

Teaching Foster, Homeless, and Adopted Students: Notes from the Field

Session: Trends & Issues

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I. Introduction

II. Current Trends

A. Foster Care

1. Tuition Waivers in Texas:

a. From the Texas Education Code: "A student is exempt from the payment of tuition and fees authorized in this chapter if the student: was in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services: on the day preceding the student's 18th birthday; on or after the day of the student's 14th birthday, if the student was also eligible for adoption on or after that day; on the day the student graduated from high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma; or on the day preceding: the date the student is adopted, if that date is on or after September 1, 2009; or the date permanent managing conservatorship of the student is awarded to a person other than the student's parent, if that date is on or after September 1, 2009; and enrolls in an institution of higher education as an undergraduate student not later than the student's 25th birthday." (*Texas Education Code* Sec. 54.211. Available at [http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us /Docs/ED/htm/ED.54.htm#54.211](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.54.htm#54.211). Accessed 10/26/10.)

2. Services in other states:

a. Visit: <http://www.cwla.org/advocacy/adoptionhr6893fostercarechart.pdf>

B. Homelessness

1. Definitions:

a. Problems of definitions:

1.) Preconceived notions

2.) Cultural stigmas

c. According to the Stewart B. McKinney Act, a person is considered homeless who:

lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence; and... has a primary night time residency that is: (A) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations... (B) An institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or (C) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings." (*42 U.S.C. § 11302(c)*)¹

¹Quoted in "Who is Homeless?" National Coalition for the Homeless, July 2009. Available at <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/who.html>. Accessed 11/9/10.

2. Homelessness and Foster Care

- a. In a study of Foster care alumnus, Casey Family Programs found that 20% were homeless within a year of leaving foster care. (“Assessing the Effects of Foster Care.” Casey Family Programs Available at http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/pdf/CaseyNationalAlumniStudy_Summary.pdf. Accessed 11/9/10.)

C. FHAR (Foster. Homeless. Adopted. Resources.) at UTEP

1. Mission Statement:

“To connect foster, homeless, and adopted individuals through education and advocacy with resources that will assist holistically with their UTEP experience.”

III. Students in Crisis and Educators of Students in Transition

A. Why bother?

1. Education is a powerful tool.
2. Institutions of higher learning can provide “wraparound” services for people in need, on the margins.
3. Students in crises *can* contribute.

B. Avoid the “Silo”

1. No one person can do all that needs to be done. See yourself as part of a team or network.

C. Foster Alum, Homeless Students, and Teachers of Students in Transition

1. Be Alert. Be aware of needs and what’s available on your campus (financial aid services, housing services, health services, computer labs, etc.).
2. Be Compassionate.
3. Be Careful
 - a. “Tough love” methods may be out of place with these students.
 - b. Be consistent
 - c. Be present
4. Be an Advocate
 - a. Find out what your campus is doing to help these students, if anything.
 - b. Begin building a network of people in different departments and offices to help students in crisis.
 - c. If you are interested in building a more formal program contact Casey Family Programs:
 - 1.) www.casey.org
 - 2.) info@casey.org

IV. Conclusion

A. Brainstorm

1. Think about ways in which what you are already doing as an educator of students in transition can help students in these particular circumstances.

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