



# Foster Care Education Summary Report 2012-2013

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## Students in Foster Care

The Foster Care Education Program at the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) was launched in September 2012 and is dedicated to ensuring that students in foster care are successful in school and life. The term “student in foster care” means that an individual has experienced an out-of-home placement and has been enrolled in a Colorado public school. An out of home placement, as defined by the Colorado Department of Human Services includes children and youth in congregate care settings such as group homes, residential child care, detention and youth corrections, and psychiatric facilities; as well as family-like settings including foster care, certified and non-certified kinship; and even those youth in an Independent Living Arrangement. The Foster Care Education Program was created in partnership with the Colorado Department of Human Services, Mile High United Way, and the Morgridge Family Foundation. Efforts are being led by the state coordinator of foster care education and the Colorado stakeholders group which includes; Rocky Mountain Children’s Law Center, the Court Improvement Program, and the Colorado Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program.

## Sense of Urgency

National research shows that children in foster care are at high-risk of dropping out of school and are unlikely to attend and graduate from college. The rates of suicide, homelessness, unemployment, and teen pregnancy are above average for foster care youth when compared to their peers. There is an urgent need for schools, child welfare agencies, communities, and families to join together to provide the opportunities, specialized services, and supports that students in foster care need to be safe, healthy, and educated.

It was with this sense of urgency that CDE launched the Foster Care Education Program to provide a framework and structure to support schools and districts in addressing barriers that impede the education of students in foster care and sets forth a course toward postsecondary success. A major step in this work involves establishing a baseline of how students in foster care are faring. This has been a challenge in the past because Colorado public schools do not report or disaggregate data on students in foster care.

This year marks the first time that CDE is able to report on graduation, completion, and mobility rates for students in foster care.

Barriers to educational stability of students in foster care include:

- Lack of vital documents or other necessary records
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of access to support services
- Prejudice and misunderstanding
- Family instability

-Taken from the *Adams County Educational Stability Roundtable Meeting*, April 2013

## Data Use Agreement

The reporting of educational rates of students in foster care was made possible through a data use agreement between CDE and the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS). CDHS provided basic data on children and youth, ages 5 to 18 that were in foster care over the past six years, to CDE for the purposes of matching their information to locate the State Assigned Student Identifiers (SASIDs). Producing a dataset with the SASIDs made it possible for CDE Data Services to pull the relevant student data to determine graduation, completion, and mobility rates for the students in foster care during the 2012-13 fiscal year. These statistics represent student counts based on the school district that the student attended, however the data is not available by district or school because the identification of students in foster care occurred through the Colorado Department of Human



Services and not the local education agencies. Records for 6,574 students were matched through the data use agreement and the counts are available by county. The Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Welfare has approved this publication. Educational data are from the Colorado Department of Education Data Services Unit.

### Legislative Framework

Federal and state laws guide CDE's work in foster care education. At the center of the policy framework is federal legislation, titled the *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008*. State laws further guide and mandate local education agencies to promote educational stability of students in foster care.

#### The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (H.R. 6893)

This sweeping legislation affects many areas of child welfare law. It provides guidance on educational stability for children in out-of-home placements to ensure that students remain in the same school if it is in the best interest of the child. If moving schools is in the best interest, the law directs that immediate and appropriate enrollment occur in another school and that all educational records be promptly provided to the new school.

#### Child Welfare Education Liaisons

Provisions to support education stability of students in foster care were passed into law by the Colorado legislature in 2008. Colorado House Bill 08-1019 mandates that each school district and state Charter School Institute designate an employee or contractor to serve as a Child Welfare Education Liaison (CWEL). The CWELs are to collaborate with child placement agencies, county departments, the state department of human services, and schools to ensure proper school placement, transfer, and enrollment of foster children. The CWELs work with all parties to ensure that students in foster care remain in school and progress through the K-12 education system.

The law also requires schools to transfer education records within five school days and that the receiving school admits these children within five days of the receipt of a student's records. Materials that were created to support implementation of HB-08-1019, include, but are not limited to; helpful resources, templates for transition planning, and materials for educational and foster care professionals. For more details, visit [www.cde.state.co.us](http://www.cde.state.co.us) and go to "[Foster Care Education](#)".

### Analysis of the Data

To provide clarity of the rates highlighted in this report, an overview of how the state calculates the graduation, completion rates, and the annual mobility rates is provided in *Appendix A*. The graduation and completion rates reflect the outcomes for a cohort of high school students with the same "Anticipated Year of Graduation".

### National Research

It is estimated that about half of foster youth complete high school by age 18 compared to 70% of youth in the general population.

-Taken from [Fostering Success in Education: National Factsheet on the Educational Outcomes of Children in Foster](#)



#### 4-year Graduation Rate

The 2013 graduation rate for foster care youth is 27.5 percent. This result indicates that 72.5 percent of Colorado students in foster care did not graduate in 4-years with their class. The National Working Group on Foster Care and Education<sup>1</sup> estimates that about half of foster youth complete high school by age 18 compared to 70% of youth in the general population.

There were 692 students in foster care that did not graduate with their class in 2013. The state's "still enrolled" rate shows that 251 (21.4 percent) of these students were still enrolled in school at the end 2013.

The 2013 completion rate for students in foster is 41.3 percent. The completion rate reflects the number of students who graduate as well as those who receive a GED (General Educational Development) certificate or a certificate or other designation of high school completion. See Appendix A for the explanation of how these rates were calculated.

The state completion rate for youth in foster care is substantially higher than the national range, which indicates that 5 to 29 percent of youth in foster care receive a GED by the age of 18. This suggests that Colorado foster care students are over represented in obtaining a GED. See Table 1 for list of 4-year graduation rates.

**Table 1: 4-Year Graduation and Completion Rates of Students in Foster Care in 2013**

Anticipated Year of Graduation	Total number of students in cohort base	Number of graduates	Graduation rate	Number of completers	Completer rate
2013	1179	324	27.5%	487	41.3%

#### 5-year Graduate Rate

Limited data for the Class of 2012 was calculated based on 2012- 2013 data. The statistics show that there were 1,230 students in foster care that were part of the Class of 2012 cohort. The 5-year graduation rate for these students was 31.2 percent. This indicates that with another year of high school the graduation rate increases for youth in foster care, but it remains alarmingly below the state's 5-year rate of 77.1 percent. The 2012 and 2013 rates validate that there is an urgency to accelerate improvement in the graduation rate of students in foster care.

**Table 2: 5-Year Graduation and Completion Rates of Students in Foster Care in 2012**

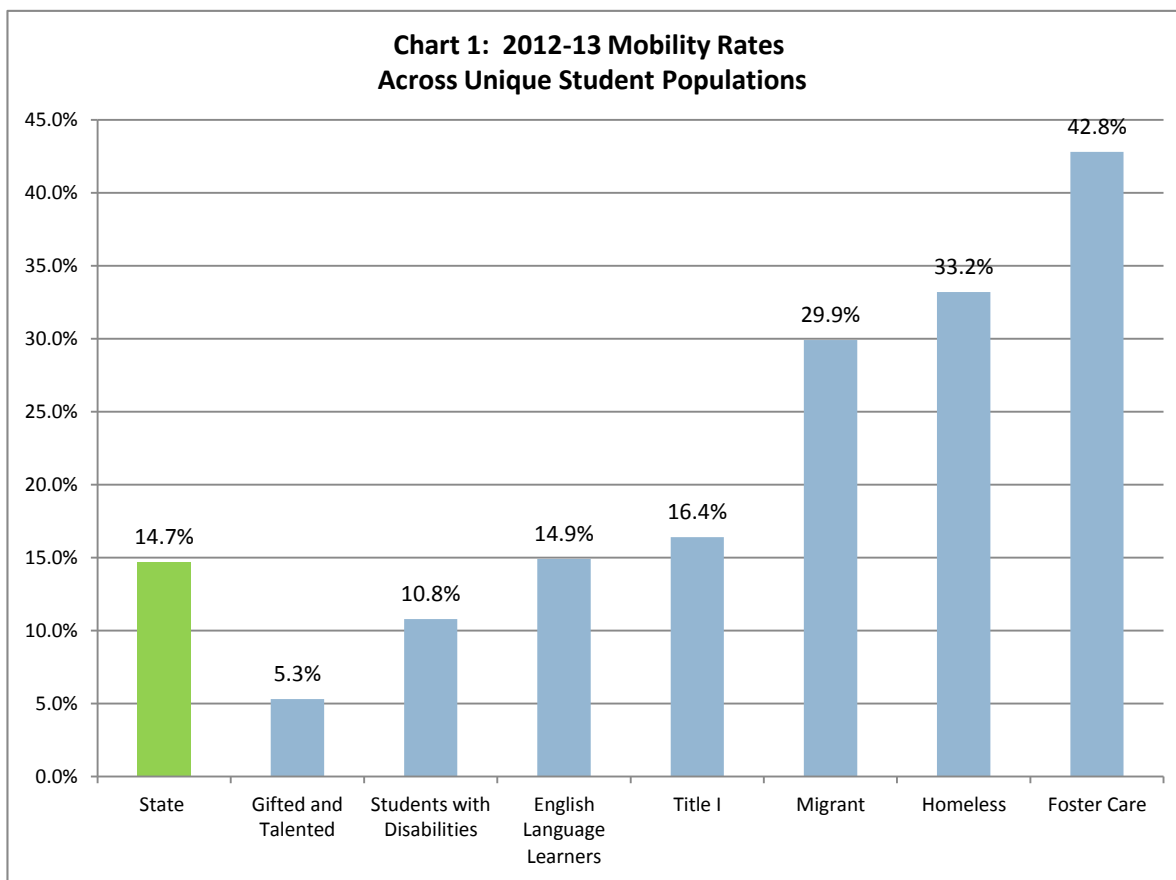
Anticipated Year of Graduation	Total number of students in cohort base	Number of graduates	Graduation rate	Number of completers	Completer rate
2012	1230	384	31.2%	605	49.2%

<sup>1</sup> The National Working Group on Foster Care and Education is facilitated by the Legal Center for Foster Care and Education at the American Bar Association Center on Children & the Law.

### Mobility Rate

A factor that is linked to school failure is student mobility. This marks the first year that mobility rates for students in foster care are available. In the 2012-2013 school year, the mobility rate for K-12 students in foster was calculated. A student is considered mobile any time he or she enters or exits a school or district in a manner that is not part of the normal educational progression. To learn more visit, [www.cde.state.co.us](http://www.cde.state.co.us), and go to “mobility rates”.

The mobility rate for students in foster care is 42.8 percent, which is the highest among the unique student populations listed in Chart 1 and Table 3.



*Chart 1 illustrates the differences in rates across unique student populations.*



Table 3 includes the “stability rate”, which refers to an unduplicated count of grade K-12 students who remained in the school or district within a school year.

**Table 3: Mobility and Stability Rates for Unique Student Populations in 2012-13**

Student Population	Total Number of Students	Stable Student Count	Stability Rate	Total Mobile Student Count	Mobility Rate
English Language Learners	137,904	116,698	84.6%	20,540	14.9%
Foster Care	6,574	3,641	55.4%	2,815	42.8%
Gifted and Talented	76,905	72,734	94.6%	4,053	5.3%
Homeless	21,515	13,994	65.0%	7,139	33.2%
Migrant	2,694	1,872	69.5%	806	29.9%
Students with Disabilities	86,093	76,505	88.9%	9,267	10.8%
Title I	234,710	194,347	82.8%	38,553	16.4%
State	952,294	808,577	84.9%	140,381	14.7%

### Prevalence by County

Based on the data sharing agreement, CDE was able to determine the prevalence of students in foster care by county. These data are not available by school district because the school districts do not report counts of students in foster care. There were four counties that had zero students in foster care that were part of the CDE data management system, they included Hinsdale, Kit Carson, Mineral, and San Juan.

There were five counties that had more than 500 foster care students attending a public school in their county during the 2012-13 school year. They included: El Paso (1095 students); Denver (942 students); Arapahoe (750 students); Jefferson (631 students) and Adams (518 students). See Table 4 for the list of counties that had more than 15 students in foster care included in the educational statistics presented in this reported. Table 5 provides a list of counties that had 15 or fewer foster care students attending public school within county boundaries. A complete list of data by county is available in Appendix B.


**Table 4: Total Number of Students in Foster Care by County with More than 15 Students**

County name	Total Number of Students in 2012-2013
ADAMS	518
ALAMOSA	21
ARAPAHOE	750
BOULDER	240
DELTA	62
DENVER	942
DOUGLAS	214
ELBERT	24
EL PASO	1095
FREMONT	107
GARFIELD	38
JEFFERSON	631
LA PLATA	36
LARIMER	243
LAS ANIMAS	30
LINCOLN	20
LOGAN	26
MESA	244
MONTEZUMA	30
MONTROSE	72
MORGAN	62
OTERO	45
PARK	38
PUEBLO	391
RIO GRANDE	21
TELLER	43
WELD	343
Total	6286

**Table 5: Aggregated Total of Students in Foster Care in Counties with 15 or fewer Students**

Total Number of Students - 288
Counties Listed in Alphabetical Order
ARCHULETA; BACA; BENT CHAFFEE
CHEYENNE; CLEAR CREEK; CONEJOS
COSTILLA; CROWLEY; CUSTER; DOLORES
EAGLE; GILPIN; GRAND; GUNNISON
HUERFANO; JACKSON; KIOWA; LAKE
MOFFAT; OURAY; PHILLIPS; PITKIN
PROWERS; RIO BLANCO; ROUTT
SAGUACHE; SAN MIGUEL; SEDGWICK
SUMMIT; WASHINGTON; YUMA
COLORADO BOCES; and includes 75 students that had no county identified

Note: The data set developed through the data use agreement between CDE and CDHS will yield a 5-year trend study on dropout, graduation, and completion rates of students in foster care. The study is being conducted by the University of Colorado and is due for release in March 2014 and will be posted on CDE's foster care education website, [www.cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/fostercare\\_index](http://www.cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/fostercare_index).



## Framework for Improvement

The Foster Care Education Program is designed to work with schools and districts to increase learning supports, implement effective strategies, and strengthen partnerships with child welfare and community agencies and coordinate educational transition services. It includes collaboration with the courts, state agencies, and child advocacy groups. The plan of action includes the following strategies and activities.

### Strategies at K-12 Education Level

- Implementation of state laws requiring child welfare education liaisons (CWELs);
- Provide guidance on federal and state legislation that defines the rights of students in foster care;
- Implement school district pilots to increase supports and coordination of services with county child welfare agencies;
- Increase awareness of rules and regulations to provide transportation to school and academic enrichment activities;
- Improve transitions due to foster care placements and school changes; and,
- Ensure prompt transfer of transcripts and student records with each move

### Strategies to Support Postsecondary Readiness

- Create targeted outreach and public awareness of foster care education issues;
- Share and track data on student achievement and educational outcomes of students in foster care;
- For students in 7th grade or older, consider the student's ICAP (Individual Career and Academic Plan);
- Connections with counselors who can educate about scholarship, financial aid, and applications; and,
- Streamlined documentation for FAFSA audits

### Cross Agency Partnership with Schools and Communities to Tackle Education Barriers

- Training and ongoing professional development for CWEL's, county caseworkers, Guardian ad Litem, court personnel, judges, juvenile justice, human services, work force, and mental health providers.
- Colorado's Education in Foster Care Demonstration Project has been established to build state and local infrastructure to ensure that youth in foster care, ages 10-17, are afforded educational stability and greater opportunity for permanency. Project efforts, occurring between October 2012 and September 2014, have been implemented in Adams and Denver Counties. The overarching goal of the demonstration project is to increase school success and permanency through responsive service delivery and improved, cross-system collaborative infrastructure. To learn more, visit the [Colorado Education in Foster Care Demonstration Project](#) homepage.





## Resources and Materials

A host of materials have been developed to guide the work of district level Child Welfare Education Liaisons (CWELs). CDE partners with local, state, and national organizations to provide policy information and resources.

### Key Resources

- 1) [Best Practices Guide](#) for Child Welfare Education Liaisons: Provides an overview of laws to support district CWEL's to better understand their roles and responsibilities for children and youth in foster care.
- 2) The [Colorado Kinship Fact Sheet](#) provides definitions and what districts need to know about Colorado Kinship, Kinship Family Foster Care, and Non-relative Foster Care. The Narrative accompanies it to add clarification around commonly asked questions.
- 3) Foster Care Education: [Legislation at a Glance](#) is a tool designed to outline and simplify legislation around Foster Care Education in an easy to read format.

### Resource from Partner Organizations

[Court Appointed Special Advocate \(CASA\)](#) - CASA stands for the basic human rights of a child. In Colorado, CASA volunteers are assigned by a judge to a case within the dependency and neglect (D&N) system. Children in such cases are the victims of abuse and neglect and are removed from their homes and families during the process. D&N cases are civil proceedings that aim to find permanency for the child or children involved.

[Colorado Children's Caucus](#) - Provides a forum for all members of the Colorado General Assembly to discuss the challenges facing Colorado's youth and work together to develop policy recommendations to strengthen families and improve the lives of children.

[Colorado Court Improvement Program \(CIP\)](#) – Created training around Educational Law in the Child Welfare System, which refers to a multi-disciplinary curriculum for improvement of understanding the Child Welfare System.

[Mile High United Way](#) – Works with hundreds of local nonprofit partners, government agencies, policy-makers, and businesses to deliver services in three key areas of investment: School Readiness, Youth Success, and Adult Self-Sufficiency. MHUW is a sponsor of the Foster Care Education Program at the Colorado Department of Education.

[MFF Morgridge Family Foundation](#) – The Morgridge Family Foundation is a private family foundation that invests in the transformation of education for both students and educators. It is a sponsor of the Foster Care Education Program at the Colorado Department of Education.

[The Rocky Mountain Children's Law Center](#) - The mission of the Children's Law Center is to change the lives of abused and neglected children through compassionate legal advocacy, education, and public policy reform.



## APPENDIX A: CALCULATIONS

The following definitions are taken from Colorado revised statutes and the Colorado Code of Regulations.

**Completion Rate:** This rate is also a cohort-based rate which reflects the number of students who graduate as well as those who receive a GED (General Educational Development) certificate or a certificate or other designation of high school completion. Like the graduation rate, the completion rate is calculated as a percent of those who were in membership over the previous 4-year period (i.e., from grades nine to twelve) and could have graduated in the currently reported school year.

### ***The Completion Rate Calculation:***

Number of students receiving a regular diploma, GED certificate or designation of high school completion within four years or prior during the 2012-2013 school year

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(Number of students beginning 9th grade in 2009-2010) + (Number of transfers in) –  
(Number of verified transfers out)

**Dropout:** In Colorado law, a dropout is defined as a person who leaves school for any reason, except death, before completion of a high school diploma or its equivalent, and who does not transfer to another public or private school or enroll in an approved home study program. Students who reach the age of 21 before receiving a diploma or designation of completion (“age-outs”) are also counted as dropouts.

A student is not a dropout if he/she transfers to an educational program recognized by the district, completes a GED or registers in a program leading to a GED, is committed to an institution that maintains educational programs, or is so ill that he/she is unable to participate in a homebound or special therapy program. For more information, visit <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/dropoutcurrent.htm>.

**Graduation Rate:** The 4-year formula defines “on time” as only those students who graduate from high school four years after entering 9th grade. A 4-year, on-time graduation rate is reported for each graduating class (i.e., the Class of 2013). The rate is calculated by dividing the number of students graduating within four years by the cohort base. The cohort base is derived from the number students entering 9th grade four years earlier (i.e., during the 2009-10 school year for the Class of 2013) and adjusted for students who have transferred into or out of the district during the years covering grades 9-12. For more information visit: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/gradcurrent>

### ***The Graduation Rate Calculation:***

*Numerator:* Number of students graduating within four years or prior with a high school diploma during the 2012-13 school year

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*Denominator:* (Number of students beginning 9th grade in 2009-10) + (Number of transfers in) – (Number of verified transfers out)

### **Extended Graduation and Completion Rate**

When a student enters 9<sup>th</sup> grade for the first time, an Anticipated Year of Graduation (AYG) is assigned; giving the year the student should graduate if they follow a traditional four year trajectory. Students with the same



AYG are treated as a self-contained cohort. Regardless of whether it takes four years or up to seven years for a high school student to graduate, they are always included in the graduate base (the denominator) of their AYG cohort. Upon receiving a diploma, a student is counted in the graduates total (the numerator). In other words, a student who graduates in four (or fewer) years is included in the numerator for the 4-year graduation rate. The students who graduate in the following year are then added to the numerator and the 5-year graduation rate is calculated. The students graduating two years or three years past their AYG are added to the numerator for the 6-year or 7-year graduation rate. Extended year completion rates are also calculated following this same logic, but the numerator includes regular diploma graduates, GED completers, and students receiving other completion certificates

**Mobility Rate and Stability Rate:** The student mobility rate measures the unduplicated count of the number of students who have moved into or out of a particular education setting as defined and calculated in CCR 301-1 (Rules for the Administration of Statewide Accountability Measures). The stability rate represents the number and percent of students who remained at a school/district without interruption throughout the school year.

***The Student Mobility Rate Calculation:***

**Unduplicated** count of grade K-12 students who moved into or out of the school or district in Year X

Total number of students that were part of the same membership base at any time during Year X

***The Student Stability Rate Calculation:***

**Unduplicated** count of grade K-12 students who remained in the school or district in Year X

Total number of students that were part of the same membership base at any time during Year X



## APPENDIX B: RATE TABLES FOR STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE BY COUNTY

### 2012-2013 Foster Student Graduation Rates: 4-Year

County Name	Total number of students in cohort base	Number of graduates	Number of completers	Graduation rate	Completer rate	Grad and Completer Percentage Point Difference
ADAMS	66	17	23	25.8%	34.8%	9.1%
ARAPAHOE	102	27	42	26.5%	41.2%	14.7%
BOULDER	44	13	15	29.5%	34.1%	4.5%
DENVER	268	45	97	16.8%	36.2%	19.4%
DOUGLAS	41	11	22	26.8%	53.7%	26.8%
EL PASO	174	51	72	29.3%	41.4%	12.1%
FREMONT	20	7	9	35.0%	45.0%	10.0%
JEFFERSON	64	26	33	40.6%	51.6%	10.9%
LARIMER	41	16	21	39.0%	51.2%	12.2%
MESA	58	18	24	31.0%	41.4%	10.3%
MONTROSE	19	3	4	15.8%	21.1%	5.3%
PUEBLO	53	16	30	30.2%	56.6%	26.4%
WELD	49	22	24	44.9%	49.0%	4.1%
NONE	52	11	13	21.2%	25.0%	3.8%
COUNTIES: 1 to 15 Students	128	41	58	32.0%	45.3%	13.3%
STATE FOSTER CARE TOTALS	1179	324	487	27.5%	41.3%	13.8%
COLORADO TOTAL	60777	46,756	48,350	76.9%	79.6%	2.7%

**Class of 2013: Foster Student Still Enrolled Rates**

County Name	All Students Final Grad Base	All Students Still Enrolled Total	All Students Still Enrolled Rate
ADAMS	132	24	18.2%
ARAPAHOE	204	44	21.6%
ARCHULETA	0	0	0.0%
BOULDER	88	32	36.4%
CHEYENNE	0	0	0.0%
CLEAR CREEK	0	0	0.0%
COSTILLA	0	0	0.0%
CUSTER	0	0	0.0%
DENVER	536	134	25.0%
DOLORES	0	0	0.0%
DOUGLAS	82	16	19.5%
EAGLE	0	0	0.0%
EL PASO	348	74	21.3%
GILPIN	0	0	0.0%
HINSDALE	0	0	0.0%
JACKSON	0	0	0.0%
JEFFERSON	128	20	15.6%
KIT CARSON	0	0	0.0%
LA PLATA	20	0	0.0%
MESA	116	22	19.0%
OURAY	0	0	0.0%
PITKIN	0	0	0.0%
PUEBLO	106	16	15.1%
SAN JUAN	0	0	0.0%
SAN MIGUEL	0	0	0.0%
COLORADO BOCS	16	0	0.0%
NONE	104	44	42.3%
COUNTIES: 1 to 15 Students in Foster Care	198	30	15%
STATE FOSTER CARE TOTALS	1179	251	21.3%
COLORADO TOTALS	60,777	6,468	10.6%



### 2012-13 Mobility and Stability Rate for Students in Foster Care

County name	Total Number of Students	Total Stable Student Count	Stability Rate	Total Mobile Student Count	Mobility Rate
ADAMS	518	290	56.0%	226	43.6%
ALAMOSA	21	8	38.1%	11	52.4%
ARAPAHOE	750	387	51.6%	349	46.5%
BOULDER	240	129	53.8%	107	44.6%
DELTA	62	32	51.6%	28	45.2%
DENVER	942	490	52.0%	432	45.9%
DOUGLAS	214	129	60.3%	78	36.4%
ELBERT	24	16	66.7%	8	33.3%
EL PASO	1095	609	55.6%	472	43.1%
FREMONT	107	76	71.0%	28	26.2%
GARFIELD	38	21	55.3%	17	44.7%
HINSDALE	0	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
JEFFERSON	631	374	59.3%	237	37.6%
KIT CARSON	0	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
LA PLATA	36	22	61.1%	14	38.9%
LARIMER	243	126	51.9%	99	40.7%
LAS ANIMAS	30	18	60.0%	12	40.0%
LINCOLN	20	9	45.0%	11	55.0%
LOGAN	26	17	65.4%	9	34.6%
MESA	244	140	57.4%	86	35.2%
MINERAL	0	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
MONTEZUMA	30	16	53.3%	14	46.7%
MONTROSE	72	34	47.2%	35	48.6%
MORGAN	62	29	46.8%	31	50.0%
OTERO	45	30	66.7%	15	33.3%
PARK	38	22	57.9%	16	42.1%
PUEBLO	391	226	57.8%	172	44.0%
RIO GRANDE	21	7	33.3%	13	61.9%
SAN JUAN	0	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
TELLER	43	24	55.8%	19	44.2%
WELD	343	202	58.9%	147	42.9%
NONE	75	51	68.0%	24	32.0%
COUNTIES: 1 to 15 Students in Foster Care	213	107	50%	105	49%
STATE FOSTER CARE TOTAL	6574	3641	55.4%	2815	42.8%
<b>COLORADO TOTAL</b>	<b>952,294</b>	<b>808,577</b>	<b>84.9%</b>	<b>140,381</b>	<b>14.7%</b>