

Foster Parents views of education during a pandemic: challenges & supports

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Motivation

- **How do foster parents (FPs) perceive the effectiveness of education during the pandemic?**
 - Are Individual Education Plans (IEPs) being implemented?
 - Have in-school mental health (MH) services been replaced?
- **What strategies have FPs used?**
 - What supports have been provided by schools and child welfare agencies?
 - What challenges have they experienced during the pandemic?
- **What does research tell us about helping vulnerable K-12 students get back “on track” educationally, emotionally & socially?**

Project Description

- Conduct 2-5 focus groups in local agencies with FPs & agency staff to inform survey
- Create a survey based on focus group & survey 150 FPs
- Scoping review of educational & policy research

Context

- Very little research on the pandemic's impact on Foster parenting and education
 - First study to include youth, FPs and staff perspectives about pandemic impact
- Educational settings provide needed social and developmental opportunities for all young persons
- Youth in foster care have poorer education and mental health outcomes compared to peers
- Stakeholders have knowledge that can be used to make sure youth do not fall further behind

“... not getting therapy for my foster grand daughter... it took forever to get an evaluation for her from the school”

“A school-based therapist would see him regularly.. Services stopped”



Foster youth are at risk for poorer educational & social outcomes relative to peers: Has the pandemic increased the gap?



Project Deliverables

Mid term ‘exam’

- We will find out how FPs perceive the educational & social trajectory of their youth during the pandemic and what supports were helpful

Final ‘exam’

- We will have systematically reviewed interventions to support educational & social progress for vulnerable youths

Outputs by the end

- Brief graphic reports to child welfare agencies designed for “action”
- Journal article

Within 1-2 years after the project

- Policy briefs for foundations and educational and law advocacy groups
- Together with Tang & Farmer’s 2020 grant, build a strengths-based model of interventions improving FP’s capacity and enhancing resilience

Potential Impact

- To enhance the educational and mental health outcomes for foster youth
- Provide evidence of the impact of the pandemic to a vulnerable group of youths/families and support need for different educational supports
 - May help youth in foster care from falling further behind peers

References and/or Acknowledgements

- *Thanks to Ivory Bennett who has shared her wisdom with me and all the young adults and their foster parents who have helped me to better understand their worlds.*
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