



Educational Challenges in Foster Care

The statistics:

- 50% children in foster care will not graduate high school
- <3% graduate from college
- 68% of kids in care have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- With every move, kids lose 6 months of functioning
- Foster children have an average of three placements, so they are 18-months behind their peers
- Foster children are twice as likely to be absent from school as their peers
- 34% of 17-18 year olds in care who have experienced 5+ school changes
- Likelihood of 17-18 year old foster youth having an out-of-school suspension 2x that of other students
- Likelihood of 17-18 year old foster youth being expelled is 3x that of other students
- Average reading level of 17-18 year olds in foster care is 7th grade
- Nationally, children in care attend 3 different schools. New Jersey passed an educational stability law to address this issue in 2010. It requires that children be kept in their home school, despite placement changes, unless there is a compelling reason not to do so.

What are some of the underlying reasons for educational challenges?

- Lack of enrichment opportunities
- Lack of engaged adults who teach, model, help children develop an expansive vocabulary, etc.
- Poor parenting
- Lack of a healthy, stable environment in early childhood
- Exposure to adverse events (i.e. domestic violence, drug use, etc.)
- Prenatal exposure to drugs/alcohol/toxic stress
- Neglect (i.e. lack of food, appropriate clothing, school supplies, etc.)

- Abuse (physical abuse, sexual abuse, etc.) → trauma → dual processes of learning vs. safety
- Nature and nurture

How CASA Can Help

- Recognize that early nurturing, enrichment, and a healthy environment are vital to children's brain development and has a significant impact of future educational attainments.
- Advocate for those things that can help address educational deficits:
 - Early intervention
 - Quality pre-k and daycare programs
 - Access to books, crayons, paper, toys, etc. to promote development
 - Attend IEP meetings for school-age children
 - Keep in regular contact with guidance counselors and teachers in order to more effectively address school-related issues
 - Advocate for school stability in placement changes
 - Advocate for tutoring or mentors
 - Advocate for after school enrichment activities
- Traveling Tutors
- Connie Fund requests for enrichment activities and materials
- School supplies/backpacks
- Provide enrichment tools like books, toys, and art supplies