transferring their credits to a 4-year school to complete a bachelor's degree.

- There are 4-year colleges and universities within NYC (CUNY) and outside NYC (SUNY, private schools). Students can also explore attending school in other states.

- Enrollment in a 4-year college or university requires more advance planning than enrolling in a community college program, including the following steps:

WHAT STEPS DO I TAKE TO SUPPORT COLLEGE ADMISSIONS?

1   Start early and set goals!

2   Take college entry tests (SAT; ACT), classes required for college admission, and earn a high school diploma or equivalency!

3   Apply to college, get accepted and enroll!

4   Obtain financial aid and scholarships!

> *My foster parents supported me in everything……it [made] me motivated to strive for what I want when it comes to my higher education.*
>
> *- A.Q., FOSTER CARE YOUTH*

(1) START EARLY AND SET GOALS

The most important thing to do to prepare for education after high school is to start early. Applications to 4-year colleges are generally due in the fall of senior year, so students interested in attending college should start thinking seriously in their junior year of high school about where they would like to apply.

PARTICIPATE IN COLLEGE TOURS/EXTRA CURRICULARS

ACS organizes college tours every year during students' spring break. Talk to your agency education specialist regarding this and any other college tour options, also try to find out about and attend college fairs. As mentioned in the previous section, encourage students to build their college resume in high school by volunteering or working and being active in clubs and organizations that they find interesting because colleges are looking for well-rounded and unique students.

Another reason to start early is that there may be diploma or equivalency requirements or specific course requirements for entry into some college programs. Ask the guidance counselor at the student's high school for information about colleges, and visit college websites to request materials about their programs.

COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS: SAT AND ACT

TIP: Encourage your student to take the PSAT examination in **October of sophmore year.** The PSAT is good practice for the SAT and there is no fee for the test.

SAT

The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT): The SAT is offered 7 times a year (October, November, December, January, March, May and June). Most students begin preparing for the SAT in December of their junior year, which is free for NYC students.

ACT

American College Testing (ACT) Assessment: The ACT test is very similar to the SAT and is used to measure a student's academic strengths in the areas of reading, math and writing.

A student planning to take the SAT, ACT or both examinations should strongly consider taking a preparation class. Talk to your agency case planner about funding options for prep courses or look for free prep courses in the community. The NYC DOE also offers SAT/ACT Prep classes. Talk to the school guidance counselor about these options. Also visit https://www.khanacademy.org/sat for free on-line SAT prep. Students who have IEPs or 504 plans that recommend testing accommodations may be able to receive those accommodations when taking the SAT or ACT.

3 APPLY TO COLLEGE, GET ACCEPTED AND ENROLL!

Apply on-time! Students typically apply by December of their senior year of high school (12th grade) for general enrollment. There are also early enrollment options and those applications are due BEFORE general admission applications.

Reserve time with your student to work on college applications. Some applications require lots of work, including getting letters of recommendation, writing an admissions essay, and collecting school records. Also, talk to your agency's education specialist for support and guidance in this process and to make a plan for post-high school education.

- Some college applications will require a college essay. Students should start writing their essays early so they can obtain feedback and edit their essays before submitting.

  TIP: Most high schools have writing assignments in a student's junior and senior year that can be used to create a college admission essay.

- It is not always necessary, but most private 4 year colleges require letters of recommendations. If the college the student is applying to requires recommendations, have the student choose an individual such as a teacher, employer or mentor to write a letter of recommendation for them.

Colleges send out acceptance letters in March and April of senior year. If your student receives an acceptance via mail or email and the student wants to attend, the student needs to contact the school by national deadline of May 1st to accept the offer. Notify the foster care agency of the acceptance.

After a student is accepted into a college, the college will send a Financial Aid Award letter. It will list all the costs and expenses of the school, and then list what financial aid a student will receive from the school. It is important to review that information with the foster care agency and the student to determine whether the school is an affordable option.

The Financial Aid Award letter **_WILL NOT_** list any aid that the student will be receiving from the foster care agency if the student is expecting to live on campus. This is why it is important to review this letter with the agency. See the next section **Obtaining Financial Aid and Scholarships** to learn about the different sources of money to help students with college-related and other postsecondary education expenses.

> " I wish my foster parent had encouraged [my] educational goals and career paths early.
>
> **- P.B.,** *FOSTER CARE YOUTH*

4 OBTAIN FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

WHAT IS FINANCIAL AID?

Student financial aid is money to help students pay for higher education and some vocational programs. Financial Aid comes from both government and private sources.

Financial aid can be in two forms: money that has to be repaid (loans) and money that does not have to be repaid (grants, scholarships, work-study). A student's financial aid package can include grants and scholarships, work-study and loans.

Some of the listed financial aid resources may not be available due to changes in federal government policy. Please check with the agency education liaison for more information on these options.

WHAT IS FAFSA?

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a form that is submitted every year annually by students to determine their eligibility for _FEDERAL financial aid._

FAFSA is the place to start the financial aid process and **_it is free to submit._** The FAFSA application period opens every year on October 1 and has to be updated every year.

- The FAFSA can be completed online at www.FAFSA.ed.gov. If there is no computer in your home, contact your agency case planner or education specialist to assist in submitting a FAFSA online.

- In order to submit the FAFSA online, the student needs to create a Federal Student Aid ID (FSA ID) at: https://fsaid.ed.gov/npas/index.htm, a couple of days before completing the FAFSA.

When filling out the FAFSA, after you receive your FAFSA ID, students in foster care **DO NOT** need to add their birth parents' signatures or their birth parents' financial information. They also **DO NOT** need foster parent financial information (unless the student was adopted before 13 years old). Instead, there will be a question on the FAFSA that asks the student if they have ever been in foster care or a ward of the court—the student should check "YES". No financial information will be required.

Completing the FAFSA allows students access to **_federal grant monies_**. There are four types of federal student grants (funds that don't need to be repaid) that students in foster care are eligible to receive:

- **Federal Pell Grants** are awarded to students who have not yet earned a bachelor's degree. Students can receive the Federal Pell Grant for up to the equivalent of 12 semesters, which is six academic years.

- **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG)** awarded to undergraduate students with exceptional financial need. These awards are issued by **_the SCHOOL_** the student attends. The amount of the award is determined by the college's financial aid office, and depends on the student's financial need and the availability of funds at the college.

- **Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH)** awarded to students who intend to teach in a public or private elementary or secondary school that serves students from low-income families. If the service requirement is not fulfilled, TEACH awards could turn into a loan to be repaid.

- **The New York Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV)**, federal aid that is only available to students in foster care that can be applied to any expenses a student has, including tuition, housing, supplies, or personal items. Students apply in July, visit the website: http://www.fc2sprograms.org/new-york/

OTHER TYPES OF FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID

Work Study--The Federal Work-Study Program enables students to earn money during the school year while also gaining valuable work experience, typically in part-time, career-related jobs.

Loans consist of money that the student borrows to help pay for college, and must be repaid (plus interest). Students do not have to start paying back loans until after they graduate from college.

- The William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program enables students to borrow money at low interest rates directly from the federal government. This Direct Loan Program includes Direct Stafford Loans, which are available to undergraduate and graduate students, and Direct PLUS Loans, which are available to parents of dependent students and to graduate and professional-degree students.

- Students should be mindful of the different types of loans, especially subsidized (no interest while in school), unsubsidized (interest accrues), and private (can be very high interest).

Students in foster care that attend public (CUNY or SUNY) colleges and universities typically DO NOT have to take out student loans because their student financial aid and aid from the foster care agency typically covers their cost of attendance.

⚠️ **Foster parents that are having trouble helping students complete the FASFA should reach out to the foster care agency education liaison.**

STEP #2	APPLY FOR STATE FINANCIAL AID

New York State financial aid is available through TAP (tuition assistance program). ***The funds can only be used for tuition.*** Students will be asked to fill out the TAP application when they complete the FAFSA. If the TAP application does not appear after the FAFSA, students can visit the Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) website to apply. http://www.ny.gov/services/apply-new-york-state-tap

⚠️ TAP is not available for students attending colleges outside of NYS.

STEP #3	EXPLORE SCHOLARSHIPS

- Check in with the school guidance counselor. Many high schools receive scholarship applications that can be distributed to students.

- Determine if there are any scholarship opportunities directly with the school your student wants to attend. Usually these scholarships can be found on the college/university website under the financial aid section.

- Some local/city governments, community organizations, private employers, and others award scholarships based on academic ability or other factors. For example, NYS has an *Excelsior Scholarship* program that helps pay for tuition for CUNY and SUNY schools.

- Foster care agencies do have some scholarship support for students. Check in with the education liaison at the agency to determine whether your agency provides this support

STEP #4	DETERMINE IF THERE ARE SPECIAL PROGRAMS AT THE COLLEGE

- **NYS Opportunity Program (EOP):** Most colleges in New York State have an Education Opportunity Program. This program allows students who would normally NOT be able to gain entry into a school due to lower academics or low SAT scores to be given an "opportunity" to demonstrate they can be college-ready by successfully completing a summer program before the fall semester of their freshman year.
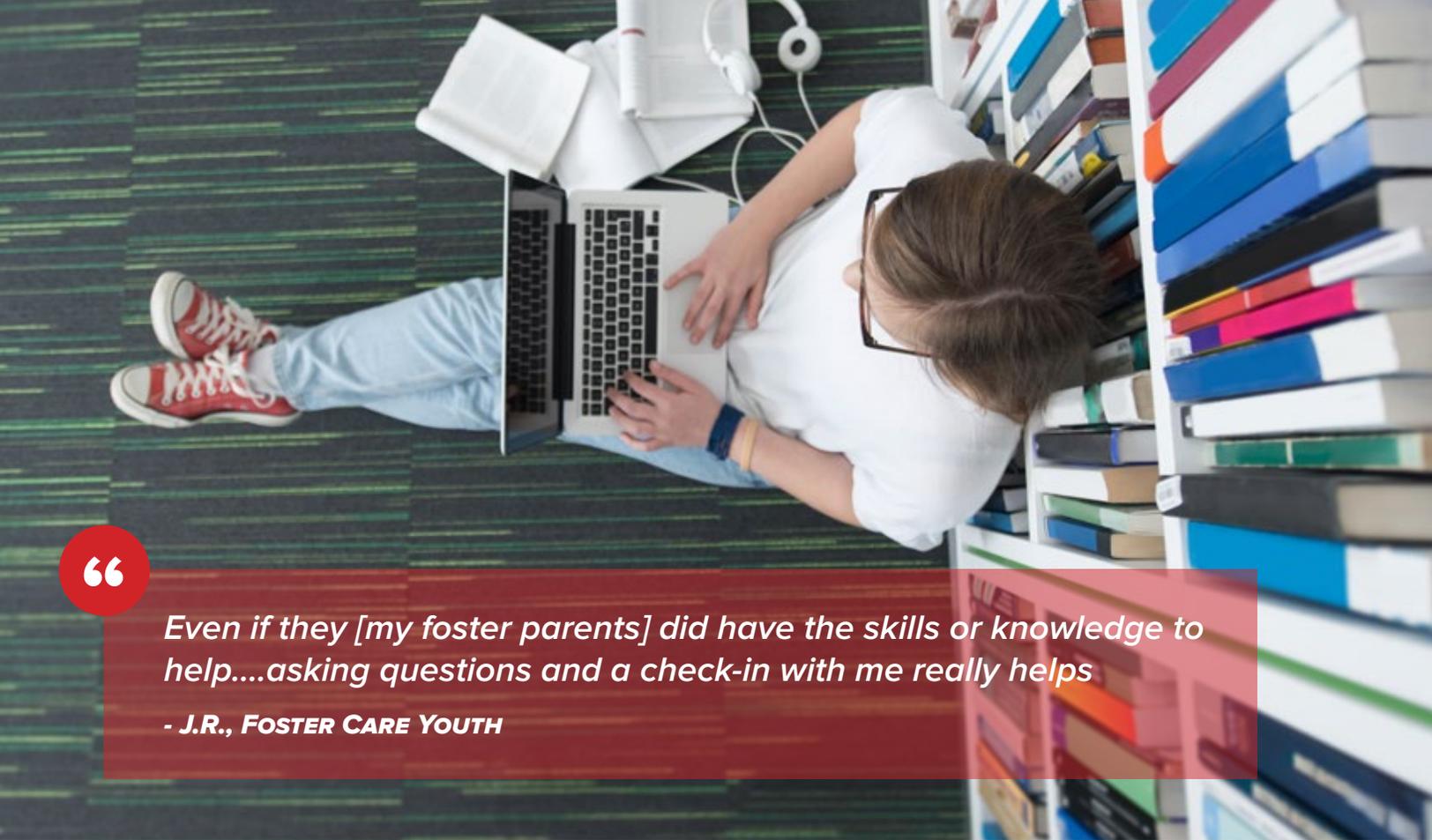
> **"** *Even if they [my foster parents] did have the skills or knowledge to help....asking questions and a check-in with me really helps*
>
> *- J.R., FOSTER CARE YOUTH*

Students are required to apply for this program on their College applications. They cannot get into the program otherwise!!!

- Students can only enter this program freshman year.

- EOP programs offer book stipends and some grant money, as well as academic support services, such as tutoring.

- The EOP program has different names at different schools:

    1. At CUNY 2 year schools, the EOP program is called College Discovery
    2. At CUNY 4 year schools, the EOP program is called SEEK
    3. At SUNY schools, the EOP program is called EOP
    4. At private universities the EOP program is called HEOP

Bridge Program: Like the EOP program, some schools have similar programs that are not EOP-funded but allow students to enter into the summer enrichment session to gain entry into the school after being rejected.

My Brother's Keeper/Young Men's Initiative Programs: Some colleges have additional support services for students of color. Please check the school's website for more information.

ACS PROGRAMS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE

In addition to existing college support programs that any students are eligible for, such as the Education Opportunity Program (EOP), there are special support programs specifically designed to meet the needs of students in foster care.

The ACS **Fostering College Success Initiative** consists of the two programs **below which are facilitated by ACS.** If a student is interested in applying for either of these programs, please contact the ACS Office of Education Support and Policy Planning at 212-453-9918 or email education.unit@acs.nyc.gov.

■ CUNY DORM PROGRAM

In order to support students in foster care once they enter college, ACS and CUNY have partnered to provide year-round college dorms for youth in foster care who attend CUNY schools. ACS provides an ongoing stipend to cover students' day-to-day living expenses and pays for any gaps in financial aid to cover the cost of this campus housing. The housing sites provide wrap-around individualized services including tutoring, mentoring, academic advising and social-emotional support. The housing is offered at three CUNY dorm sites; Queens College, the College of Staten Island, and City College, with possible expansion in the future to more sites.

Eligibility:

- Youth must be currently in foster care and must be attending a CUNY school, except that students at the College of Staten Island dorms must be attending the College of Staten Island.

- Students must comply with program requirements once they are accepted, including maintaining good academic standing with a GPA of no less than 2.0.

■ FOSTERING COLLEGE SUCCESS COLLEGE STIPEND PROGRAM

ACS is providing a financial stipend to **STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE** who live in dormitories at **ANY college**. Students in foster care who dorm at private colleges and universities or reside on campus at State University of New York (SUNY) schools are eligible to receive an ongoing stipend from ACS to cover their personal living expenses.

Eligibility:

- Youth must be currently in foster care and must be residing in on-campus or in approved off-campus housing at any college or university.

- Students must comply with program requirements once they are accepted, including maintaining good academic standing with a GPA of no less than 2.0.

CUNY SUPPORT PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE

The below listed support services are only available to _**students who attend CUNY schools and are in foster care.**_

■ THE CUNY START/ASAP FOSTER CARE INITIATIVE

This is a program located in CUNY 2-year colleges and at the College of Staten Island to move students who are currently or formerly in foster care or with ACS involvement in a justice setting, through the CUNY continuum of support services. Students begin in CUNY Start (remedial support if necessary), transition to CUNY ASAP programs and final admission to CUNY 4-year schools.

- CUNY Start is a program to assist students that need remedial classes after completing the CUNY Placement exam.

- CUNY ASAP is designed to provide students with academic and social emotional supports to achieve an Associate's degree (students with no remedial needs can enter the ASAP program directly).

The program layers support over existing CUNY Start and CUNY ASAP programs. All students receive textbook vouchers; enhanced academic support and advisement, including tutoring; free winter and summer credit courses to keep students on track; paid on-campus internships; and a designated CUNY Central office staff to support the program and students.

■ CUNY YOUTH MATTER PROGRAM

Youth Matter provides additional support for students _**that are accepted into CUNY's EOP programs**_, College Discovery or SEEK. To obtain admission into CD or SEEK, students must select that they want "EOP" programs on their college admission applications.

Youth Matter offers a structured support system to foster youth who are currently or were formerly in care, as well as orphans and wards of the court. Students have to have been in foster care past their 16th birthday to qualify for this program. Students who return home, sign out of care, or were discharged from foster care are still eligible.

Youth Matter provides access to academic, social, financial, and psychosocial support, including MetroCards, summer or extended day campus meal vouchers, winter/summer tuition, Single Stop screening for benefits and services, access to an emergency fund (limited resource), life coaching by a mental health practitioner, social/cultural workshops and events, and a laptop and printer loaner program.

NEW YORKERS FOR CHILDREN

New Yorkers for Children (NYFC) is a non-profit agency that partners with ACS and foster care agencies to support and promote paths to stable adulthood for youth in foster care through education and building sustainable relationships with caring adults. Some of the educational support programs offered are listed below.

- **The Spirit Award** is a $10,000 scholarship awarded each year to one student currently in foster care or a former foster youth who is a junior or senior attending a 4-year college with plans to complete a bachelor's degree. Applicants should have demonstrated academic success (3.0 GPA or higher), a commitment to community, resilience in the face of challenges, and have gained a new sense of self-awareness as a result of the obstacles they have had to overcome.

- **The NYFC Nick's Scholars Program** is a working partnership between the private sector, foster care agencies, CUNY and Private Colleges in New York City, designed to support students in foster care. This comprehensive program provides wraparound support to current and former foster youth enrolled at any CUNY or Private College in New York City. The program provides essential financial, academic, and emotional support.

- **The Charles Evans Emergency Educational Fund** assists young people who were formerly in the foster care system with emergency funding to advance and complete their educational endeavors. This Fund is run in close partnership with ACS, whose staff do an initial application review and make recommendations to NYFC. These emergency funds meet vital housing needs, tuition and other academic costs.

- **Back to School Package** provides tools for academic success for students who were in foster care after turning 18, are under 25 years old, and are registered at a college or vocational school for the semester in which they apply. Each Back-to-School Package is valued at $1,000 and includes a laptop, a Metrocard, and an Amazon gift card for books. Youth who are currently in foster care must be register for the Back-to-School Package Program with their foster care agency case planner or agency education specialist. Former foster youth should apply on-line.

For more information about these programs, application instructions, and other information, please visit the New Yorkers for Children website at http://newyorkersforchildren.org/

FINANCIAL AID FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS:

While undocumented students are not eligible for federal or state financial aid, they may be eligible for college-based financial aid. Most states and colleges determine undocumented students' eligibility for financial aid by referring to the information they submitted on their FAFSAs.

⚠️ All students in foster care are eligible for "Special Juvenile Immigrant Status", which is a pathway to citizenship through the green card application process. Please talk to the case planner about whether the student has applied for the status. This can help the student receive financial aid in the future.

There are also resources available to help undocumented students find the financial support they need to pursue postsecondary education, including scholarships, such as The Dream US Scholarship. The Dream US Scholarship partners with CUNY, to provide college scholarships to highly motivated DREAMers (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals [DACA] or Temporary Protected Status [TPS]-eligible students) who want to get a college education but cannot afford it.

- **The Dream US Scholarship** application process closes in February with scholarships awarded by the spring/summer for use in the Fall semester. To obtain more information about the scholarship in several languages and to apply, visit http://www.thedream.us/

⚠️ Student status as "DACA" or "TPS" for the purpose of the scholarship is subject to federal approval and can be changed at any time. It is important to research the availability of this program at the time of application and students should seek support from the agency.

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VOCATIONAL TRAINING OPTIONS

For students who are not interested in attending a traditional college program, there are other options:

- **Community-based Organization job training programs**

- **Vocational Training Schools**

- **Vocational Programs in Community Colleges**

While we encourage students in foster care to consider traditional college programs, other students may want a short term vocational program that prepares them to enter the workforce quickly. ***Vocational education*** is education and training that prepares people to work in a trade, a craft, as a technician, or in support roles to other professionals, such as an administrative assistant.

There are vocational programs at colleges where students earn college credits and/or a college degree. There are also some vocational programs at colleges where students are not required to meet requirements for a degree, but rather, can earn a certificate showing that they are qualified to do a specific job or certified in a particular job title.

There are also many vocational programs offered through non-profit and for-profit organizations that provide specialized job and career training. For example, security guard certification, a year-long beauty school program, or a specialized technology certification. Some vocational programs require a high school diploma or equivalency and some may not.
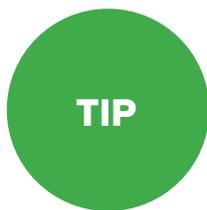
TIP Talk to your agency education specialist if your student is seeking a vocational program that does not earn college credits or lead to a college degree. Some programs may take financial aid while others do not. There are also many community organizations providing free or low cost training programs.

Be mindful that there are vocational programs that may charge high fees and provide little job placement assistance. These programs should be avoided. It is important that students and foster parents research programs thoroughly and ask about their training specifics, fees and job placement rate, and work with the agency to ensure students are asking the right questions to determine if a program is appropriate.

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For more information on youth employment and vocational-based program, please visit the ACS Youth page at www.nyc.gov/acs/youth.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Listed below are various vocationally focused programs that either have vocational only training or vocational with educational support programs. Each program has its own admission criteria and requirements. Please reach out to the agency case planner or education specialist if you believe one of these programs may be a good fit for any youth or young adult in foster care.

NYC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION CO-OP TECH

Students ages 16-21 that have completed at least one year of high school can apply to Co-Op Tech's vocational training programs. Students will continue to attend their current high school for part of the school day and then attend Co-Op Tech for the other half of the day. There is a main Co-Op Tech site in Manhattan, and several off-site locations in the five boroughs.

- Students in foster care can apply for admission to <u>The Judith Kaye School</u>, which is located inside Co-op Tech and offers middle school and high school classes and diplomas, as well as high school equivalency diploma (TASC) preparation and testing. Students must be at least 16 years old to apply.

NYC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ADULT LEARNING CENTERS

The learning centers provide over 900 classes for **adults 21 years of age or older** in literacy; high school equivalency preparation and testing; and vocational training in construction trades, health care trades, auto mechanic and computer literacy. All classes are tuition-free but some vocational programs may have supplies and testing fees. Classes are located in every borough and are held during the day, afternoon, evening, and on Saturdays. These programs are offered to NYC residents only. To find out more, please visit the website at: http://schools.nyc.gov/community/AdultEd/default.htm

NEW YORK STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY CENTERS (SUNY EOC)

Education Opportunity Centers are sponsored by the State University of New York and are located in each of the five boroughs. The borough-based hubs provide young adult and adult learners to access for both academic and vocational programs. Vocational classes range from computer literacy, hospitality training, security officer training, civil service exam preparation, and medical office/billing skills. These classes are available to New York State residents only. For more information and to find the EOC center in your borough of residence, please visit the website at: http://www.ucawd.suny.edu/eoc.php

Now that I know what's available to the youth in my care, I am trying to help them get all that is being offered.
- FEDCAP PrepNow! Foster Parent

NYS DEPARTMENT OF LABOR APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

Apprenticeship is the process of learning a skilled trade through a combination of on-the-job training and related classroom education. Apprentices are full time employees, who operate under the close supervision of a skilled worker on the job and take classroom instruction at night or on weekends. The length of training varies from one to six years, depending on the occupation. More than 100 occupations offer training through the apprenticeship program. For more information, visit the New York State Department of Labor Apprenticeship Field Office listed below or the apprenticeship webpage page at: http://www.labor.ny.gov/apprenticeship/appindex.shtm

New York City/Hudson Valley Apprenticeship Field Office
75 Varick Street, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10013
(212) 775-3354

> " *[I am] more productive in advocating for them not just in school but outside. Making sure they are in program that will groom their minds to reach for the stars.*
>
> *- FEDCAP PREPNOW! FOSTER PARENT*

CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

The City University of New York offers vocationally-focused certificate and associate degree programs.

One Year CUNY Certificate Programs

Certificate programs are geared to assists students in obtaining a specific vocational license. One year certificate programs allow students to earn credits that can be used later should a student decide to enroll in a CUNY college degree program; certificate programs less than one year do not offer college credit.

- Not all one-year certificate programs at CUNY can be paid for through financial aid and foster care agencies are not required to pay college/ vocational tuition. Students may be able to utilize the Education Training Voucher (see ***College and Career section*** on pg. 98) to pay for these programs but it is important to follow up with both the program and the agency education liaison to discuss before the student is enrolled.

- Some CUNY schools have certificate programs that are free of charge through sponsorships or private donations. Please make sure that once the student decides on a program, they explore whether the college has a tuition-free program they can access.

One-year Certificate Programs Include: (for more certificate programs see www.cuny.edu/undergraduate)

- Culinary Arts
- Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counseling
- Practical Nursing (LPN)

- Computer information Systems
- Early Childhood Assistant
- Health Information Technology

Any certificate program that is **less than a year** may be offered through the "Continuing and Professional Education" program. It is likely that these programs may not be covered by financial aid or the ETV voucher program. These programs also ***DO NOT offer college credit***. Before choosing these types of programs, please talk to the agency education liaison.

Associate Degrees

Students can apply for CUNY community colleges to obtain an AAS—Associate in Applied Science or an AA—Associate in Arts. (See page 100 for details about 2-year associate programs.)

- AAS degrees have less liberal arts requirements and more vocationally-tracked course work.

  - Both AAS and AA degree recipients can transfer to any CUNY BS—Bachelor of Science or BA—Bachelor of Arts 4 year program, as long as they are academically eligible

  - Both AAS and AA degrees can lead to job placement opportunities without the requirement of a four-year degree

Some AAS degrees include: (for more AAS degrees programs see www.cuny.edu/undergraduate)

- Occupational Therapy Assistant
- Radiologic Tech and Medical Imaging
- Tourism and Hospitality
- Website Development
- Paramedic/EMS

- Construction Management Technology
- Automotive Technology
- Legal Assistant
- Game Design
- Fashion Marketing

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

Vocational rehabilitation services are available to **individuals with disabilities** to help them attain and maintain employment and to become more independent through training, education, rehabilitation, and career development.

NYS ACCES-VR (Adult Career & Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation) is a NY State-funded program that offers vocational rehabilitation services in district offices located in all 5 boroughs. Youth can apply for services while still in high school or after they are no longer in school.

- **How do students access these services?**
  For students still in high school, the transition team at the school will help decide when to apply and will help complete the forms. If the student has already finished high school, they should contact the ACCES-VR District Office located in their borough to schedule an orientation session.

What are the eligibility criteria for ACCES-VR services?
- You must have a qualifying disability
- The disability creates a barrier to getting a job
- You can benefit from receiving rehabilitation services
- That vocational rehabilitation services are required to get employment

What happens if I am found eligible?

Upon receiving a letter confirming your eligibility, you will meet with a vocational counselor to develop a plan. If you are still in high school, the meeting may take place at your school, otherwise you will meet the counselor at the ACCES-VR district office in your borough.

What kinds of services does ACCES-VR provide?

Examples include:
- Vocational counseling
- Assessment for career planning
- Assessment for and purchase of assistive technology
- Funding toward the cost of education or training after high school
- Assistance with some transportation costs

- Funding for academic support services (note takers, tutors)
- Job readiness and job placement services to help you get and keep a job (may include job coaching)

INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTERS

Independent Living Centers (ILC), a component of ACCES-VR, provides services to individuals with disabilities to promote self-help, equal access, peer role modeling, personal growth, and empowerment. Independent Living Skills Training teaches everyday life skills including budgeting, meal preparation, arranging transportation, or personal assistance services, job seeking, and self-advocacy. ILC's also provide housing assistance, benefits access and entitlements, and disability awareness training, among other services.

To find out more about ACCES-VR and Independent Living Centers, please visit: http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world"

- Nelson Mandela

CONCLUSION

The guide contains a lot of different education information to support children and youth in foster care. As a foster parent we value your efforts to create an education-focused home environment while balancing other supportive services that children and youth in your care may need.

It is important to remember that you are part of a TEAM to support student's educational goals—you are not alone in these efforts. Your case planner and your agency education liaison are available to support you, as well as ACS central office staff that can also assist when needed.

Remember that the ACS website has valuable information for education support services, as well as other services for children and youth in your care. You can access the website here: http://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/index.page.

You can also follow ACS on various social media outlets for updated information on events and program information.

- Twitter: @ACSNYC
- Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/NYCChildren/

With your assistance, commitment and support, we believe students in foster care can reach their full potential. We thank you for all that you do and look forward to joining you in celebrating student success!

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