Foster Care Success Act
Annual Evaluation Report (2022-23)

Bonnie E. Brett, Ph.D.
Research and Evaluation Principal Consultant
Brett_B@cde.state.co.us

Jamie Burciaga
Foster Care Education State Coordinator
Burciaga_J@cde.state.co.us

Dana Scott
Director of the Office of Student Support
Scott_D@cde.state.co.us

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Executive Summary

The Foster Care Success Act (House Bill 22-1374) provides funds to both the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to improve the educational attainment of students in out-of-home placement.

The Act requires CDE to identify specific goals for its Foster Care Education Program to achieve this aim, as well as to report to the Colorado State Board of Education, the Colorado General Assembly, and the public on annual improvement in the educational attainment of youth in foster care. The goals to be specified by CDE fall into three categories: 1) Identification of students in out-of-home placement enrolled in Colorado schools; 2) Tracking outcomes related to student success and educational attainment; and 3) Local service delivery to support educational attainment.

Activities to Increase the Identification of Students in Out of Home Placement Enrolled in Colorado Schools

In addition to tracking the number of students in out-of-home placement identified each year, CDE has set forth goals concerning process improvements for assuring mandated training of Colorado Child Welfare Education Liaisons (CWELs) in all public school districts in the state and of Colorado County Caseworkers (CCCs). These trainings assist in identifying and ensuring the educational rights and legal requirements of children and youth in foster care, as specified in the federal "Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008" P.L. 110-351, as amended; the federal "Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965" (ESEA), 20 U.S.C. sec. 6301 et seq., as amended; and Colorado House Bill 22-1374.

These goals include tracking mandated training of CWELs and CCCs to improve their identification and service delivery skills. To achieve this aim, CDE has create 8 modules concerning the educational rights of students in foster care. The department will track usage of the modules all will report on the number of new CWELs engaging in the training each year.

Moreover, CDE has increased the number of resources available to CWELs and CCCs, including the initiation of a yearly Back-to-School training that will disseminate important information concerning new laws around foster care in Colorado and will help interested parties gain access to the training modules.

CDE has also created an updated memorandum of understanding (MOU) between CDE and CDHS (the agency tasked with identification of students in out-of-home placement) designed to make data sharing quicker and easier. Multiple protections are in place to ensure the secure transfer of any personally identifiable information. Specifically, any such data is shared via a secure file transfer site and is only available to designated staff. If any other program staff need access to such data, they can request it. ICDE and CDHS are currently engaged in regular cross-department meetings to discuss the data sharing process, discrepancies between datasets, and ways to ensure a seamless and accurate transfer of data. These meetings will continue until discrepancies between CDHS and CDE data are rare and minimal.

Finally, CDE staff implementing the department's Foster Care Education Program are working with the CDE data services team to provide in-depth training to CWELs and CCCs to be able to access data from a report pertinent to their district to identify students in out-of-home placement. In service of this goal, CDE created the previously mentioned annual Back-to-School training that covers the process for collaborating with district data professionals to access the appropriate foster care data. In addition, CDE is currently working with data services to establish timely access to this data for existing and newly hired CWELs,and to train data staff and CWELs on

use and management of such data . Finally, CDE and data services created a short byte video about how to access available foster care data.

Tracking Outcomes Related to Student Success and Educational Attainment

This is the second year CDE is reporting on outcomes related to student success and educational attainment. Each year, data are reported from the previous three years when available, allowing examination of trends across time.

In the 2022-2023 school year, CDE identified 2,384 students eligible for foster care services in the yearly count of students that occurs in October. This is a higher number of students than average (as computed over the last four years), and close to the number of students that were identified prior to the COVID-19 pandemic which disrupted education in a myriad of ways, including the identification of students in out-of-home placement.

In general, student outcomes improved in the 2022-2023 school year compared to the previous year (and in some areas, compared to the previous three years). Of note, 70.1 percent of Language, Math, Science, and Social Studies courses attempted by students in out-of-home placement were passed, a 5.4 percentage point improvement over the 2021-2022 school year. Slightly more students in out-of-home placement successfully advanced to the next grade level than did last year (96.6 percent, a 0.1 percentage point improvement, and the highest rate in four years).

Students in out-of-home placement also saw an increase in four-year graduation and completion rates, with 36.2 percent of eligible graduates (i.e., students anticipated to graduate in 2022-23) graduating with a regular high school diploma, and 42.9 percent completing their education by graduating with a regular high school diploma, receiving a High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED), or receiving a non-diploma certificate of completion. While this is still far below the four-year state rates of 83.1 percent for graduation and 84.6 percent for completion, it is also a 6.2 percentage point improvement in graduation rate over the 2021-2022 school and the highest rate in the past four years.

Regarding student mobility, students in out-of-home placement have had much higher mobility rates than the state student population, although the number of students in out-of-home placement staying in one school has steadily increased since 2018-2019. In addition, attendance rates for students in out-of-home placement have increased. However, truancy rates remained constant.

The dropout rate for students in out-of-home placement increased 0.5 percentage points to 5.5 percent in 2022-2023. This increase appeared to be driven by 8th, 9th, and 11th graders leaving school, making dropout in these grades a top concern for the department. However, the percentage of foster students who re-enroll after dropping out is about 10 percentage points higher (with an average of 33.8 percent over the last four years) than the percentage of students in the state student population who do the same.

Finally, of the students in out-of-home placement who graduated or completed their education, 25.2 percent went on to postsecondary education in 2021-2022. (Data for 2022-2023 are not yet available.) This is comparable to the previous two years (30.4 percent in 2020-2021 and 24.1 percent in 2019-2020) and lower than the three-year statewide average of 49.9 percent (for the classes of 2020, 2021, and 2022).

In examining this data, it is important to note that the number of students in out-of-home care each year is small, leading to more variability in rates than is found in larger groups. CDE will continue to monitor these trends to help identify primary areas in which to focus efforts.

Local Service Delivery to Support Educational Attainment

CDE is committed to increasing knowledge in schools about best practices for supporting the educational attainment of students in out-of-home placement. In line with this, CDE has strengthened and increased information available to new CWELs through a new onboarding process that includes comprehensive guidance documents around the education of students in out-of-home placement. In addition, the previously mentioned annual Back-to-School training includes information about the education rights of students in out-of-home placement as well as updates from CDE about the state of foster care in Colorado. In addition, CDE is currently working with the Colorado Department of Human Services to create inter-department office hours to help districts and counties develop, understand, and implement educational rights for students in foster care, and is working on additional informational materials to be published on the CDE website in the next year. Finally, CDE is creating a dispute log to track trend data around the types of disputes that occur between local education agencies and county human service offices. This will inform areas of needed technical assistance and further training.

Introduction

CDE's Foster Care Education Program

The Foster Care Education Program at the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) supports students in out-of-home placement and was created by the Foster Care Success Act. Students in out-of-home placement are defined as: PreK-12 students who experience any type of "foster care", as defined by § 19-1-103(66), C.R.S., which includes, but is not limited to, licensed congregate care settings such as group homes, residential child care, detention, youth correction, and psychiatric facilities, as well as family-like settings such as foster care, certified and non-certified kinship placements, and youth in independent living arrangements. Placement out of the home could be brief, such as a few days, or might occur across multiple years.

CDE works with Colorado public school districts and other Local Education Agencies to ensure that the federal and state educational rights of students in out-of-home placement are met. Students in out-of-home placement have the right to remain in their school of origin when they are initially placed in foster care or move foster care placements. Additionally, these students have the right to immediate enrollment if moving schools is determined to be in their best interest, as well as receiving free meals and having school fees waived. CDE ensures that each school district in Colorado has a designated Child Welfare Education Liaison (CWEL). The CWEL serves as the single point of contact to help facilitate school stability and seamless transfers for students in an out-of-home placement. The CWEL also coordinates with county child welfare agencies in providing, arranging, and funding transportation to the school of origin or facilitating school transfers. More information on CWELS and CDE's Foster Care Education Program can be found at: https://www.cde.state.co.us/studentsupport/fostercare_index.

Key to this work is supporting the school stability of students in out-of-home placement. Overall, students who experience (or are at risk of experiencing) multiple school moves during their K-12 education outside of regular grade promotion are at-risk for not reaching their educational potential. This includes, and is not limited to, youth in out-of-home placement and is linked to several negative consequences such as stress, lower test scores, four to six months of education loss with each move, loss of credits/coursework, and loss of peer groups and relationships with trusted adults (see end notes 1 to 5 for sources).

Colorado data trends show that students in out-of-home placement continue to experience lower graduation rates and completion rates as well as higher dropout rates compared to their peers. Given this, identification of, and provision of support to, students out-of-home placement is crucial. Moreover, the state agencies concerned with health and education are working to improve internal processes surrounding students in out-home placements to ensure that they are given every opportunity to succeed.

The Foster Care Success Act

In 2022, the Colorado General Assembly passed House Bill 22-1374, the Foster Care Success Act. This law improves identification and outcomes of students in out-of-home placement through improved tracking and process improvements at the state level. Outcomes to be examined each year include identification of students in out-of-home placement enrolled in Colorado schools and student success and educational attainment. Process improvements outlined by the law include strengthening local service delivery to support educational attainment. On an annual basis CDE will provide local education agency personnel and CWELs with professional development opportunities that will include training for CWELs and Colorado County Caseworkers (CCCs) to be renewed once every two years after the initial training.

Goals Developed for the Foster Care Education Program (FCEP) at CDE

The Foster Care Success Act required CDE to identify specific goals for FCEP to improve the educational attainment of students in out-of-home placement, as well as to report to the Colorado State Board of Education, the Colorado General Assembly, and the public on annual improvement in the educational attainment of youth in out-of-home placement. The goals to be specified fall into three categories: 1) Identification of students in out-of-home placement enrolled in Colorado schools, 2) Tracking outcomes related to student success and educational attainment, and 3) Strengthening local service delivery to support educational attainment. Goals are outlined and reported on in the following sections.

Reporting Requirements

The authorizing legislation requires reporting of the outcomes outlined above to the State Board of Education and the Colorado Legislature by February 1st of each year. This report is intended to meet the statutory reporting requirements outlined in House Bill 22-1374 through the analysis of state and student-level information annually submitted to CDE and the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) by schools, districts and county offices. *See [Appendix: Definitions](#) for a list of commonly used terms throughout the report.*

Identification of Students in Out-of-Home Placement Enrolled in Colorado Schools

In addition to tracking the number of students in out-of-home placement identified each year (reported on in the next section), CDE has set forth goals concerning process improvements for assuring mandated training of CWELs and CCCs to assist in identifying and ensuring the educational rights and legal requirements of children and youth in out-of-home placement, as specified in the federal "Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008", P.L. 110-351, as amended; the federal "Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965" (ESEA), 20 U.S.C. sec. 6301 et seq., as amended; and Colorado House Bill 22-1374.

Mandated Training of Colorado Child Welfare Liaisons (CWELs) and Colorado County Caseworkers (CCCs)

Goal: Both CWELs and CCCs will be trained in the identification and educational rights of children in foster care. CDE will work with the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) to create training modules around these topics and will post them to a public website.

Status: In line with this goal, the Educational Rights for Students in Foster Care training was created. To date there are 8 modules that were created by CDE in collaboration with CDHS and are hosted on the [Welfare Training Center page of the Colorado Department of Human Services](#). These modules address topics such as the educational rights of students in out-of-home placement, the roles and responsibilities of CWELs and CCCs, and information about best interest determinations. CDE worked with the Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect at the University of Colorado Medical Campus, who partner with CDHS on welfare training, to create an account creation process for CWELs and to ensure that there was a formal way to run reports regarding module completion hosted on the learning management system platform.

In the coming year, CDE and CDHS will track who is completing the trainings as well as the number of participants per training and will send regular communication to those individuals who have not yet completed the trainings. Per House Bill 22-1374, participation in these trainings is mandatory for new CWELs and CCCs and must be taken once every two years after the initial training.

Additional Resources for Colorado Child Welfare Liaisons (CWELs) and Colorado County Caseworkers (CCCs)

In addition, CDE provided (and will continue to provide each year) the previously referenced statewide back-to-school training webinar for CWELs to review new legislation and provide information about the eight mandatory training modules concerning the educational rights for students in foster care and account creation. In future years, CDE will have CWELs register for such webinars to better track and report on attendance. Moreover, at least 58 CWELs (out of 184 CWELs in school districts across the state) have completed all eight Educational Rights for Students in Foster Care modules as of January 5th, 2024. CDE is considering ways to incentivize all CWELs to complete the mandatory modules.

Increased Identification of Students in Out-of-Home-Placement

In service of a more complete identification of students in Out-of-Home placement, CDE created an updated Data Service Agreement (DSA) between CDE and CDHS designed to make monthly data sharing between the agencies as accurate as possible. Data sharing will be continuously improved in the coming years through a series of regular meetings between the agencies to address any discrepancies in identification. As of the writing of this report, CDE and CDHS have met multiple times to discuss the data sharing process, discrepancies between datasets, and ways to ensure a seamless and accurate transfer of data.

Increased Ability and Timeliness in Local Level CWEL Access to Data Pipeline Data

Once students in out-of-home placement have been identified by CDE, it is critical that CWELs can access and act on that data. To facilitate this process, CDE's Foster Care Education Program (FCEP) staff are working with the CDE data services team to provide in-depth trainings to CWELs and local education agency data managers so that they are able to to identify students in out-of-placement in their districts as identified through the data sharing agreement with CDHS.

To align with this goal, FCEP staff, in partnership with the CDE's Data Services Team, offered a back-to-school training on Thursday, September 21, 2023 for CWELs. During the training CDE's Data Services Team members went over the new process for collaborating with local education agency data managers on accessing foster care data. This training will be offered annually. In future years, CWELs will register for the training and indicate which district they are from to facilitate better tracking of who is accessing this information. Moreover, to monitor the effectiveness of the trainings, CDE FCEP staff will create a pre/post-test to measure increased knowledge because of the training. In addition, FCEP staff is currently working with Data Services staff to establish timely access for existing and newly hired CWELs to access data in concert with the data manager in their district, and to train local education data managers and CWELs in the proper management and use of such data.

Further, CDE's FCEP staff and Data Services Team created a short byte video about how to access foster care data. Future plans include tracking the number of participants accessing the video and holding regular office hours to support individuals with their data questions.

Tracking Outcomes Related to Student Success and Educational Attainment (2019-2020 through 2022-2023)

Per the Foster Care Success Act, at a minimum, this report must contain the following data for each of the preceding three school years for students in out-of-home placement and enrolled in a public school:

- The number of students in out-of-home placement and number of students in the general state student population;
- The total number and proportion of students in out-of-home placement compared to the general student population who were enrolled in one school, two schools, three schools, or more than three schools during each school year;
- The rates of attendance and habitual truancy, as defined in section 22-33-102 (3.5), C.R.S., for students in out-of-home placement compared to the general student population;
- The dropout rates of students in out-of-home placement compared to the general state student population by individual grade level for grades seven through 12;
- The number and percentage of students in out-of-home placement who re-enrolled in school after dropping out compared to the general state student population;
- The number and percentage of students in out-of-home placement who graduated or completed high school in four years compared to the general state student population; and
- The number and percentage of students in out-of-home placement who took more than four years to graduate or complete high school compared to the general state student population.
- The number and percentage of core content area classes that students in grades six through 12 in out-of-home placement complete during each school year;
- The percentage of students in out-of-home placement who advance to the next grade level after each school year;
- The percentage of students in out-of-home placement who graduated or completed high school in more than four years;
- The percentage of students in out-of-home placement who engage in postsecondary and workforce readiness pathways as described in section 22-11-204(4). C.R.S. 22-7-1009 allows local school boards, BOCES and CSI to choose to add an endorsement to a high school diploma to indicate that a student has achieved postsecondary and workforce readiness or that the student has demonstrated exemplary postsecondary and workforce readiness. To date, no diploma granting body in Colorado has opted to include such an endorsement on its diplomas and so CDE does not have any data to report in this category. Given this, we instead report on the number of graduating students in out-of-home placement who entered postsecondary education.

Each of these points are addressed below in the context of the baseline data reported in CDE's 2021-2022 Foster Care Success Act Annual Evaluation Report.

Students Identified

Over the course of the past four years, an average of 1,524 students in out-of-home placement have been identified each year as eligible for educational services in Colorado at the time enrollment is counted in October. This number increases throughout the year as more students are identified. The rate of identification has varied from year to year, with 2022-2023 having the most students in out-of-home placement identified. *See **Table 1** for the numbers of students in the state student population and the number identified as being in out-of-home placement.*

AN AVERAGE OF

1,524
STUDENTS
IDENTIFIED EACH

Table 1: State Student Population and Students Identified as Being in Out-of-Home Placement

	State Student Population	Identified as Out-of-Home Placement
2019-2020	913,223	2,057
2020-2021	883,199	944
2021-2022	886,517	709
2022-2023	883,264	2,384

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting. Student counts here will be lower than counts in later tables due to the timing of this collection.

Course Completion

In the 2022-2023 school year, 6th – 12th grade foster students collectively took a total of 12,491 Language, Math, Science, and Social Studies courses (or 5.2 core courses per foster student on average). Of these courses, 8,175 courses were passed or completed (or 3.4 core courses per foster student on average), a 65.4% completion rate. In 2021-22, foster students' completion rate for core content area classes was 65.7%. Given that the collection of this data started in fiscal year 2021-2022, further historical trends are not available.

Successful Grade-Level Transitions

The authorizing legislation requires the annual reporting of increases in successful grade-level transitions for students in out-of-home placement and the state student population. Data shows that despite a continuous improvement over the past 4 years, students in out-of-home placement continue to lag behind their peers in successful grade-level transitions, with a transition rate that is an average of 2.8 percentage points lower than the state rate. *See **Chart 1** for the percentage of students in Colorado and in out-of-home placement who advanced to the next grade level in the past four years.*

Chart 1: Percentage of Students in Colorado and in Out-of-Home Placement Advancing to the Next Grade Level
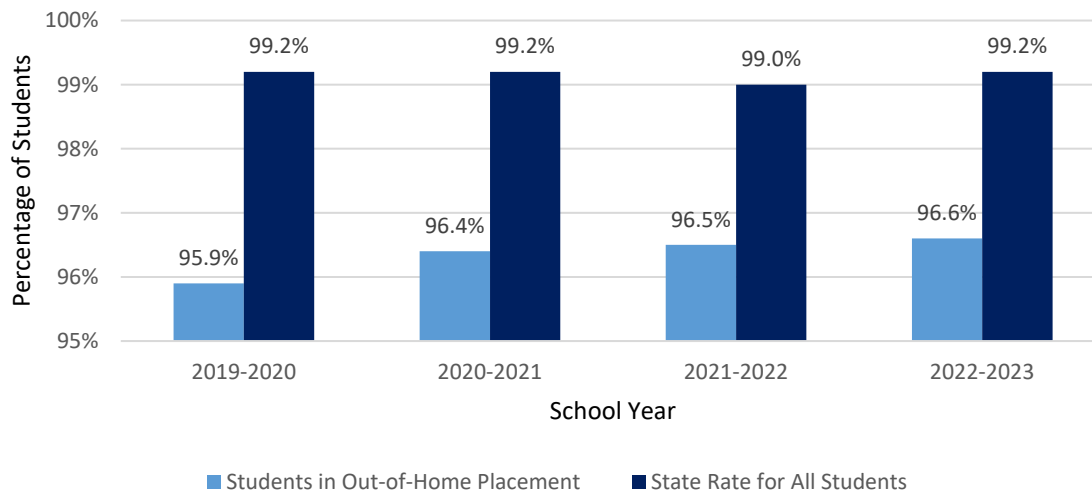
Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

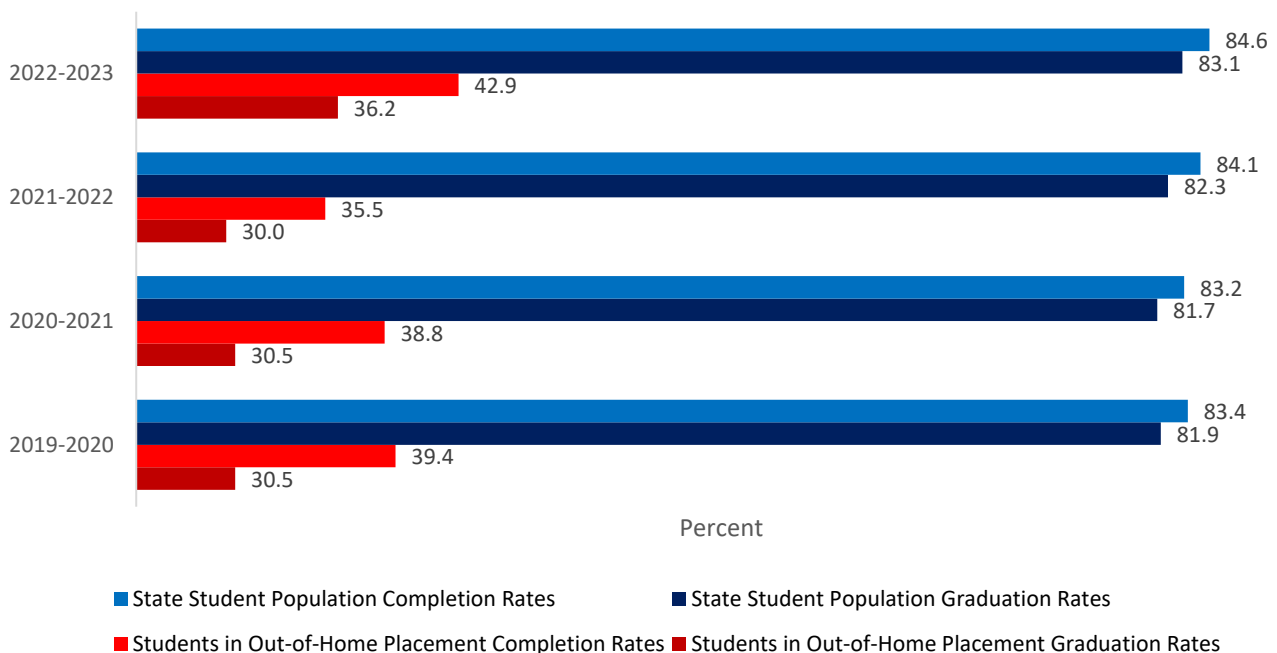## Four-Year and Extended Graduation and Completion Rates

Graduation and completion rates for students in out-of-home placement have historically been much lower than these rates for the state student population in Colorado. Four-year graduation rates for students in students in out-of-home placement are rising, reaching 36.2 percent in the 2022-2023 school year, a 6.2 percentage point increase over the previous year. Four-year completion rates also rose in comparison to previous years, and, in line with historical data, show that many students in out-of-home placement take advantage of alternatives to graduation to complete their educations. *See* **Table 2** *for the number of graduates and completers in the state student population and students in out-of-home placement and* **Chart 2** *for the four-year graduation and completion rates of the state student population and students in out-of-home placement over the past four years.*

Table 2: Four-Year **Graduates and Completers Among the State Student Population and Students in Out-of-Home Placement**

	State Student Population		Students in Out-of-Home Placement	
	Graduates	**Completers**	**Graduates**	**Completers**
2019-2020	55,220	56,251	273	352
2020-2021	55,842	56,862	224	285
2021-2022	56,284	57,456	180	213
2022-2023	56,812	57,840	173	205

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

Chart 2: 4 Year Graduation Rates for Students in Colorado and Students in Out-of-Home Placement

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

Moreover, when given more time, many students in out-of-home placement continue their educations, graduating or completing in 5, 6, or 7 years. These extended graduation rates show that a higher percentage of students in out-of-home placement utilize the extra years needed to complete their educations than the percentage of the state's overall student population utilizing the extra time. *See **Table 3** for extended-year graduation and completion rates for the state student population and students in out-of-home placement. See **Chart 3** and **Table 4** for the number and percentage of students in the state student population and students in out-of-home placement graduating or completing their educations in more than four years.*

Table 3: Extended-Year Graduation and Completion Rates for the State Student Population and Students in Out-of-Home Placement

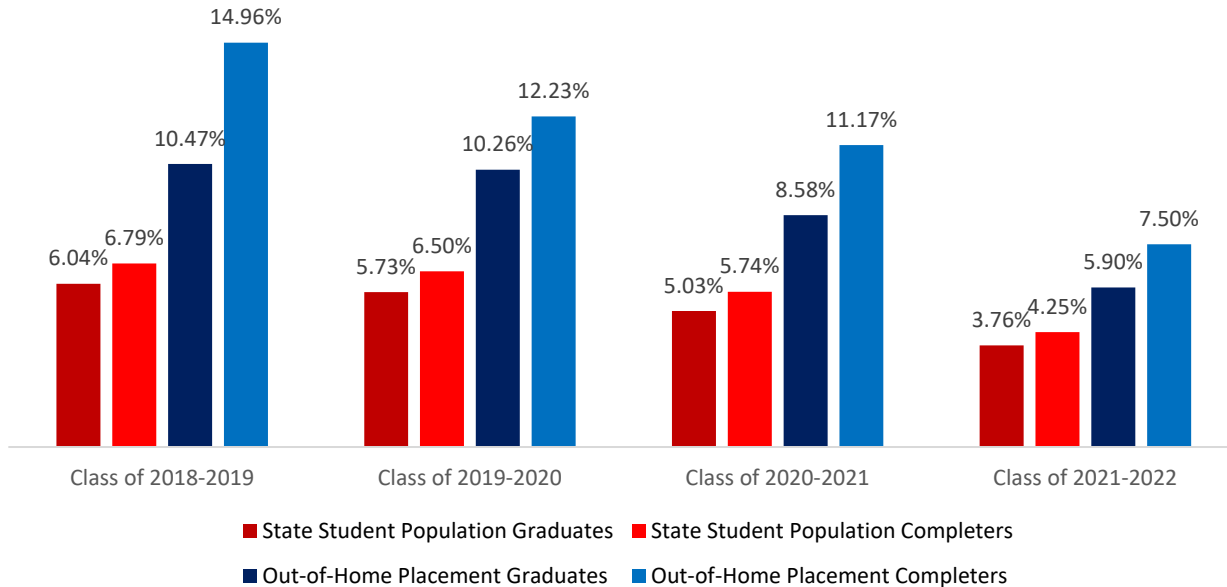| Class of	4-Year Rate		5-Year Rate		6-Year Rate		7-Year Rate	
	Graduation	Completion	Graduation	Completion	Graduation	Completion	Graduation	Completion
State Student Population								
2019	81.1	82.9	85.1	87.3	86.6	89.0	87.2	89.7
2020	81.9	83.4	86.0	88.0	87.1	89.3	87.6	89.9
2021	81.7	83.2	85.7	87.7	86.7	88.9	*Available 2023-2024*	
2022	82.3	84.1	86.1	88.3	*Available 2023-2024*		*Available 2024-2025*	
2023	83.1	84.6	*Available 2023-2024*		*Available 2024-2025*		*Available 2025-2026*	
Students in Out-of-Home Placement								
2019	26.6	38.5	33.4	47.3	47.3	51.5	35.9	53.4
2020	30.5	39.4	36.7	46.7	39.4	49.9	40.8	51.6
2021	30.5	38.8	36.5	45.6	39.1	50.0	*Available 2023-2024*	
2022	30.0	35.5	35.9	43.0	*Available 2023-2024*		*Available 2024-2025*	
2023	36.2	42.9	*Available 2023-2024*		*Available 2024-2025*		*Available 2025-2026*	

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

Table 4: Graduates and Completers Taking More Than Four Years Among the State Student Population and Students in Out-of-Home Placement

Anticipated Year of Graduation	Graduates / Completers Included in Count	State Student Population		Students in Out-of-Home Placement	
		Graduates	Completers	Graduates	Completers
2018-2019	5-, 6-, and 7-year	3882	4382	98	140
2019-2020	5-, 6-, and 7-year	3322	3761	80	95
2020-2021	5- and 6-year	2548	2879	46	52
2021-2022	5-year	2447	2734	38	48

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting. Counts include all students from each AYG cohort who took more than four years to graduate. For those students expected to graduate in 2021-2022, this only includes students who graduated in five years. For students in earlier cohorts, this also includes students who graduated in 6 or 7 years.

Chart 3: Percentage of Additional Students in the General Population and in Out-of-Home Placement Graduating and Completing in More Than Four Years

Legend:
- State Student Population Graduates
- State Student Population Completers
- Out-of-Home Placement Graduates
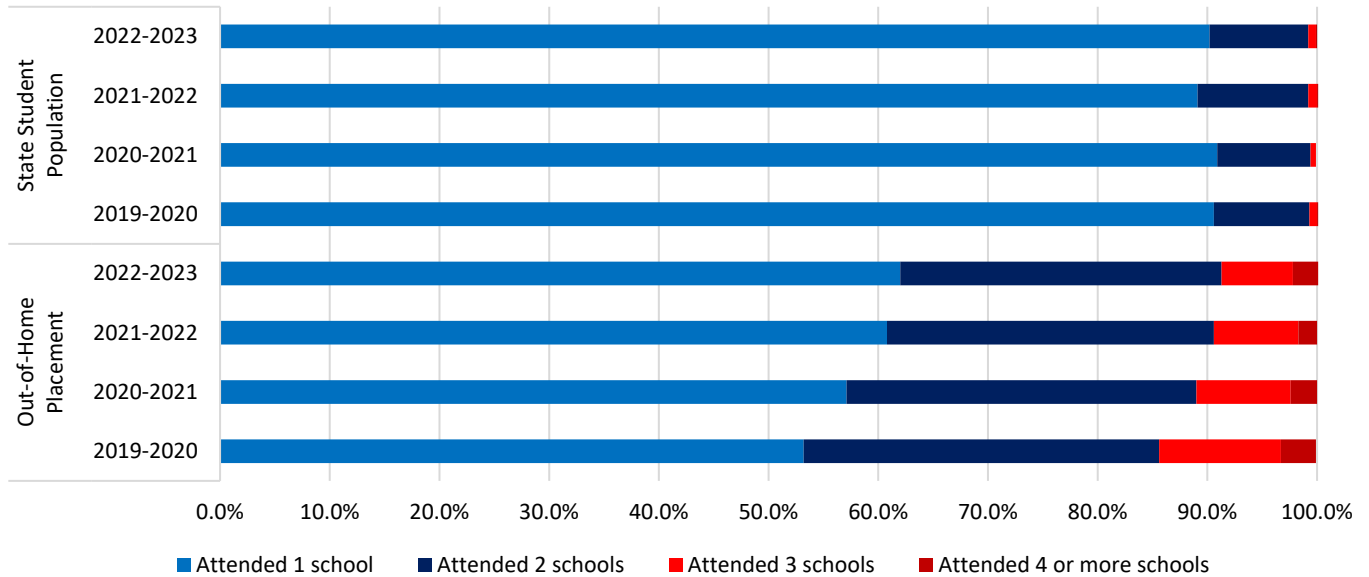- Out-of-Home Placement Completers

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting. Graduates and completers from the classes of 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 include students who graduated or completed in 5, 6, and 7 years. Graduates and completers from the class of 2020-2021 include students who graduated or completed in 5 and 6 years. Graduates and completers from the class of 2021-2022 include students who graduated or completed in 5 years. The classes of 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 do not yet have 6- and 7- years rates available as they are not yet 6- or 7-years out from their expected graduation years.

Student Mobility

Students in out-of-home placement are more likely to change schools throughout the year, putting them at increased risk for disengagement. Across the last four years in Colorado, students in out-of-home placement have had much higher mobility rates than the state student population. The number of students in out-of-home placement staying in one school has steadily increased since 2018-2019, and the number of these students attending 3 or more schools has decreased in that period. *Chart 4 shows the percentages (and Table 5 shows the numbers) of students attending single and multiple schools in Colorado and in out-of-home placement across the last four years.*

Chart 4: Percentages of Students Attending Single and Multiple Schools:
State Rates and Rates for Students in Out-of-Home-Placement

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

Table 5: Number of Students in the State Student Population and in Out-of-Home Placement Attending Single and Multiple Schools

School Year	Total students	Attend 1 school	Attend 2 schools	Attend 3 schools	Attend 4+ schools
State Student Population					
2022-2023	935,703	844,025	84,301	6,746	631
2021-2022	944,160	840,959	95,109	7,463	629
2020-2021	947,205	861,402	80,448	4,980	375
2019-2020	961,468	870,692	83,784	6,419	573
Students in Out-of-Home Placement					
2022-2023	3,807	2,359	1,115	247	86
2021-2022	3,738	2,273	1,114	289	62
2020-2021	2,965	1,694	947	254	70
2019-2020	3,202	1,704	1,039	355	104

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting. Student counts here are higher than student counts in Table 1 because it includes all students enrolled in a Colorado school in 2022-2023, including those who left before October 1 (the date of the enrollment count) or entered a Colorado school at any point in the year.

Attendance

In Colorado, students in out-of-home placement have lower attendance and higher truancy rates than their peers in the state student population. *Charts 5 and 6 show the attendance and truancy rates for students in the state student population and students in out-of-home placement over the last four years.*

Chart 5: Average Attendance Rates for Students in Colorado and Students in Out-of-Home Placement
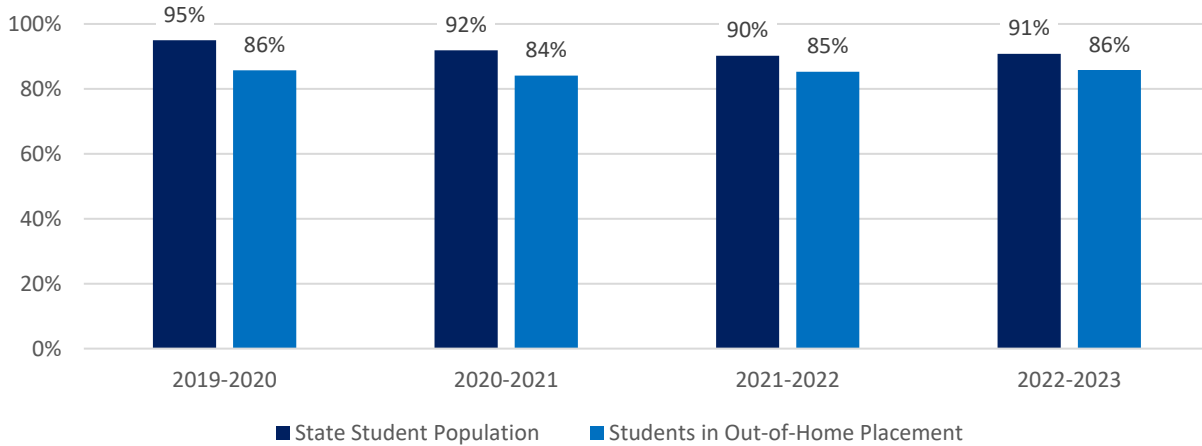
Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting. The attendance rate of a student is the proportion of possible school days that they attended. For the state, this rate is the number of school days attended over all possible school days for all students.

Chart 6: Average Truancy Rates for Students in Colorado and Students in Out-of-Home Placement
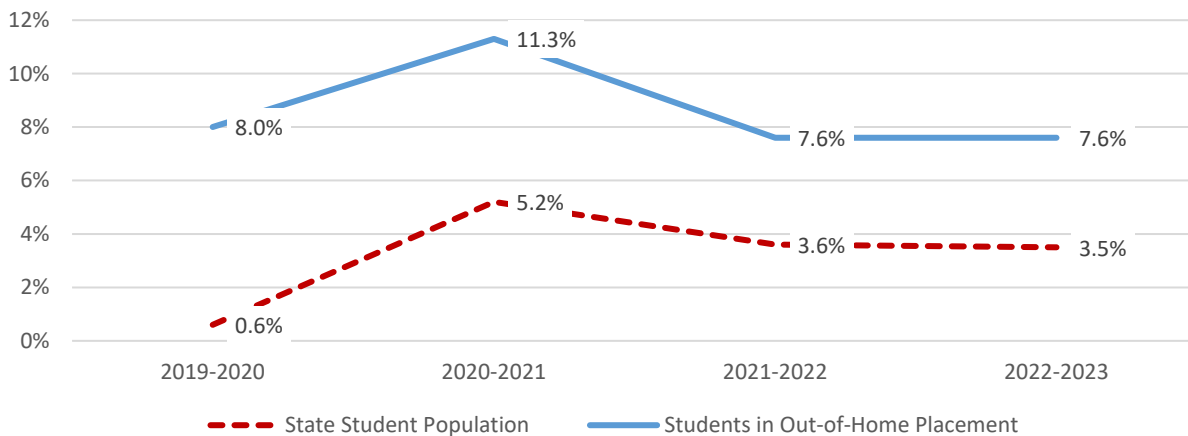
Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting. The truancy rate of a student is the proportion of possible school days for which they had an unexcused absence. For the state, this rate is the number of unexcused absences over all possible school days for all students.

Dropout Prevention

In Colorado, students in out-of-home placement show higher dropout rates than their peers in the state's overall student population. Moreover, in the past year, the dropout rate increased among students in out-of-home placement, whereas it decreased for the state's overall population. ***Chart 7*** *shows the dropout rates for students in the state student population and students in out-of-home placement over the last four years.* ***Chart 8*** *shows the dropout rates for students in the state student population and in out-of-home placement broken down by grade over the last four years. Please note that these rates are computed over small numbers of students and*

as such are expected to naturally vary by several percentage points year-to-year. The total numbers of 7 – 12th grade students in out-of-home placement were 2,321 students in 2022-23, 2,280 in 2021-22 and 1,942 in 2020-21.

Chart 7: Dropout Rates for Students in Colorado and Students in Out-of-Home Placement
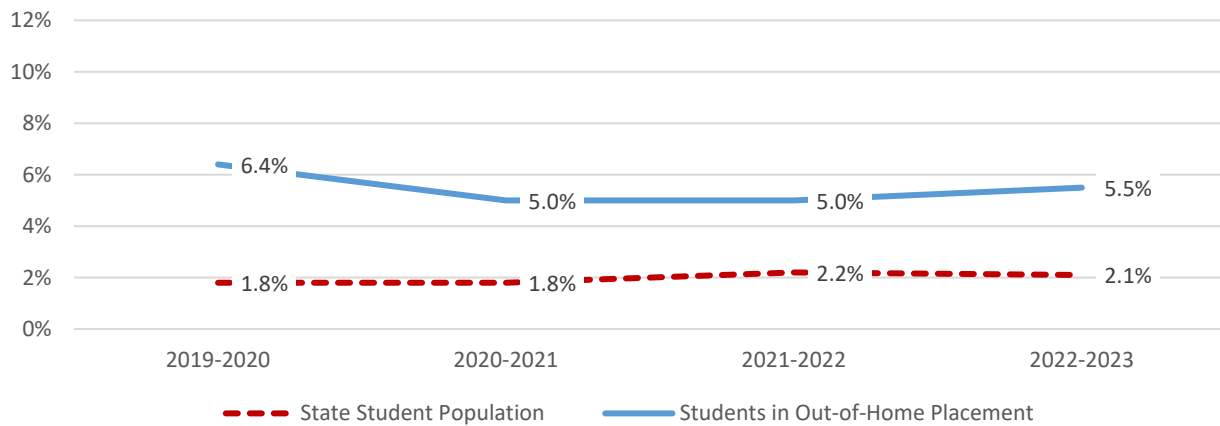
Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

Chart 8: Dropout Rates by Grade for the General Student Population and Students in Out-of-Home Placement

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
State 7th Grade	0.20%	0.20%	0.30%	0.27%
State 8th Grade	0.30%	0.30%	0.30%	0.37%
State 9th Grade	0.90%	0.70%	1.10%	1.05%
State 10th Grade	1.10%	1.10%	1.40%	1.49%
State 11th Grade	2.20%	2.30%	2.80%	2.56%
State 12th Grade	6.10%	6%	7.20%	6.40%
OHP 7th Grade	1.80%	2.20%	1.20%	1.82%
OHP 8th Grade	3.70%	0.90%	1.30%	3.19%
OHP 9th Grade	7.70%	4.60%	3.40%	4.45%
OHP 10th Grade	6.10%	7.90%	5.50%	4.18%
OHP 11th Grade	8.60%	6%	5.70%	6.63%
OHP 12th Grade	11.80%	10.40%	14.40%	14.33%
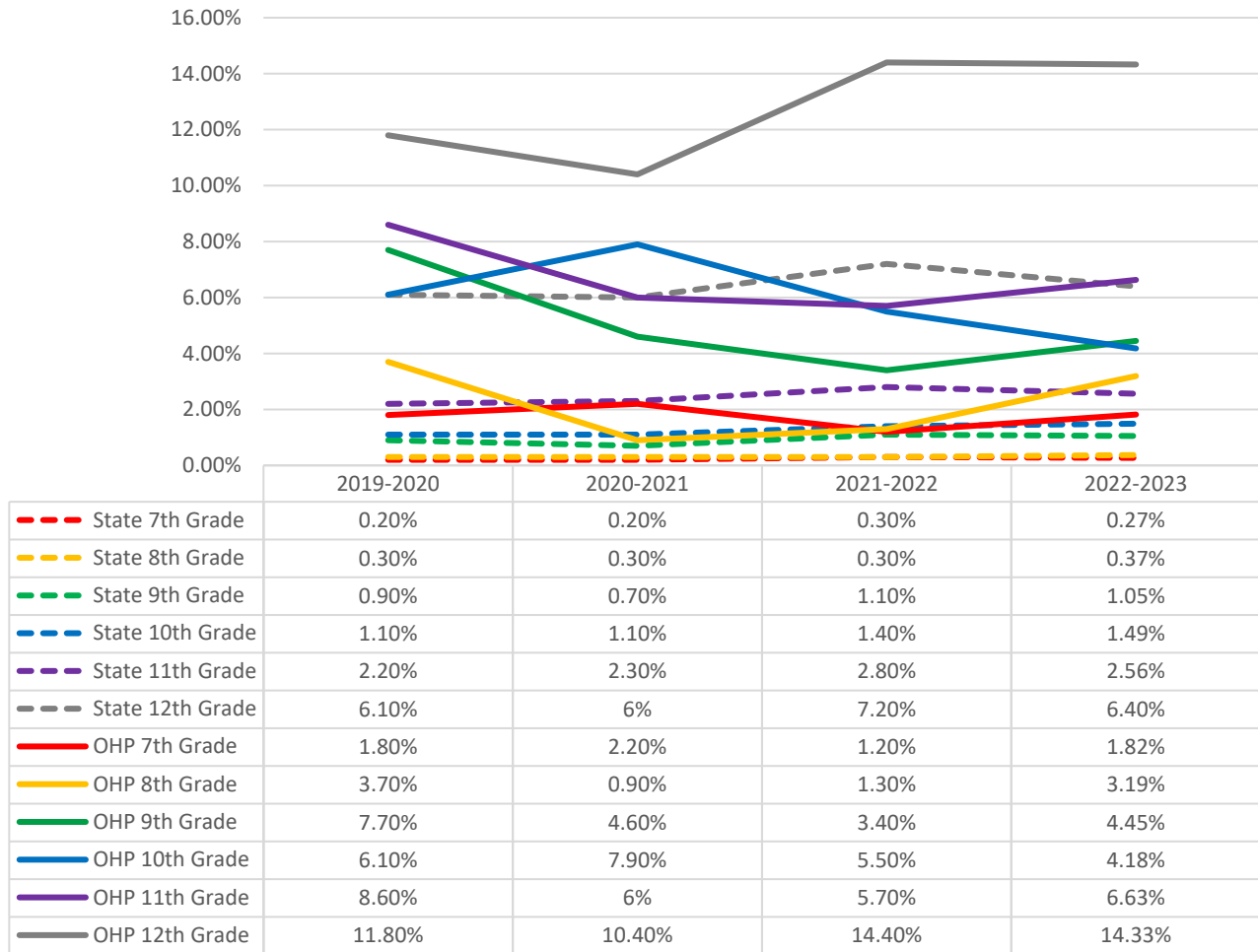
Note: State = state student population; OHP = students in out-of-home placement. Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

Engagement and Re-enrollment

Two essential keys to ensuring positive educational outcomes for all of Colorado's students in out-of-home placement are engaging students in the educational process and re-enrolling students who have left.

One way to engage students and keep them on track for graduation is through offering postsecondary workforce readiness pathways (e.g., personalized pathways through high school and on to college or a career, including exploration of non-traditional ways students can enter into postsecondary education, such as certificate programs, apprenticeships and other work-based learning experiences, 2- and 4-year degrees, military, and career training). Please note that there is no statewide data collection of students participation in postsecondary workforce readiness pathways. C.R.S. 22-7-1009 allows local school boards, BOCES and CSI to choose to add an endorsement to a high school diploma to indicate that a student has achieved postsecondary and workforce readiness or that the student has demonstrated exemplary postsecondary and workforce readiness. To date, no diploma granting body in Colorado has reported to CDE that it is offering such an endorsement and CDE does not systemically collect this data currently.

CDE does track the number of students who go on to postsecondary education. Historically, the number of students in out-of-home placement going on to postsecondary is low. Of those students in out-of-home placement who graduated or completed their education, 25.2 percent went on to postsecondary education in 2021-2022. This is comparable to the previous two years (30.4 percent in 2020-2021 and 24.1 percent in 2019-2020[i]), but lower than the three-year statewide average of 49.9 percent for the classes of 2020 (50.7 percent), 2021 (50.0 percent), and 2022 (49.0 percent). The number and percentage of students in out-of-home placement going on to postsecondary is not currently available for the 2022-2023 school year as this information is not available until months after this report is due. CDE will include this information in next year's report. The department will continue to provide resources for districts to encourage students in out-of-home placement to engage in postsecondary workforce readiness pathways to promote the attainment of higher education among this group of students. In addition to CDE's efforts in this regard, the Colorado Department of Higher Education offers FosterEd, a program that helps pay for attendance at a public institution of higher education in Colorado for students in foster care.

Part of re-engaging students in school is re-enrolling them after they're dropped out. Each year, about a quarter of all the students statewide who dropped out the previous year re-enroll, with an average over the last four years of 23.8 percent of students statewide who have dropped out of school in one year re-enrolling in the following year. The percentage of foster students who re-enroll after dropping out is about 10 percentage points higher (with an average of 33.8 percent over the last four years). *See **Table 6** for the number (and **Chart 9** for the percentage) of students in the state student population and students in out-of-home placement who re-engaged after dropping out over the last four years.*

Table 6: Students Who Re-Enrolled After Dropping Out		
	State Student Population	**Students in Out-of-Home Placement**
2019-2020	2631	52
2020-2021	1824	31
2021-2022	1826	30
2022-2023	2385	38

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

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[i] Note that graduating classes for students in out-of-home-placement are small, making large jumps in percentages more common.

Chart 9: Percentage of Students in the General Population and
Students in Out-of-Home Placement who Re-engaged After Dropping
Out the Year Prior
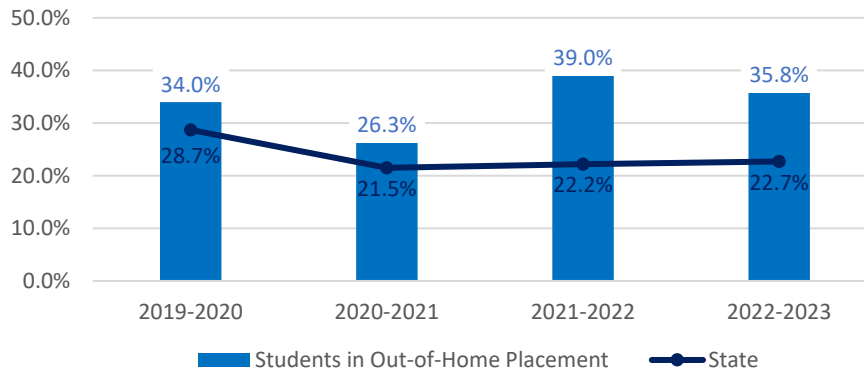
Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

Please note that the number of students in out-of-home-placement who drop is relatively small, making large jumps in percentages from year to year more common.

Local Service Delivery to Support Educational Attainment

CDE is committed to increasing knowledge in schools about best practices for supporting the educational attainment of students in out-of-home placement.

Orientation Materials and Training
In the past year, CDE's Foster Care Education Program State Coordinator created a process for onboarding new CWELs which included creating:
- a Change of CWEL request form;
- an updated and comprehensive New CWEL Information at a glance guidance document; and
- a new CWEL guidance document.

The CDE' FCEP State Coordinator also created a welcome email that includes the above-mentioned documents and provides an opportunity to connect about any questions. In future years, CDE will track the number of new CWELs, as well as the number of CWELs accessing this training.

Annual Back-to-School Training for All CWELs
In addition to the information reported above, the annual back-to-school training for all CWELs will include in-depth information on the following:
- Updates from CDE about the state of Foster Care in Colorado; and
- An overview of educational rights for students in out-of-home placement.

Inter-Department Office Hours
CDE is currently exploring the possibility of partnering with CDHS to host open office hours to help local education agencies and counties develop, understand, and implement educational rights for students in out-of-home placement. In addition to being an open forum for questions around supporting the educational attainment of students in out-of-home placement, topics could include:

- Disputes between the local education agency and county and the dispute resolution process;
- Best Interest Determination meetings;
- Promising practices for better transportation plans;
- Promising practices for better record transfer plans; and/or
- Training plans for local service providers

CDE will track the implementation of these office hours by creating and posting agendas online, and by tracking which local education agencies are represented at each session.

Additional Informational Materials

CDE also aims to improve the coordination of services between local educational agencies and county agencies, including the types of services provided to students in out-of-home placement. CDE will provide technical assistance to local education agencies regarding this topic via webinars and informational manuals published on the CDE website. These materials are still in development and will be reported on in full next year.

In addition, CDE is working with the Foster Care Education Coordinator to continuously improve FCEP. Per House Bill 18-1306 the specific duties of the Department of Education Foster Care Education Coordinator are as follows:

- Provide training and professional development to address needs associated with implementation of state and federal mandates relating to foster care education;
- Collect and disseminate child welfare education information on CDE's website;
- Coordinate with CDHS and other agencies as necessary;
- Provide technical assistance to education providers for removing barriers to graduation;
- Serve as the point of contact to review compliance of local education providers; and
- Acting as a liaison in coordination with CDHS to review complaints related to disputes over transportation agreements between local education agencies, the state charter school institute and county departments.

Dispute Resolution

CDE's FCEP created a dispute log to track trend data around the types of disputes that occur between local education agencies and county human service offices. This will inform areas of needed technical assistance and further training. The number and types of disputes will be reported on in the next annual report.

CONCLUSION

Colorado data trends show that students in out-of-home placement continue to experience lower attendance rates, lower graduation rates and completion rates, and higher dropout rates than their peers. Further, students in out-of-home placement are more likely to change schools throughout the year, putting them at increased risk for disengagement. Given this, identification of and provision of support to students in out-of-home placement is crucial. CDE and CDHE are working to improve internal processes and meet improvement goals regarding these students to ensure that they are given every opportunity to succeed.

Endnotes

[1] Clemens, E. V., Klopfenstein, K., Lalonde, T. L., & Tis, M. (2018). The effects of placement and school stability on academic growth trajectories of students in foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *87*, 86-94.

[2] Clemens, E. V., Lalonde, T. L., & Sheesley, A. P. (2016). The relationship between school mobility and students in foster care earning a high school credential. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *68*, 193-201.

[3] Free, J. L., Križ, K., & Konecnik, J. (2014). Harvesting hardships: Educators' views on the challenges of migrant students and their consequences on education. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *47*, 187-197.

[4] Gasper, J., DeLuca, S., & Estacion, A. (2012). Switching schools: Revisiting the relationship between school mobility and high school dropout. *American Educational Research Journal*, *49*(3), 487-519. Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4279956/pdf/nihms622720.pdf

[5] Grim, J. T. (2019). *High School Student Mobility, Achievement, and Graduation*. Retrieved from https://media.proquest.com/media/pq/classic/doc/4327436933/fmt/ai/rep/NPDF?_s=y%2BkmV0cMCoHMstyQviUBjjRyaHE%3D

[6] Colorado Department of Education (2019). Retrieved from https://www.cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/2019statepolicyreportondropoutpreventionandstudentengagement

Appendix

Helpful Definitions

Highly mobile students: Means children or youth who at any time during the academic year were homeless, as defined in section 22-1-102.5, C.R.S; were in non-certified kinship care, as defined in section 19-1-103, C.R.S; were students in out-of-home placement, as defined in section 22-32-138(1)(h), C.R.S.; or were migrant children, as defined in section 22-23-103, C.R.S.

Kinship: According to section 19-1-103, C.R.S., there are two types of kinship placement. The definitions are as follows:

- (71.3) "Kin", for purposes of a "kinship foster care home" or for purposes of "noncertified kinship care", may be a relative of the child, a person ascribed by the family as having a family-like relationship with the child, or a person that has a prior significant relationship with the child. These relationships take into account cultural values and continuity of significant relationships with the child.
- (78.7) "Noncertified kinship care" means a child is being cared for by a relative or kin who has a significant relationship with the child in circumstances when there is a safety concern by a county department and where the relative or kin has not met the foster care certification requirements for a kinship foster care home or has chosen not to pursue that certification process.

Student in out-of-home placement: Means a student who at any time during an academic term is in foster care and receiving educational services through a state-licensed day treatment facility, who is otherwise in placement out of the home as that term is defined in section 19-1-103 (85), C.R.S., or who is in placement outside of the home as a result of an adjudication pursuant to article 2 of title 19, C.R.S. It includes a child or youth who transfers enrollment as a result of being returned to his or her home at the conclusion of out-of-home placement.