

MODEL EDUCATION PROJECTS FOR FOSTER YOUTH SUMMARIES

A. Court Based Models

Alameda County, CA - Educational Advocacy Program

The Educational Advocacy Program (EAP) was created as a state Court Improvement Project designed to meet the educational needs of dependent children of the juvenile court. EAP focused on children with disabilities and provided direct education advocacy as well as training to improve the educational services provided to dependents eligible for special education services. The Court contracted with Parents Helping Parents, a non-profit educational advocacy program that trains and uses volunteers to advocate on behalf of children with disabilities. The EAP provided individual advocacy and worked with school districts within Alameda County in order to ensure timely and appropriate identification and delivery of services for court dependent children who require special education services. In addition, the program provided training to social workers, parents, foster parents, attorneys, CASA volunteers, and others who work with children to more effectively identify children with learning disabilities and make referrals for appropriate educational services.ⁱ

B. CASA Based Models

Prince William County, VA - Court Appointed Educational Advocate Programⁱⁱ

Community Advocacy Resources for Education (CARE) is a project of CASA of Greater Prince William, Virginia. CARE has a Court Appointed Education Advocate Program designed to help truant youth in juvenile court achieve their secondary education. The Court Appointed Educational Advocate (CAEA) is one of the three intervention programs CARE administers. CAEAs are specially trained volunteer advocates appointed by judges in the Prince William Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court to work with truant youth. The CAEAs role is to encourage school attendance, help truant youth and their families locate available and needed community resources, mentor, and tutor truant youth on an as-needed basis. The CAEA also monitors court orders, and ultimately reports directly back to the court.

Siskiyou County, CA - Choices for Children-Educational Advocateⁱⁱⁱ

The CASA program employs a full-time educational advocate to assist with educational problems and report on educational issues for dependent children referred by the Court. The advocate works with parents, foster parents and surrogates on advocacy issues, provides the court with an educational supplement to the CASA report and attends juvenile court hearings. Siskiyou is a small county (approximately 150 dependent children) and the advocate only carries an active caseload of 10%-15% of the County's dependent children. CASA and the Court plan to expand the role of the advocate to include monitoring the health and education passports and school records of all foster youth in the County.

San Luis Obispo County, CA – Voices for Children Education Advocacy Program^{iv}

Community Awareness, Advocacy, and Resources for Education (CAARE) is a project of Voices for Children, the San Luis Obispo County CASA program. CAARE is dedicated to helping all children who are having educational difficulties and is not limited to court

dependents. Volunteers are recruited and trained to serve as education advocates. They provide direct advocacy for youth who are referred by the court or local agencies. The CAARE Center hosts an annual special education conference to raise community awareness of local issues in special education, and hosts several workshops throughout the year to provide training on advocacy and general education issues.

Alameda, Contra Costa, and Riverside Counties, CA - Surrogate Programs^v

CASA programs in each of these counties have operated educational surrogate programs for children involved in the juvenile court. In **Riverside**, all CASAs are trained and certified to serve as educational surrogates and serve in that role if needed for the dependent children they are appointed to represent. The juvenile court and the local school districts also call upon CASA when a parent surrogate is needed for a dependent or delinquent child who is eligible for special education services, does not have a parent available to make educational decisions and does not have a CASA. **Alameda** and **Contra Costa** have operated surrogate programs of juvenile court involved children who are eligible for special education services and need a parent surrogate. Volunteers are specifically recruited and trained to serve as a CASA solely on education issues.

San Diego County, CA – Educational Surrogacy Program^{vi}

Like Alameda, Contra Costa, and Riverside Counties, San Diego operates an educational surrogate program for youth involved with the juvenile court system. In San Diego County, Voices for Children has four categories of CASA: the traditional CASA, a Court Appointed Special Monitor (CASM), an Educational Surrogate and Case Assessor. The CASM has a minimum two-year commitment, works with up to four children in long-term care, helps to prepare children for adulthood by focusing on education and job training, and has contact with the child at least once a month. An Educational Surrogate has a one-year commitment, focuses on educational issues for two to four children, and has contact with the children at least once every other month. A Case Assessor has a six-month commitment, reviews court files to determine the level and type of services needed by each child, and helps match the child with a CASM, CASA or Educational Surrogate.

C. Interagency Based Models

Los Angeles, CA Foster Care Educational Liaison^{vii}

Mental Health Advocacy Services (MHAS), a non-profit advocacy organization, in collaboration with the Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the County Office Education (COE) developed an Educational Liaison program to improve educational outcomes for children in the foster care system. The Liaisons are COE employees that are stationed in each of the DCFS regional offices to provide social workers with assistance to resolve educational issues that arise for foster children on their caseloads. The Liaisons are supported by MHAS, which provides training and technical assistance and receives referrals of cases that require intensive advocacy to resolve.

Santa Clara, CA - Educational Rights Project^{viii}

The Educational Rights Project is a public-private collaborative among Social Services, Probation, Parents Helping Parents, Legal Advocates for Children and Youth, County Counsel and Morrissey-Compton Education Center. The project works to ensure that dependents and

wards of the court are enrolled in and attending school and receiving an appropriate educational program. Social workers and probation officers are trained and assisted by education consultants to identify children in need of special education services and what services will benefit them. The non-profit advocacy organizations and community volunteers serve as educational advocates for youth while County Counsel's Office works collaboratively with schools on systemic issues which have hampered access to services.

New York, NY - Safe and Smart (Foster Care Educational Liaison)^{ix}

Safe and Smart is an interagency collaboration among the Vera Institute of Justice, a non-profit advocacy organization, the New York City Administration for Children's Services and the City Department of Education to better meet the educational needs of foster children. Child welfare workers from ACS were stationed as "school specialists" in five Brooklyn middle schools to provide guidance and counseling to foster children and help resolve their education and behavioral problems. Vera provided training and advocacy support to the specialists. The school specialists' initial focus was on improving attendance and academic performance. However, their work quickly expanded to include enrollment issues, school discipline issues, engagement of foster parents and caseworkers in education issues and residential placement stability.

New York, NY – Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services (CASES)^x

The Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services was established in 1989 when the Court Employment Project and the Community Service Sentencing Project - originally demonstration projects designed and managed by the Vera Institute - were gathered under the umbrella of a single, independent non-profit corporation. Hoping to broker solutions across agencies, in 2000, CASES organized the Committee on Court-Involved Students. Comprised of policymakers from the criminal and juvenile justice systems as well as the City Department of Education, the Committee has met regularly and has made significant progress towards resolving the obstacles facing court-involved youth's re-enrollment in the community. In September 2002, CASES opened the Community Prep High School, an innovative collaboration with NYC Department of Education and the City University of New York (CUNY). The partners received funding from a consortium of funders - the Carnegie Corporation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Open Society Institute. The Prep School is a rigorous literacy and student engagement program, targeting students who read significantly below grade level. Students learn both the academic and social skills they need to move on to - and succeed in - their next school, or vocational program, or employment setting. The Prep School creates a bridge for youth making the transition from custodial to community schools.

D. Advocacy Agency Based Models

Fulton County (Atlanta), GA - Juvenile Justice Fund - Special Education Advocate^{xi}

The Juvenile Justice Fund is a non-profit organization that was formed by a group of concerned citizens to increase the resources available to the Fulton County Juvenile Court. The Fund has established a Special Education Advocate to provide assistance to children with disabilities in the juvenile court system. The Advocate takes the lead on educational issues for the child and works with the school system overcome the bureaucratic barriers, put an appropriate plan and support team in place, and assure follow-through on addressing the child's educational needs. The

Advocate cannot serve all children in the juvenile court in need of services, but accepts referrals from the Court as his caseload allows.

Roxbury, MA - EdLaw Project – Education Advocacy^{xii}

A project of the Children’s Law Center of Massachusetts, the EdLaw project provides education advocacy to children involved with the juvenile court. The project provides direct advocacy to children facing suspension and expulsion, ineffective reintegration into the school system following detention, inadequate education while in state custody and children with undetected special needs. The project offers training to families and youth serving professionals.

Seattle, WA - TeamChild - Education Advocacy^{xiii}

TeamChild started as a joint project of the public defender and legal aid offices to provide advocacy to juvenile court delinquents on education, health services, and other issues beyond the juvenile court to address the underlying causes of juvenile delinquency. Attorneys work on educational issues ranging from suspension and expulsion to special education. For clients with multi-system problems extending beyond school, TeamChild works to bring all service providers together to develop a comprehensive service plan for the child. In other cases, TeamChild may work with the child’s defender to develop a service plan that serves as an alternative to incarceration. TeamChild has expanded its services to include foster youth.

Santa Clara & San Mateo Counties, CA: Stanford Youth Education & Law Clinic^{xiv}

This clinic at Stanford Law School offers law students the opportunity to represent elementary and high school students with disabilities in special education and school discipline proceedings, in individual education program (IEP) team meetings, mediation, or special education due process hearings, and to work with community groups in advocating for the provision of better and more equitable educational opportunities for at-risk youth. In addition to individual representation of youth in education proceedings and law students promote educational advocacy through their work with parents and guardians of children with disabilities in monitoring the implementation of a settlement agreement recently obtained in a class action lawsuit regarding the provision of special education to children in East Palo Alto public schools. The clinic also pursues specific policy research projects that result in written briefs and/or proposals to state and county officials.

E. School Based Models

Kentucky^{xv}

In Kentucky, each student leaving school for a locked facility is given an Educational Passport to facilitate reenrollment, and each school district has a “Bridge Coordinator” who “conducts transition interviews, collects appropriate data, and obtains parental releases for juvenile record sharing” for adjudicated students returning to the district. The Kentucky program also recruits mentors for rehabilitated youth, and has a monitoring process to insure that barriers to reentry are identified and overcome.

California- AB490 Foster Care Liaison^{xvi}

California requires every local education agency (LEA) to designate a staff person as a foster care liaison to ensure proper placement, transfer and enrollment in school for foster youth. LEA's have met this requirement in a variety of ways, including designating their **McKinney-Vento** Coordinator as the liaison. This requirement was enacted during the 2003-2004 legislative session as part of comprehensive legislation (Assembly Bill 490) to improve educational stability and access to education for foster youth in California.

California- Foster Youth Services Program^{xvii}

Foster Youth Services (FYSP) is a program designed to serve the educational needs of children in foster care. FYSP began in 1973 with four school districts in Northern California and expanded to a total of 6 Core Foster Youth Services Programs in 1992. Currently, 42 of the 58 counties in California have programs that provide a variety of services. FYSP services range from tracking down "lost" transcripts and assessments to providing academic tutoring and counseling to foster children as well as consultation and resources to foster parents, group home staff and school personnel. Additionally, some FYS programs provide emancipation planning, employment search, and post-secondary education counseling.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Press Release announcing project:

<http://www.co.alameda.ca.us/courts/news/1999/lehnerpr.shtml>

Article: <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc/pdffiles/vol2iss1.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Website: <http://www.casa-pw.org/CAEA.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Article: <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc/pdffiles/update801.pdf>

^{iv} Website: <http://www.slocasa.org/>

^v Article: <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc/pdffiles/update801.pdf>

^{vi} Website: <http://www.voices4children.com/index.htm>

^{vii} Information Available from Mental Health Advocacy Services,

^{viii} Article:

<http://www.hhw.org/content/0%2C4745%2Cchid%253D15074%2526ccid%253D27340%2C00.html>

^{ix} Publication: http://www.vera.org/publication_pdf/241_452.pdf

^x Website: <http://www.cases.org>

^{xi} Website: http://www.juvenilejusticefund.org/initiatives/special_edu.htm

^{xii} Website: <http://youthadvocacyproject.org/edlaw/edlaw.htm>

^{xiii} Website: <http://www.teamchild.org/saying.html>

^{xiv} Website: <http://www.law.stanford.edu/clinics/yelc/>

^{xv} U.S. House of Representatives Education & Workforce committee:

<http://edworkforce.house.gov/hearings/106th/fc/migrant72299/niswonger.htm>

^{xvi} Links to overview, training materials, resources: <http://ylc.org/AB490materials.htm>

^{xvii} CDE Website: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/pf/fy/>