

# Guiding Students in Foster Care to Higher Ed

## Greeley-Evans District 6

### Greeley, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education



The goal of this practice was to deepen student connection to outside organizations providing support and increase motivation, post-secondary educational attainment, and career readiness in students in foster care. Graduation rates for students in foster care are of high concern as this population historically has the lowest graduation rates of most highly mobile student populations.

A number of parties were involved in supporting students to help them maintain school of origin (home school when changing foster care placements), map early graduation, or envision post-secondary education as a possibility by connecting them with [FosterEd](#), new state legislation that supports the total cost of higher education for individuals who entered foster care in Colorado. Such a process involved a liaison under the [Educational Stability Grant](#) working with any interested students directly, their school counselor, front office staff, and an outside navigator from CDHE in assisting interested students in understanding how to reach post-graduation career goals.

Students could meet with the district liaison on an as-needed basis for school supplies and other support throughout the year. After the student met with their school counselor to plan early graduation (if applicable), the counselor would refer back to the same liaison to connect with interested students about college funding options. The liaison met with interested students to discuss FosterEd and informed them of their rights to access this benefit. The student(s) and liaison met with the FosterEd CDHE navigator to further discuss the process of applying and accessing funding. Students were able to focus on academic performance after seeing post-secondary options were in reach.

Success will ultimately be determined by future data points including students' successful graduation and whether they are able to access the FosterEd funding or not. Challenges in implementing this guidance included a general lack of knowledge at the secondary level about FosterEd or options that exist for students in foster care for post-secondary funding (such as marking certain questions on FAFSA to indicate their status) as well as high anxiety from students about whether this option truly would follow through to support their needs.

Those looking to implement this practice to guide students in foster care in their districts to post-secondary education should keep in mind the emotional concerns of students and their need for reassurance that this is a viable, established, and reliable option for them. Also, consider tracking at the district level whether students in foster care take advantage of FosterEd as this could be shared in work groups or listening sessions on this issue and would help advocate for similar benefits for youth at the state or local level in the future. Finally, having a dedicated liaison or point of contact to guide the student through the process is beneficial as it helps reduce confusion for the student in accessing sources of support. It was highly beneficial to have a team of school-based and outside experts working to support interested students.