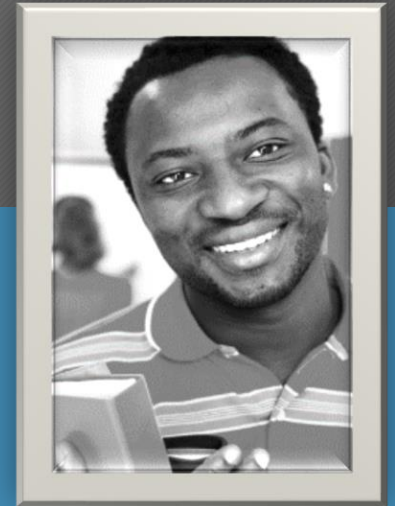Dr. Doris M. Houston- Illinois State University

Dr. Jennifer M. Geiger- The University of Illinois at Chicago

Education as the Lifeline to Social Mobility for Youth in Foster Care
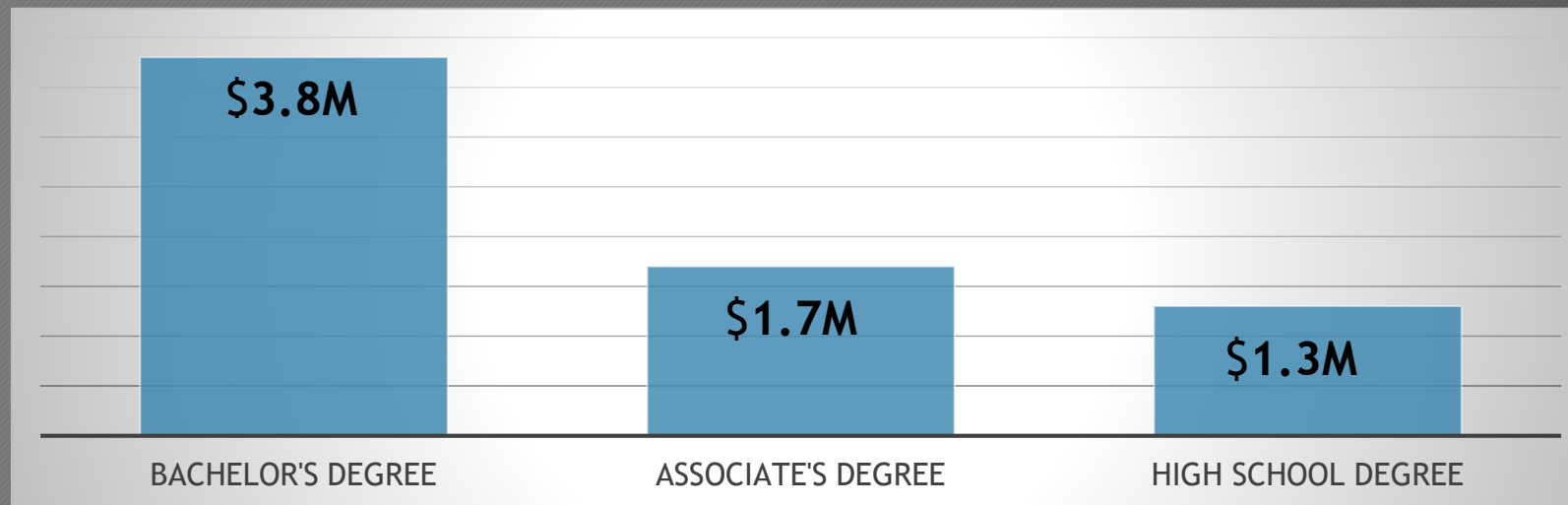
Forefront: College and Career Access, Persistence and Success (CCAPS)

- An individual with a Bachelor's degree will earn **84%** more than someone with a high school degree.

$3.8M	
	$1.7M
	$1.3M
BACHELOR'S DEGREE	ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE	HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE

Carnevale, A.P., Rose, S.J., & Cheah, B. (2011). *The college payoff: Education, occupation, and lifetime earnings*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. Retrieved from: https://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/2011/collegepayoff.pdf
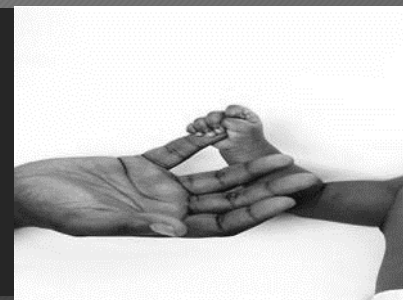
Foster Care, Childhood Trauma, and Challenges to College and Career Access

Children in Foster Care Nationwide

Children in Foster Care Nationwide

488,000
2007

- 397,605 (2011)
- 397,301 (2012)
- 401,213 (2013)
- 414,429 (2014)
- 427,910 (2015)

YOUTH IN CARE

FISCAL YEAR

Median age: 6.3 years

The AFCARS Report: Preliminary FY 2015 Estimates as of June 2016 (23) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 2016), available at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcarsreport23.pdf.
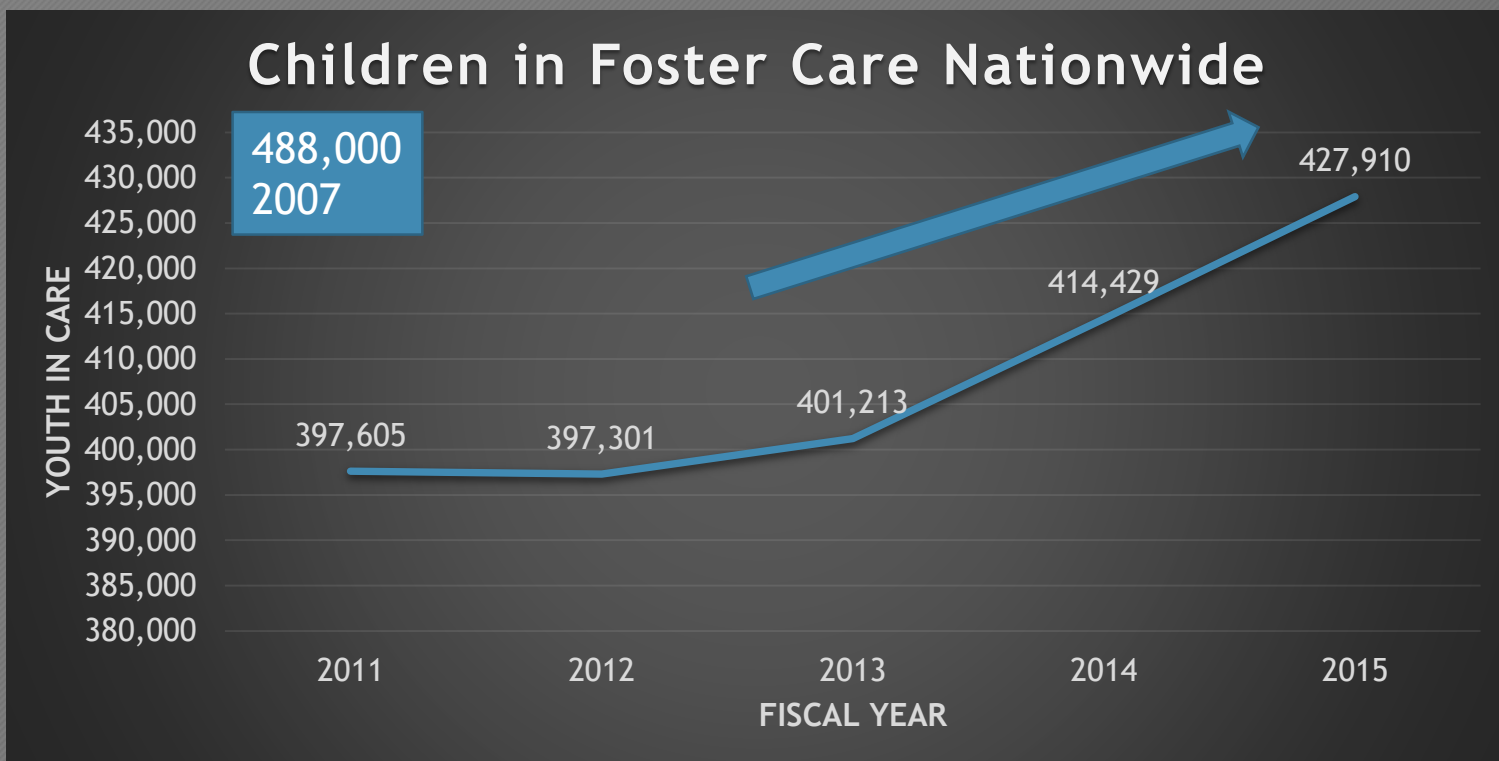
Children in Foster Care have a 50/50 Chance of Returning Home

Category	2015
Reunification	55%
Adoption	24%
Long-term Foster Care	3%
Emancipation	4%
Goal Not Yet Established	6%
Guardianship	3%
Living With Other Relatives	3%

(x-axis: 0%, 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%, 60%)

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2017). *Foster care statistics 2015.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau. https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/foster/
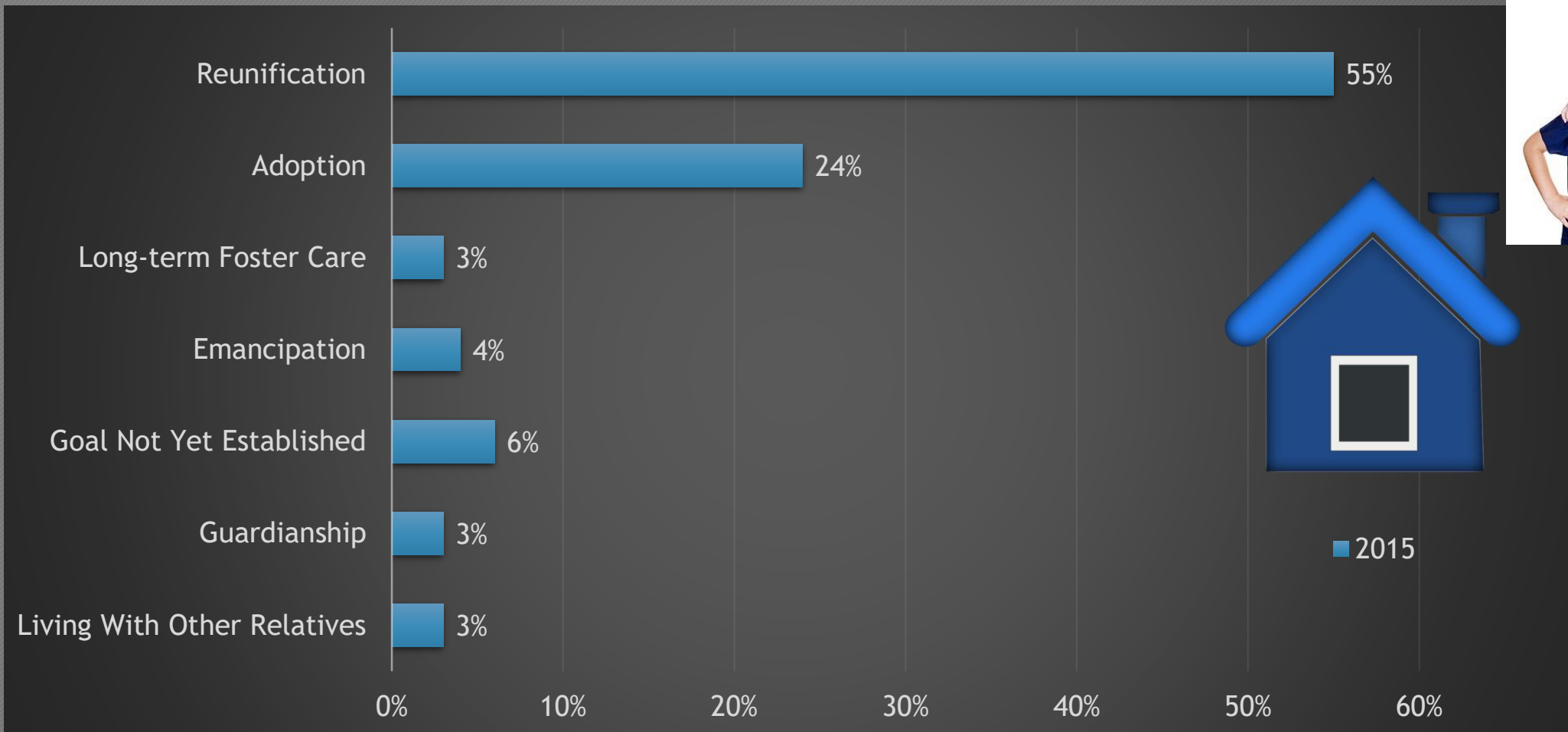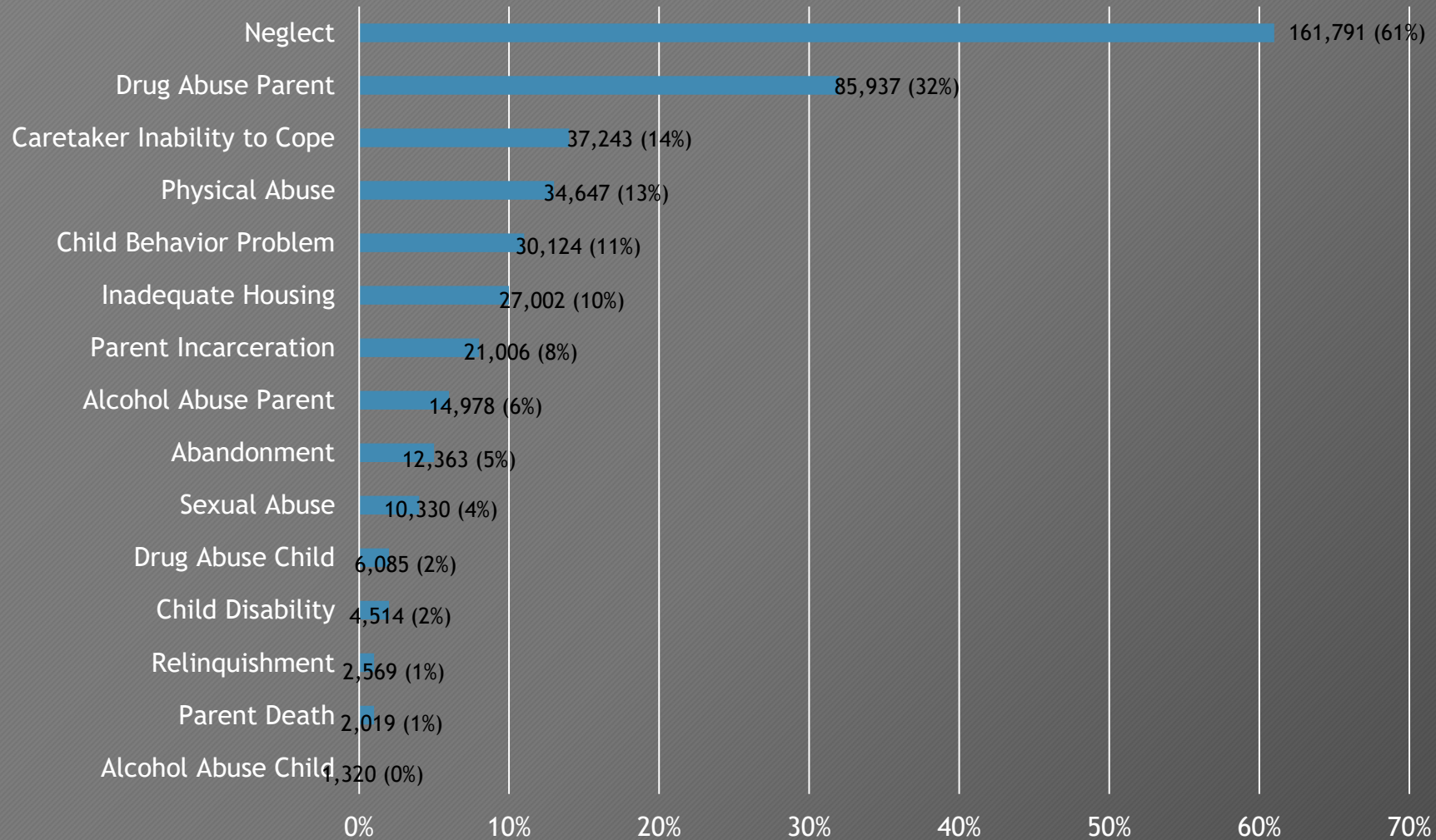
- Abuse/Neglect
- Parent who's an alcoholic
- Mother who's a domestic violence survivor
- Family member in jail
- Family member diagnosed with a mental illness
- Disappearance of a parent through

divorce, death, abandonment.

Holman, D., Ports, K., Buchanan, N., Hawkins, N., Merrick, M., Metzler, M., & Trivers, K. (2016). The Association Between Adverse Childhood Experiences and Risk of Cancer in Adulthood: A Systematic Review of the Literature. Pediatrics, 138:S81-S91.

The Intersection of Foster Care and ACEs

7

Foster Care Involvement and ACES

Neglect — 161,791 (61%)
Drug Abuse Parent — 85,937 (32%)
Caretaker Inability to Cope — 37,243 (14%)
Physical Abuse — 34,647 (13%)
Child Behavior Problem — 30,124 (11%)
Inadequate Housing — 27,002 (10%)
Parent Incarceration — 21,006 (8%)
Alcohol Abuse Parent — 14,978 (6%)
Abandonment — 12,363 (5%)
Sexual Abuse — 10,330 (4%)
Drug Abuse Child — 6,085 (2%)
Child Disability — 4,514 (2%)
Relinquishment — 2,569 (1%)
Parent Death — 2,019 (1%)
Alcohol Abuse Child — 1,320 (0%)

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2017). *Foster care statistics 2015.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau. https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/foster/
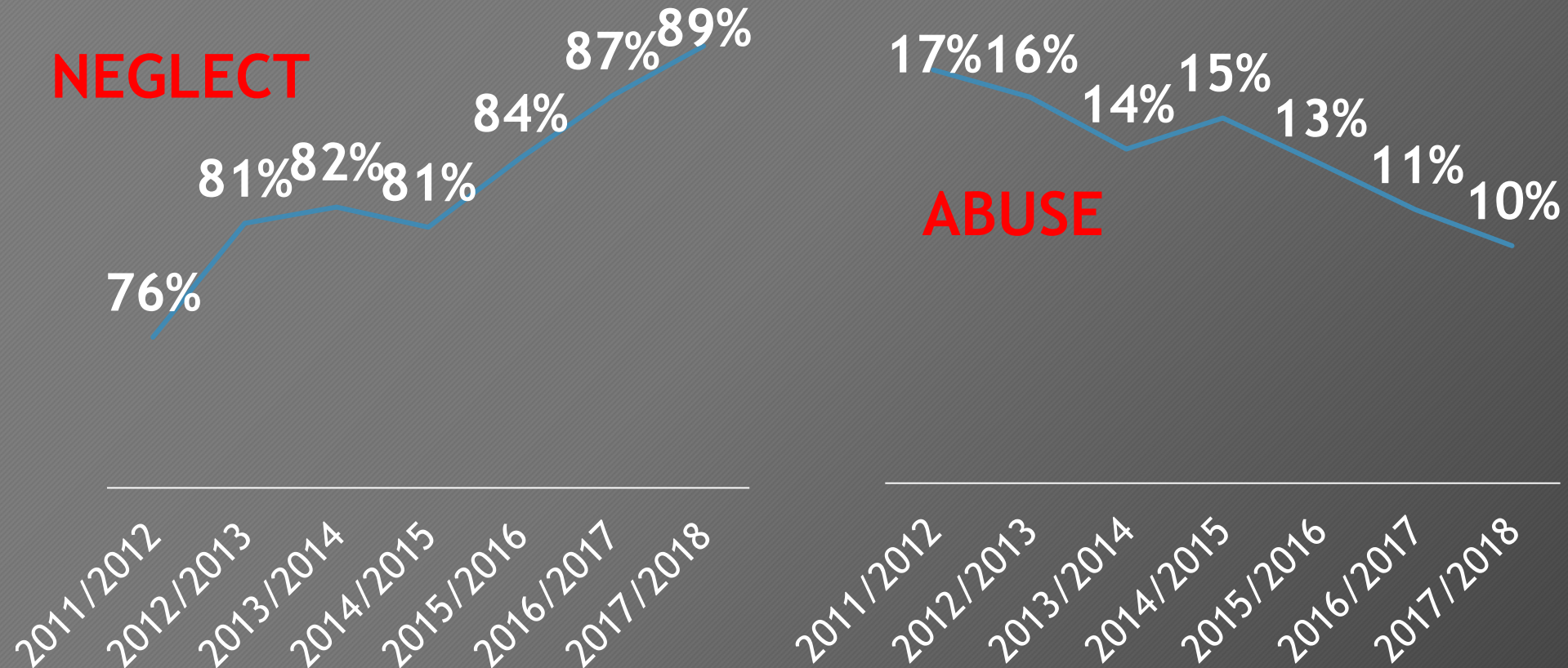
Illinois Youth In Care

8

Changing case dynamics

There are changing dynamics in our foster care system: Abuse is on the decline while Neglect is on the rise

NEGLECT

89%
87%
84%
81% 82% 81%
76%

2011/2012
2012/2013
2013/2014
2014/2015
2015/2016
2016/2017
2017/2018

17% 16%
14% 15%
13%
11%
10%

ABUSE

2011/2012
2012/2013
2013/2014
2014/2015
2015/2016
2016/2017
2017/2018

Walker, B.J. (2017) Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, 0-3 Working Conference

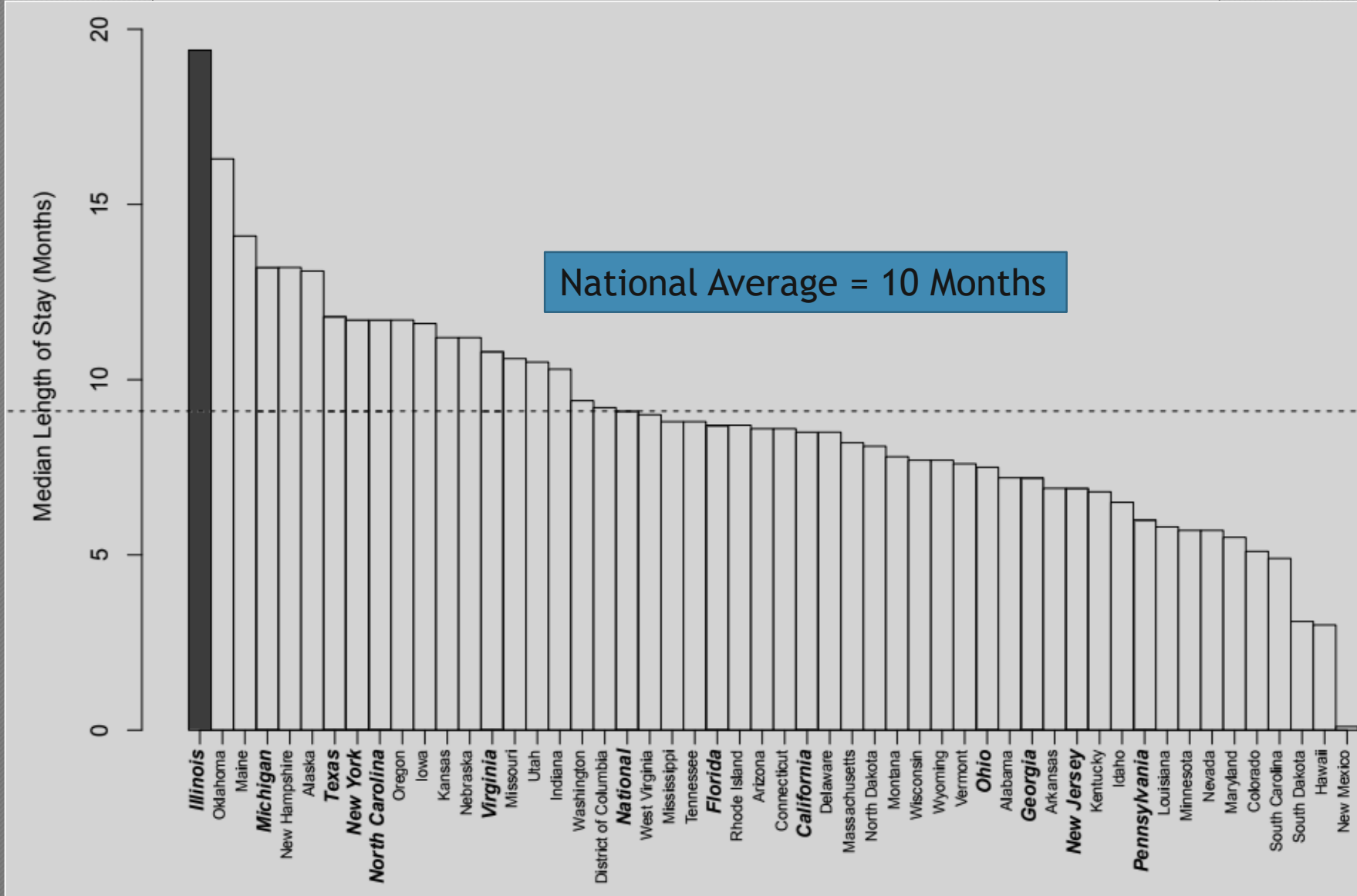# Children in Foster Care Leave Their Families, Schools, Communities

FY1997 : 51,596 Illinois children in Foster Care

- 14,640 Illinois children in foster care (FY16)

- Distance from home of origin: 11.4 miles

Children and Family Research Center (2016). Conditions of Children in or at Risk of Foster Care in Illinois: 2016 Monitoring Report of the B.H. Consent Decree. Urbana, IL: Authors

Illinois Time to Return home

National Average = 10 Months

Illinois has the longest period of time to achieve return home in America, and nearly double the national average.

Walker, B.J. (2017) Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, 0-3 Working Conference

Emotional Toll of Long Term Foster Care

...I moved from the first home and went to a temporary shelter and then to another placement...

Then after that I went through a lot of homes...I've been like through six or seven foster homes...

...I can't even remember their names.

Houston, D. (2007). *Family Connections Project: Focus Group/Youth Interview Final Report*. Normal, Illinois: Illinois State University, Center for Adoption Studies.

- 2x more likely to be absent from school
- 50-75%v change schools upon FC entry
- 34% 17-18 year olds: 5+ school changes
- 2.5-3.5x more likely to receive special education services

Smithgall, C., Jarpe-Ratner, E., Walker, L. (2010). Looking Back, Moving Forward: Using Integrated Assessments to Examine the Educational Experiences of Children Entering Foster Care. Chicago: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago

- 1/3 of children in care ages 6-10 missed 10+ days in school

- 50%+ ages 11-17 missed 10+ days in school

- 1/3 of children in care ages 3-5 – evidence of a developmental delay

Smithgall, C., Jarpe-Ratner, E., Walker, L. (2010). Looking Back, Moving Forward: Using Integrated Assessments to Examine the Educational Experiences of Children Entering Foster Care. Chicago: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago

Chapin Hall Study of Chicago School-Aged Children:

- 20% of ALL Chicago children live in households engaged with 2+ Social Welfare/ Legal Entities:
  - Mental Health Services
  - Adult Incarceration
  - Juvenile Incarceration
  - Child Welfare/Foster Care
  - Substance Abuse Treatment

Smithgall, C., Jarpe-Ratner, E., Walker, L. (2010). Looking Back, Moving Forward: Using Integrated Assessments to Examine the Educational Experiences of Children Entering Foster Care. Chicago: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago

Social/Emotional

Homelessness (46.6%)

Delinquency/Incarceration (46% women; 74% men)

PTSD (60%)

Early Pregnancy (79% ever; 32% before 18)

Courtney, M., Dworsky, A., Brown, A., Cary, C., Love, K., & Vorhies, V. (2011). Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 26. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

Economic

Unemployment (46.8%)

Public Assistance (76.5%)

Economic Hardship (45%)

Courtney, M., Dworsky, A., Brown, A., Cary, C., Love, K., & Vorhies, V. (2011). Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 26. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

Illinois Foster Care and Racial Disparities (2013)

Bar chart legend: ■ African American ■ White ■ Hispanic ■ Other

Category	African American	White	Hispanic	Other
Child Population	16	51	26	8
Children Investigated for Maltreatment	32	57	6	6
Indicated Reports of Maltreatment	31	57	7	5
Substitute Care Entries	43	49	5	3
Long Term Foster Care (3 years +)	52	41	5	2
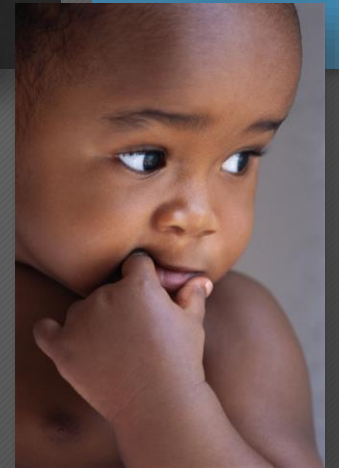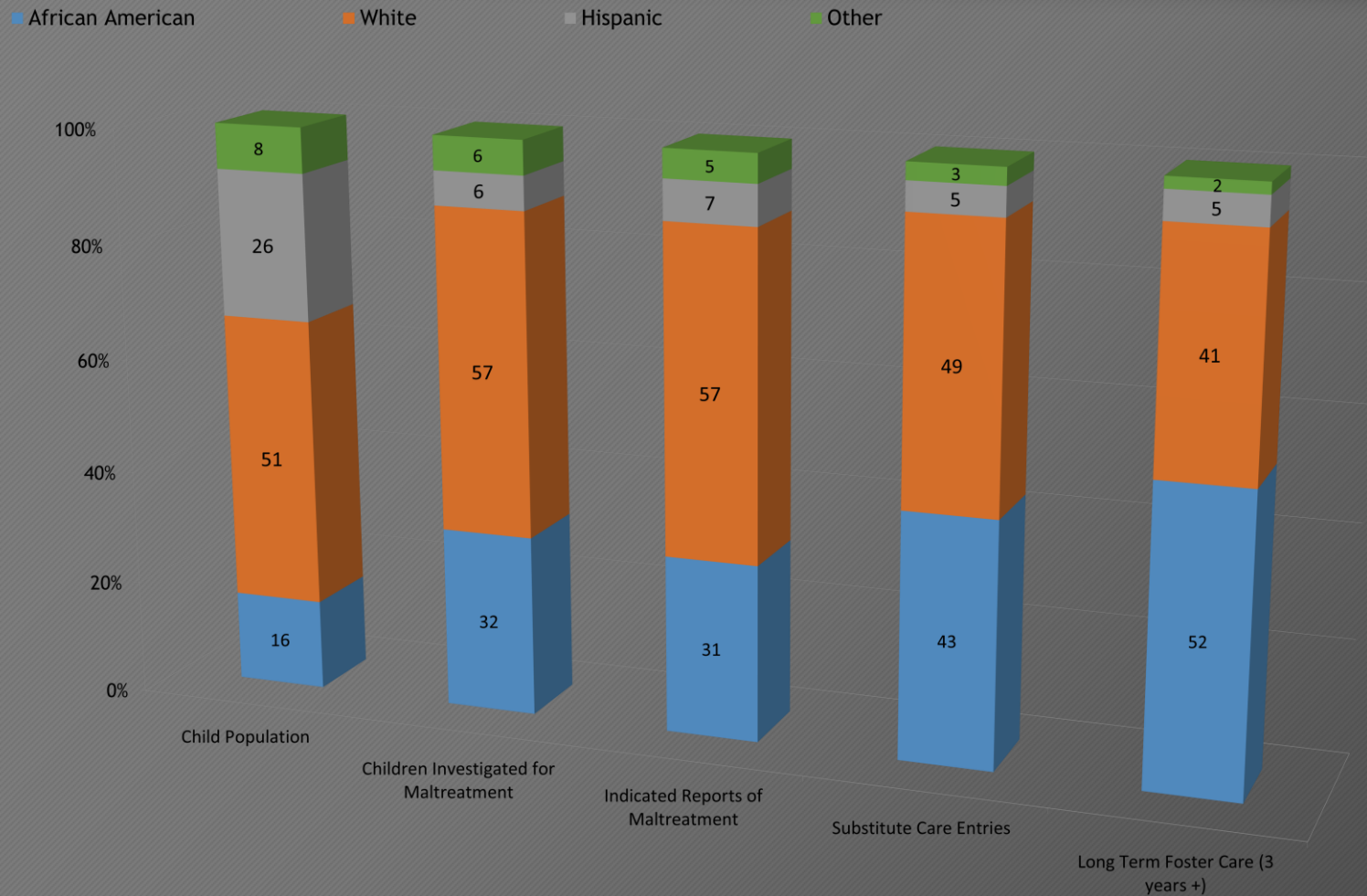
Educator's Challenge

- Schools and institutions of higher education lack the knowledge-base to address the unique needs and circumstances of students with a history of abuse, trauma, and family instability.[1,2]

1 Davis, R. J. (2006). *College access, financial aid, and college success for students from foster care*. Washington, DC: National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.

2 Houston, D. M., & Kramer, L. (2008). Meeting the long-term needs of families who adopt children out of foster care: A three-year follow-up study. *Child Welfare*, 87, 4, 145-170.

3 National Working Group on Foster Care and Education (2014). Fostering success in education: National factsheet on the educational outcomes of children in foster care. Retrieved from http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/NationalWork/NationalWorkGroup.aspx

Unique Opportunities for Success

Strengths of Youth In Care

- Problem solving
- Leadership ability
- Managing through bureaucracy
- Life wisdom
- Resilience: Ability to "bounce back" from adversity
- More motivated to succeed compared to their peers

Strengths and Talents of Youth in College

Strength	Score
Enthusiasm	3.95
Determination	4.03
Social skills	4.05
Influence	4.14
Self-discipline	4.14
Resourcefulness	4.26
Self-confidence	4.42

Skill	Score
Study skills	3.58
Time	3.73
Help-seeking skills	3.74
Communication	3.81
Focus	3.85
Creativitiy	3.89
Organizational skills	3.93

Houston, D., Gjesfjeld, C., Avant, D., Miller-Ott, A., & Gholson, T. (2017). Higher Education as the Lifeline to Social Mobility for former Foster Youth: A Comprehensive Needs and Assets Assessment. Chicago IL: Spencer Foundation.

Young People   Families   Our Communities

Creating Pathways to College for Youth in Care

- Providing information and connections to youth, their caregivers, and DCFS/child welfare workers EARLY and FREQUENTLY

- Creating a culture of postsecondary education and training and normalizing this experience

- Organizing documents, knowing options (schools/programs), financial aid, social supports, and living arrangements

- Developing a plan and executing it (know what's expected, what are deadlines)

Promising Practices: Pre-College Preparation and Bridge Programs

- First Star Academy

- Pre-College Bridge Programs for Foster Care Alumni
  - Example: Bridging Success Early-Start at Arizona State University[1]

- Key Program Components

[1]Geiger, J.M., Cheung, J.R., Hanrahan, J.E., Lietz, C.A., & Carpenter, B. (2017). Increasing competency, self-confidence, and connectedness among foster care alumni entering a 4-year university: Findings from an early-start program. *Journal of Social Service Research*, *43*(5), 566-579.

Financial Aid Options

- Federal
  - Pell Grants
  - Work-Study
  - Loans (Subsidized and Non-subsidized)
- State-Level
  - Youth in College
  - Youth in Scholarship
- Institutional
  - Merit Based
  - Need Based
- Private Scholarships

Promising Practices:
On-Campus Support Programs

- Prevalence[1]

- Key Program Components[1,2]
  - Counseling
  - Housing
  - Academic Support
  - Coaching/Mentoring
  - Connecting with other FCA
  - Relationships with Key
    On-Campus Units

- Challenges & Successes[1]
  - Program
  - Student

Psychological Emotional Trauma

+

Academic

+

Social

+

Practical

→ Success

[1]Geiger, J.M., Piel, M.H., Day, A., & Schelbe, L. (2018). A Descriptive Analysis of Programs Serving Foster Care Alumni in Higher Education: Challenges and Opportunities. *Children and Youth Services Review, 85, 287-294.*
[2]Geiger, J.M., Hanrahan, J.E., Cheung, J.R., & Lietz, C.A. (2016). Developing an on-campus recruitment and retention support program for foster care alumni. *Children and Youth Services Review, 61,* 271-280.

College-Community Partnerships

- DCFS
- Community College & Technical Programs
- K-12 Schools
- Child Welfare Agencies
- Private Foundations & Philanthropy
- Court & Legal System

Program Recommendations

- Pre-college and on-campus support programs at *ALL* large public universities
- Youth in college advisory board
- Statewide & Community Consortiums
- Safe and affordable housing
- Trainings – caregivers, child welfare workers, on-campus supports
- Getting the word out – Opportunities and financial aid
- Partner with community colleges – transfer students

Policy Recommendations

- Statewide Tuition & Fee Waiver for FCA
- DCFS Liaison at each college/university
- Data sharing (K-12 and Post-sec Inst.)
- Permanency for youth in care and placement stability
- Tracking educational progress of youth in care, youth in college, and beyond

Education as a Game Changer for Youth

"We are all kids that are trying to have the best future that we can."

"When I had the opportunity to come to college, I didn't know what to do. It can be overwhelming and a resource like this helps put you in the right direction. Once you are here, you realize that you can do whatever you want to do with your career."

The AFCARS Report: Preliminary FY 2015 Estimates as of June 2016 (23) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 2016), available at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcarsreport23.pdf

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Geiger, J.M., Cheung, J.R., Hanrahan, J.E., Lietz, C.A., & *Carpenter, B. (2017). Increasing competency, self-confidence, and connectedness among foster care alumni entering a 4-year university: Findings from an early-start program. *Journal of Social Service Research, 43*(5), 566-579.

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http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/NationalWork/NationalWorkGroup.aspx

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