

Educational Stability for Connecticut Children and Youth in Foster Care



An Idea Whose Time Has Come!

December 2, 2008

**The Lyceum Resource and Conference Center
Hartford, Connecticut**

*A community forum sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation/
Casey Family Services and Connecticut Voices for Children*



WELCOME

Dear friends and colleagues,

Welcome to our community forum on educational stability for Connecticut children and youth placed in foster care. The Annie E. Casey Foundation/Casey Family Services and Connecticut Voices for Children are pleased to sponsor today's event "Educational Stability for Connecticut Children and Youth in Foster Care: An Idea Whose Time Has Come!" Our goal is twofold: to raise public awareness about this significant issue which affects the educational outcomes and permanence of thousands of children and youth in foster care, and to stimulate dialogue and collaboration regarding the implementation of the recently enacted Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, the most significant reform of child welfare legislation in more than a decade. Several advocacy organizations, including the Center for Children's Advocacy, a contributor to today's forum, have been working over the last few years to improve educational stability and academic outcomes for Connecticut youth in foster care. This forum presents a first opportunity for youth, parents, legislators, policymakers, advocates, educators, and community members to discuss the implications for educational stability in Connecticut as outlined by the Act. As part of that collaborative effort, the Center's Child Abuse Project Director, Sarah Eagan, today will outline processes helpful in implementing this federal mandate.

Nationally, it is estimated that 57 percent of children entering foster care between 1995 and 1999 transferred schools for non-educational reasons in the year following foster care placement. School transfers are problematic for most children, requiring great adjustments to new classmates, new teachers, and curricula, as well as repeated or missed lessons. Studies have found that children in foster care are often changing schools multiple times over their academic careers, and this school mobility impedes their educational progress while in out-of-home care. The loss of an important educational, social, and cultural connection for children and youth, and significant problems with transferring information and documentation between the education and child welfare systems, particularly around enrollment and special education services, are of paramount concern. Here in Connecticut, children and youth continue to experience multiple school changes, often within the same town or city where they are placed.

Today, you will have the opportunity to hear from Susan Hamilton, the Connecticut Department of Children and Families commissioner, in her role as a key implementer of this effort; Representative Toni Walker, one of the state's leading champions on this issue; and Cheryl Smithgall of Chapin Hall in Chicago, Illinois, who will review research findings on this issue. Also presenting will be MaryLee Allen, a national advocate from the Washington, D.C.-based Children's Defense Fund; Brian Baker of the Juvenile Rights Project of Oregon; and Connecticut youth panelists, legislators, and other advocates.



Jamey Bell

Executive Director

Connecticut Voices for Children



Raymond L. Torres

Vice President of the Annie E. Casey Foundation

Executive Director of Casey Family Services

AGENDA

The Day's Hosts

*Douglas Hall, Ph.D., Acting Managing Director, Connecticut Voices for Children
Karina Jiménez Lewis, Senior Policy Associate, the Annie E. Casey Foundation/
Casey Family Services*

8:30 A.M. Breakfast

9 A.M. Welcome and Opening Remarks

*Joy Duva, Casey Family Services
Jamey Bell, Connecticut Voices for Children*

9:15 A.M. Youth Advocates Panel

*Shakeisha H.
Taki McCants
Facilitator: Lamond Daniels, Casey Family Services*

9:45 A.M. What Does the Research Tell Us?

Cheryl Smithgall, Chapin Hall

10:15 A.M. Break

10:30 A.M. The View of a Connecticut Legislative Champion

Rep. Toni Walker, Deputy Majority Leader at the Connecticut General Assembly

10:45 A.M. Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008:
Implications for Educational Stability in Connecticut

*MaryLee Allen, Children's Defense Fund
Sarah Eagan, Center for Children's Advocacy*

11:30 A.M. Lessons Learned: The Oregon Model

Brian Baker, Oregon Juvenile Rights Project

12:15 P.M. Lunch

12:45 P.M. Moving Forward—Educational Stability for Connecticut's Children and
Youth in Foster Care: A Conversation Between the Connecticut Department
of Children and Families and the State Department of Education

*Commissioner Susan Hamilton, Connecticut Department of Children and Families
Anne Louise Thompson, Chief, Bureau of Special Education, Connecticut State
Department of Education*

1:30 P.M. Wrap-up

SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

The [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#) established [Casey Family Services](#) as its direct service agency in 1976. Today, the agency operates divisions in Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. It is a fully licensed and accredited nonprofit child welfare agency providing foster care, as well as post-adoption, preservation, and reunification services for families. In addition, Casey Family Services has established a number of specialized and innovative community-based programs to help strengthen families and enable parents to provide the healthy, nurturing environments their children need to grow and thrive. The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private foundation dedicated to promoting public policies, human service reform, and innovative programs that meet the needs of disadvantaged children and families in the United States.

www.aecf.org

www.caseyfamilyservices.org

[Connecticut Voices for Children](#) is a research-based advocacy organization that works statewide to promote the well-being of Connecticut's children, youth, and their families by advocating for strategic public investments and wise public policies. Connecticut Voices for Children's current work is in the areas of education, health and mental health, child welfare, juvenile justice, family economic security, and state and federal tax and budget policy. The organization advances its mission through high-quality research and analysis, strategic communications, public education, and mentoring the next generation of advocates. Connecticut Voices for Children's interdisciplinary approach makes its work unique; the collaborative work of its staff, who have graduate training and experience in law, public health, health, political science, economics, and social work, enables the organization to have new insights on, and offer new solutions to, Connecticut's challenges.

www.ctkidslink.org