

Advocating for the Educational Needs of Children in Out-of-Home Care

**Training Curriculum for Child Welfare Caseworkers and
Supervisors**

Colorado Department of Human Services

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Introduction

In order to improve the educational outcomes for children in the child welfare system, greater coordination needs to occur between the child welfare and education systems. The Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families contracted with the Cutler Institute for Health and Social Policy, Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine to help the state make that goal a reality.

A major component of this work was to develop a manual and curriculum for child welfare supervisors and caseworkers in Colorado to increase their understanding of the various laws affecting their coordination with the education system on behalf of children in the child welfare system and to provide suggestions and resources for including the educational issues of children as a part of regular casework practice. In addition to the development of the curriculum and manual, issues which were perceived as barriers to coordination between the child welfare and education systems were identified and two statewide forums were held by the Colorado Department of Human Services in 2005 and 2006 to discuss those issues and share strategies.

This curriculum, and the Manual that goes with it, were completed in 2006. In January, 2009, and again in April, 2010, both were updated to reflect new state legislation in Colorado addressing the educational needs of this population as well as changes brought about at the federal level by the reauthorization in 2004 of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) and in 2008, by passage of the *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act* .

Acknowledgements

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We also wish to express our deepest appreciation to the individuals we spoke to from the Adams County After Care Group—a group of dynamic young people transitioning out of the foster care system. They provided us with stories and experiences that helped us create many of the activities and materials for this curriculum.

We would especially like to thank Arthur Atwell, Director of Children and Family Training and Mary Griffin, Program Administrator, Foster Care and Kinship Foster Care at the Colorado Department of Human Services for providing the impetus and vision for this effort and guiding and supporting us throughout this project.

Many thanks also go to our Advisory Committee members listed below who provided us with their thoughtful feedback and encouragement. (With the exception of Arthur Atwell and Mary Griffin, titles are those held at the time of the original development of the curriculum and manual.)

Arthur Atwell	<i>Director, Children and Family Training, Office of Children, Youth and Families, Colorado Department of Human Services</i>
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Laura Writebol	<i>Education Liaison, Denver County Department of Human Services</i>

A Brief Review of the Curriculum

The goal of this curriculum is to broaden the knowledge and enhance the skills of caseworkers and supervisors so that they can advocate more effectively for the educational needs of the children they serve. Divided into modules, this curriculum is flexible and can be used in a way that is appropriate for individual training audiences and trainers. The training is to be delivered at the county level by two trainers, one from child welfare and one from education. It is intended to occur over a one-and-a-half day training session.

A manual, *Advocating for the Educational Needs of Children in Out-of-Home Care*, is the companion to this curriculum (referred to as “the Manual” throughout). The Manual is the basis for all of the information this training covers. Therefore, trainers should be very familiar with its contents and layout. Trainers should be prepared to refer training participants to the Manual for additional information and guidance.

Module 1, *Overview of the Training*, allows trainers to welcome participants, introduce the goals of the training, and discuss the handouts, activity materials and companion Manual.

Module 2, *Why We Care*, is a basic overview of the factors that contribute to the educational success of children in the child welfare system. More importantly, it provides opportunities for discussions about the role caseworkers can play in helping children to be successful at school.

Module 3, *First Steps—Addressing Educational Issues When Children First Enter the Child Welfare System*, provides information on the initial steps caseworkers can take when a child enters the child welfare system to address the child’s educational needs and create a system of communication and information sharing with the school. Issues of confidentiality will also be covered.

Module 4, *School Stability, Easing Transitions, and Enrollment Issues*, gives caseworkers a chance to learn about and practice skills involving the importance of school stability and the need for smooth transitions for children.

Module 5, *Insuring Daily Educational Success*, allows participants to discuss and work on issues of sensitivity and stigma faced by children in the child welfare system in the school setting. Further, it gives caseworkers suggestions on how to involve foster parents in the educational lives of their foster children.

Module 6, *Special Education*, examines the various laws, regulations, and timelines caseworkers will need to understand in order to advocate for the educational needs of children with disabilities.

Module 7, *Special Populations*, provides information on the youngest and oldest children in the child welfare system. Participants will learn about the unique educational needs of children from birth through age five, and those older youth transitioning out of the system, and how best to address them.

Module 8, *Wrap-up*, allows participants to discuss what they have learned in the training and how they will apply what they have learned in their practice as caseworkers.

Module 1: Summary

Time	Content	Activities	Manual Chapter(s)
<p>Total: 40 minutes</p> <p><i>Introductions:</i> 15 minutes</p> <p><i>Review Materials:</i> 15 minutes</p> <p><i>Review key themes and ground rules</i> 10 minutes</p>	<p>Module 1: <i>Overview of the Training</i></p> <p>Introduce participants to each other</p> <p>Orient the participants to the training</p> <p>Review the contents of the Manual and Appendices</p> <p>Set ground rules</p>	<p>Introductions</p> <p>Review agenda/training packet</p> <p>Review contents of Manual and Appendices</p> <p>Review key themes in the training</p> <p>Review ground rules</p>	<p>Entire Manual</p>

Module 1: Overview of the Training

Time

Approximately 40 minutes

Rationale

In order to engage participants and enable them to fully understand the benefits of the training, participants should be introduced to each other and the trainer and become familiar with the goals and purpose of the training and its primary materials.

Learning Objectives

When this module is complete, participants should be able to:

- Understand the goals and agenda for the training
- List the major themes of the training
- Understand what the Manual is and how it should be used

Activities

- Welcome and introductions
- Review training agenda, learning objectives, goals of the training and major themes.
- Introduce the Manual, how it is organized and how it will be used.

Materials Needed for this Module

- ✓ Training packets
- ✓ Manuals

The trainer may want to use PowerPoint slides to list the goals of the training and the learning objectives for each module.

Advanced Preparation:

The curriculum itself does not contain all of the information you will need to convey to the participants.

It will list topics and important points to emphasize but the detailed information for each topic is only found in the Manual.

Make sure to review the chapters of the Manual that are listed under “Advanced Preparation” within each module before the training session!

Handouts for the training:

The curriculum itself only includes the handouts outlining the activities in the training (e.g. the case study used in Module 4).

Since one of the objects of this curriculum is to permit participants to become familiar with the contents of the Manual, we have left in the Appendices of the Manual the relevant checklists, tools, etc. that might be used to assist participants in doing the exercises. We have referenced these materials under the section, “Advanced Preparation” within each module of the curriculum. During the

Advanced Preparation

- Review contents of Manual and Appendices
- Make up an agenda for the training using the lesson plans at the beginning of each module as a guide and reflecting the time schedules for the trainees at that particular site.
- Prepare training packets for each participant containing the training agenda, exercise materials, the Manual and any supplemental information.
- Make sure that flip charts, markers, TV/DVD player, and any additional audio/visual equipment are set up in the training room.
- Prepare a “Parking Lot” list on a flip chart in the training room.

training, you can refer participants to the Appendices for those documents or, if you prefer, you can copy them from the Manual and hand them out.

Trainer’s Instructions

- Begin the session by welcoming the group and introducing yourself.
- Highlight the goals of the training which are:
 - To understand the educational challenges many children in care face and what factors help these children succeed educationally.
 - To understand what it means to be an advocate for children and collaborate effectively with the education system.
 - To learn how to use the Manual and apply what’s learned in everyday practice.

- Go around the room, asking participants to introduce themselves by stating their name, title and where they work. In addition, an effective icebreaker, given the topic of this training, is to ask participants to relate a favorite memory they have of school.
- Walk quickly through the training packet, starting with the agenda for the training and briefly describe the packet's contents.
- Introduce the Manual, review its contents (especially the Table of Contents, use of section numbers in the text, the Index and the Appendices) and how it will be used.
- Go over the following key themes of the training:
 - Stress that the focus of child welfare caseworkers is “safety, permanency and child well being” and that education is a critical component of “child well being.”
 - Emphasize that we’re not going into a great deal of detail about all of the laws and policies involved in collaboration with the education system. Instead, we will learn how to use the Manual to resolve issues and monitor children’s education.
 - Acknowledge challenges of collaboration but say they will learn strategies they can use in their everyday practice to support the educational needs of children.
 - Explain that collaboration is enhanced when each system has a better understanding of the other.

These themes are points you will want to return to throughout the training!

- Emphasize that the most important aspect of being a good advocate for children is to monitor the child's educational progress, to make sure the child's education is supported by all of the adults involved, including the foster parent, and to know who to contact when issues of concern arise.
- Acknowledge that caseworkers will be involved in the education of the children on their caseload to varying degrees depending on the capacity/availability of the biological parent and/or foster parent and the complexity of the educational needs of the child.
- For all children, however, encourage “simple strategies that make a difference” – small gestures they and others can use to encourage children in the school setting to do well and stay engaged. Tell them the DVD they will see in Module 2 will provide examples of these gestures.
- Go over the ground rules for the training:
 - All participants should use language that promotes collaboration between systems.
 - Systemic issues won't be discussed (those will be addressed in other forums and should be listed in the “parking lot.”) Instead, we will concentrate on what everyone can do within the system as it exists now.
- Ask for and address questions. Mention that questions and comments are welcome at any time.

- Encourage participation! Throughout the discussions encourage participants to talk about issues they have encountered in coordinating with the education system as well as positive experiences and successful strategies they have used.
- Introduce the next module, *Why We Care*.

Module 2: Summary

Time	Content	Activities	Manual Chapter(s)
<p>Total: 90 minutes</p> <p><i>DVD:</i> 20 minutes</p> <p><i>Overview: Educational outcomes, factors for success, role of caseworkers</i> 30 minutes</p> <p><i>Scavenger Hunt:</i> 30 minutes</p> <p><i>Debrief:</i> 10 minutes</p>	<p>Module 2: <i>Why We Care</i></p> <p>Educational outcomes of children in child welfare system</p> <p>Factors that make a difference in helping children succeed in school.</p> <p>Role of caseworkers in making a difference</p> <p>Practice using the Manual</p>	<p>Show first half of DVD: <i>Speaking Out</i></p> <p>Discuss educational outcomes, factors for success.</p> <p>Ask participants what they see as their role in supporting education</p> <p>Small Group Activity: Scavenger Hunt – finding answers in Manual</p> <p>Debrief about using the Manual</p>	<p>Chapter 1</p>

Module 2: Why We Care

Time

Approximately 90 minutes

Rationale

For a variety of reasons, children in care face special challenges in the school setting and often lack the support and individual attention from caring adults that other children enjoy. Many enter the child welfare system already behind in school. They experience the trauma of being removed from their homes and their worries about parents and siblings make it difficult for them to focus on their school work. They immediately become “foster children”—a label which, despite the best intentions of caring adults, can carry with it the baggage of stereotyping, lowered expectations and social isolation. For many children, this initial upheaval is then compounded by frequent changes in placement that mean changes in schools. They can fall further behind academically and become more alienated socially.

Yet the need for a good education is especially critical for these children. Youth in the child welfare system enter adulthood with fewer resources to fall back on than most other children whose families are available to provide support. Because of their unique circumstances, however, most need more help than other children in order to achieve that success. Many youth in care view school as their saving grace. By throwing themselves into their school work, signing up for every extracurricular activity, creating special bonds with certain teachers, school becomes a home away from home at a time when everything else feels like it is falling apart.

Learning strategies to incorporate educational considerations into the procedures and practices caseworkers are currently following can make a big difference to a child's educational success. These strategies were gathered from the research and from the experiences of staff operating model programs to improve coordination between child welfare and education in Colorado and in other states.

Learning Objectives

When this module is complete, participants should be able to:

- Discuss factors that contribute to educational success of children in care.
- Identify what the research says about the outcomes of children in care when education is not a priority.
- Explain how caseworkers, acting as educational advocates, can make a difference.
- Become familiar with the resources in the Manual.

Activities

- View first half of the DVD of youth in care discussing their educational experiences (“Speaking Out”).
- Small Group Activity: “Scavenger Hunt”
- Debrief as a large group.

Materials Needed for this Module

- ✓ TV with a DVD player
- ✓ “Speaking Out” DVD
- ✓ Manuals
- ✓ Flip charts and markers
- ✓ Small group activity handout: “Scavenger Hunt”
- ✓ Prizes for “Scavenger Hunt”

Advanced Preparation

- View and become familiar with the “Speaking Out” DVD of the youth discussing their educational experiences while in the child welfare system.
- Read Chapter 1 of the Manual.
- Review Appendix A.
- Make sure the TV and DVD player are set up.
- Prepare a flipchart for each small group.
- Prepare a flipchart for the large group debrief

Speaking Out really gives faces and voices to the issues discussed in this training. Use examples from it and encourage participants to refer back to the DVD in discussions throughout the day.

Trainer’s Instructions

- Introduce the module by presenting the rationale and objectives.
- Begin the module by introducing, then showing, the first half of the DVD, “Speaking Out.” Explain that:
 - The youth in the DVD may not be typical of the youth on their caseloads. These are kids who succeeded against all the odds and who are unusually articulate in discussing their experiences.
 - Explain also that their experiences may or may not be typical of the majority of children in the child welfare system.
- Ask participants to write down particularly memorable quotes as they watch the DVD.
- After viewing the DVD, solicit feedback from participants about what they saw and heard and discuss some of the choices of quotes participants made.
- Point out that what the youth say in the DVD closely parallels what the research has found are the key factors

The first half of the DVD is about experiences in school. You might want to show the second half about transition issues in Module 7.

This is a good place in the training to reinforce that simple strategies such as attending a child’s band concert can make a big difference! Again, key this into what was said in the DVD.

that make a difference in the educational outcomes of children and youth in the child welfare system. Refer participants to Appendix A, “*Factors that Make a Difference...*” to illustrate this and point out the bibliography at the end of that document if they want to read more about this research. Use this as a way to introduce an overview of why it is so important to address the educational needs of children in the child welfare system:

- Point out the major role school plays in a child’s life and refer participants to the pie chart in Chapter 1 of the Manual, illustrating a typical day in the life of a sixth grader, to make this point.
- Discuss the research about the outcomes of kids in care:
 - In a study in Washington State, twice as many youth in foster care at both the elementary and secondary levels repeated a grade compared to youth not in care (Burley & Halpern, 2001). In a study conducted in three states of youth aging out of care (the Midwest Study), 37% of the youth (compared with 22% of a comparable national sample) reported repeating a grade (Courtney, et al., 2004).
 - Youth in foster care in the Midwest Study, interviewed primarily after completing 10th or 11th grade, on average read at only the seventh grade level (Courtney, et al., 2004).
 - Almost 50% of third to eighth grade students in out-of-home care in Chicago scored in the bottom quartile on reading tests (Smithgall, et

al., 2004).

- Almost half of foster youth in the Midwest Study had been placed in special education at least once during their school careers. (Courtney, et al., 2004)
 - In the Midwest Study, approximately 58% of youth in foster care had a high school degree at age nineteen compared with 87% of their same-age peers in a comparable national sample (Courtney, et al., 2005).
 - According to a study of alumni of foster care, more than one in five reported experiencing homelessness since being discharged from foster care. One-third lived at or below the poverty level (three times the national rate) (Pecora, et al., 2005).
- Go over the factors that research has shown lead to success in school. These are listed in Appendix A.
 - Ask participants how caseworkers, acting as educational advocates, can make a difference in helping children achieve educational success. Be sure to tie in some of what was discussed in the DVD through the use of examples.
 - Move into the small group activity: “Scavenger Hunt” by breaking the large group into two smaller groups called Group 1 and Group 2 and give them the following instructions:

In your training packets, you will find a handout called “Scavenger Hunt.” The purpose of this activity is to give you some time to practice using the Manual. Within your smaller

group, please locate the answers to the questions on the “Scavenger Hunt” handout by using the Manual for the questions listed under your group number. The Manual and its Table of Contents and Index are organized by page numbers and section numbers. The section numbers are keyed to the chapter numbers (e.g. Section 400.0 is in Chapter 4). Remember to record the specific section of the Manual where you found the answer. We’ll come back together as a large group to discuss what the groups found, and we’ll talk about your experiences with using the Manual.

Take and respond to any questions, then have the group work on the activity for about 30 minutes.

- After time is up, ask each group to share their experiences in using the Manual and what they came up with for answers to the questions provided on the activity handout. Have them cite the section of the Manual where they found the answer. Process each group’s answers. Be sure to discuss any answers in the Manual that the groups may have missed by referring to the “Instructor’s Copy” of the handout. Hand out prizes to the group who most successfully answers the questions (or to all participants, if you’d like). Wrap up by taking a few minutes for discussion about the activity and to answer any questions.
- Introduce the next module, *First Steps: Addressing Educational Issues When Children Enter the Child Welfare System*.

References

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Note: This research was cited in Casey Family Programs, (2007). *Fact Sheet, Educational Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster and Out-of-Home Care*. Seattle, WA.: Casey Family Programs URL: http://www.casey.org/NR/rdonlyres/A8991CAB-AFC1-4CF0-8121-7E4C31A2553F/1241/National_EdFactSheet_2008.pdf

**Large Group Activity:
Scavenger Hunt**

In your groups, and by using the Manual, please find the answers to the following questions. Be sure to indicate specifically *where* you found the answers by using the section numbers in the Manual.

Group 1

1. Who is eligible for education and training vouchers (ETVs)?
2. How many school days does a school have to process a special education referral and conduct an evaluation?
3. Can a school deny a child in an out-of-home placement the right to enroll if that child lacks an immunization record?
4. Which children are helped by the McKinney-Vento Act and in what ways are they helped?
5. Can caseworkers be educational surrogates for children with disabilities?

Group 2

1. Name two exceptions under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) to the requirement that parental consent be obtained before school records are released.
2. Who can refer a child for an evaluation for special education?
3. What are the timeframes within which a school must transfer the records of a student who is in an out-of-home placement and is changing schools?
4. Do children eligible for Section 504 but not for special education have any special protections in disciplinary proceedings?
5. Name three impacts on children of school instability (frequent changes of schools.)

Small Group Activity: Scavenger Hunt

In your groups, and by using the Manual, please find the answers to the following questions. Be sure to indicate specifically *where* you found the answers by using the section numbers in the Manual.

Group 1

1. List two criteria for eligibility for education and training vouchers (ETVs)

Chapter 7, Section 702.2 (D)

- Are currently in foster care and are at least 16 years old, a citizen or qualified citizen and do not have assets of more than \$10,000
- Were adopted from foster care after attaining age sixteen
- Are 17, 18, 19 or 20 years old, have obtained a GED or high school diploma and be entering into or enrolled in vocational or college level training
- Are a youth that is enrolled in a post secondary education or training program (college, university, technical certificate or other accredited program at a college, university) or vocational school on or before their 20th birthday. These individuals are eligible to receive vouchers until age 23, as long as they are showing progress towards a degree or certificate.
- Must be enrolled a minimum of 9 credit hours for freshman in the first semester with a gradual increase to 18 maximum credits per semester and minimum of 3 credit hours if enrolled for a summer session
- Must maintain at least a 2.0 GPA to remain eligible for the program

2. How many school days does a school have to process a special education referral and conduct an evaluation?

Chapter 4, Section 401.4(A)(ii)

- 60 calendar days from the date when written parental consent is given for the evaluation.

3. Can a school deny a child in an out-of-home placement the right to enroll if that child lacks an immunization record?

Chapter 3, Section 302.0

- Under the new state law, *An Act Concerning the Provision of Education Services to Children in Out-of-home Placements* (22-32-138, C.R.S.) enacted in 2008, lack

of immunization records cannot hold up a child's enrollment but when the child lacks these records the receiving school must notify the child's legal guardian that the records must be received within fourteen days. If they are not received within that timeframe then the school can suspend the student until the records are received. Refer to the agency letter, Appendix Z, implementing this new state law.

4. Which children are helped by the McKinney-Vento Act and in what ways are they helped?

Chapter 3, Sections 301.3 (B), 303.1.

- As explained in Chapter 3, Sec. 301.3 (B), children who are “awaiting foster care placement” may be considered homeless under this federal act, depending on the circumstances of the placement the child is in. If they do meet the definition, they have the right to continue at their original school while they are waiting for placement and have the right to finish out the school year even if a placement is found. If they go to a new school, they have the right to immediate enrollment even if they lack the records normally required for enrollment. They are also eligible for tutoring services paid for by the school district. Explain that the interpretation of this provision of the law varies by county and reflects differences in the types of placements available in the different counties. Each school district must have a McKinney-Vento Act Coordinator – urge caseworkers to find out who that person is for the school districts involved in the case so that an agreement can be worked out to help the child stay in their home school if that is in the best interests of the child.

5. Can caseworkers be educational surrogates for children with disabilities?

Chapter 4, Section 401.3(E)

- No. Caseworkers can never serve as an educational surrogate parent and may never sign or give consent as the parent.

Group 2

1. Name two exceptions under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) to the requirement that parental consent be obtained before school records are released.

Chapter 2, Section 202.2(A)

- No written consent is required to release records to:

- Other school officials including teachers with a legitimate educational interest in the child
- Appropriate persons in connection with an emergency when the information is needed to protect the health and safety of the child or other persons
- Officials of other schools when a student is transferring schools
- Appropriate persons when the release of the information is needed to comply with a judicial order or subpoena.

2. Who can refer a child for an evaluation for special education?

Chapter 4, Section 401.4(A)

- Under IDEA 2004 and Colorado Rules governing special education, an evaluation of a child for special education can be initiated by the child's parent, the school district, the state education agency or another state agency. A caseworker can make a referral because the county human/social services agency is considered an arm of the state. See explanation of how the referral process for special education is coordinated with the RtI system in Chapter 3, Section 303.5 (B) of the Manual.

3. What are the timeframes within which a school must transfer the records of a student who is in an out-of-home placement and is changing schools?

Chapter 3, Section 302.0

- Review the following provisions of the new state law, 22-32-138 C.R.S. as implemented by the Agency Letter in Appendix Z, that relate to transferring records.
 - **Notification to Schools:** The county human/social services agency must notify both the old and the new school about the transfer of the child in writing. Email is not sufficient to meet this requirement and many counties have forms that caseworkers can fill out and send to schools to provide this written notification.
 - **Timeline for Transfer of Records:** The written notification referenced above triggers the start of a five school day period within which the sending school must transfer the child's school records to the new school.
 - **Release of Records to County Human/Social Services Department:** The law allows the county human/social services department with legal custody of a child to request that the school or school district release the child's records to an employee of the department solely for the purpose of transferring the information to the new school.
 - **Unpaid Fines at Sending school:** Transfer of records cannot be delayed for any reason including unpaid fines or fees the student may have that are outstanding at the sending school or school district.

4. Do children eligible for Section 504 but not for special education have any special protections in disciplinary proceedings?

Chapter 5, Section 506.0

- With a few exceptions, the same protections afforded children eligible for IDEA/special education are also afforded to children who are not in special education but are eligible for Section 504.

5. Name three impacts on children of school instability (frequent changes of schools.)

Chapter 3, Section 301.1

- Emotional adjustments taking a toll
- Missed instructional time and loss of credits
- Lack of uniformity of curricula
- Less investment in the child
- Disruptions in the evaluation process under IDEA
- Too many assessments
- Lack of school records
- Inappropriate educational placement and lengthy transition plans

Module 3: Summary

Time	Content	Activities	Manual Chapter(s)
<p>Total: 50 minutes</p> <p><i>Introduction</i> 5 minutes</p> <p><i>Discussion of steps to take when children enter the child welfare system</i> 15 minutes</p> <p><i>Overview of confidentiality laws</i> 20 minutes</p> <p><i>Sharing strategies</i> 10 minutes</p>	<p>Module 3: <i>First Steps-Addressing Educational Issues When Children First Enter the Child Welfare System</i></p> <p>Designating a lead person to address educational needs</p> <p>Getting releases signed</p> <p>Gathering school records</p> <p>Determining educational status of child</p> <p>Contact information</p> <p>Confidentiality issues</p>	<p>Large Group discussion of steps to take when child enters the child welfare system</p> <p>Brief overview of key laws governing confidentiality</p> <p>Large group shares strategies for getting releases signed and resolving issues of confidentiality.</p>	Chapter 2

Module 3: First Steps—Addressing Educational Issues When Children Enter the Child Welfare System

Time

Approximately 50 minutes

Rationale

Given that the average length of stay in the child welfare system in Colorado is 20 months*, it is critical to move quickly in order to support children's educational needs by assessing the educational status of a child, establishing relationships with his or her school personnel, and gathering appropriate education-related records. In addition, including foster parents in the relationship-building process with representatives from all systems involved in the child's life is important. This will allow the foster parent to provide educational support to the child at home.

A major challenge of collaboration between systems involves issues of privacy and confidentiality. Caseworkers must understand that some pieces of information should be shared with school personnel and vice versa. By understanding issues of confidentiality, caseworkers will be able to give and obtain access to appropriate information helpful to the other adults in the child's life.

Learning Objectives

When this module is complete, participants should be able to:

- Understand the importance of addressing the educational issues of children as soon as they enter the child welfare

* Reference: Table 11-38 from the *2004 Green Book* by the Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives, March 2004. Available online at: <http://waysandmeans.house.gov/Documents.asp?section=813>

system.

- Identify the steps to take when a child enters the child welfare system to set up an effective framework for collaboration to address the educational needs of the child.
- Reiterate the importance of having a designated lead person for educational issues.
- Determine an efficient process for gathering signatures and records as needed.
- Describe why it is important to share information with educators and know what information should be shared.

Activities

- Group discussion of the checklist of steps caseworkers should take when a child first enters the system (Appendix C) with a particular emphasis on:
 - Designating a lead person
 - Getting releases signed
 - Gathering school records
 - Determining educational status of child
 - Listing contact information to give to school
- Brief overview of the key laws affecting confidentiality between child welfare and education.
- Large group sharing of any successful strategies they have used for getting releases signed or resolving issues of confidentiality.

Materials Needed

- ✓ Manuals

Advanced Preparation

- Read Chapter 2 of the Manual.
- Review Appendices C,D,E,F

Trainer's Instructions

- Introduce the module by presenting the rationale and learning objectives.
- Begin the discussion by asking participants to look at Appendix C in the Manual: *Steps to Address Educational Needs as Soon as a Child Enters the System* which can be found in their training packets.
- Using the list below as a guide, go through the steps with the group and ask participants why it's important to set a framework for good communication and what opportunities are missed if that isn't done. Be sure to emphasize the following topics, in particular:
 - Designating a lead person
 - Getting releases signed
 - Gathering school records
 - Determining the educational status of child
 - Listing contact information to give to school
- Ask the group whether the checklist is missing any important steps.
- Finally, discuss issues of confidentiality. Direct caseworkers to the Manual for more detail on these issues and give a very brief overview of the applicable laws including:
 - Family Educational Records Privacy Act (FERPA)
 - Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA)
 - Colorado Children's Code
 - Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act

(HIPAA)

- Emphasize that interpretations of the requirements of these laws vary from school district to school district and county to county. Explain the competing interests at play between the child's/family's right to privacy and the need to disclose enough information to permit the child welfare agency and the school district to meet the needs of that child. These questions do not have clear answers – it's important that caseworkers know who in the school district has responsibility for school records so they know who to call if issues of access come up. Urge them to ask their supervisors for clarification if they are unsure what information they can disclose to teachers, counselors and others within the schools or if they encounter problems with accessing school records.
- Begin wrapping up this module by asking for and addressing questions and comments.
- End this module by reminding participants to use the checklist and suggest that they make copies of the list and put it in the case file of all new cases.
- Introduce the next module by saying,
Now that you know what steps to take when a child first enters the system, in the next module, "School Stability, Easing Transitions, and Enrollment Issues," we will discuss what steps to take when a child has to change their out-of-home placement.

Module 4: Summary

Time	Content	Activities	Manual Chapter(s)
<p>Total: 80 minutes</p> <p><i>Introduction:</i> 10 minutes</p> <p><i>Small groups:</i> 30 minutes</p> <p><i>Report back/Discussion:</i> 40 minutes</p>	<p>Module 4: <i>School Stability, Easing Transitions, and Enrollment Issues</i></p> <p>The impact of changing schools and strategies to avoid this</p> <p>Which school district is responsible for special education services for kids in out of home placements</p> <p>Making proper notifications if a transfer/change in parental status occurs</p> <p>Strategies to use to ease transitions</p> <p>Enrollment issues and timely transfer of records</p>	<p>Small Group Activity: <i>Cassie's Case</i></p> <p>Report back and discussion</p>	<p>Chapters 3 and 4</p>

Module 4: School Stability, Easing Transitions, and Enrollment Issues

Time

Approximately 80 minutes

Rationale

When placing a child in out-of-home care, particularly in an emergency situation, your primary consideration is the safety of the child. Yet placement without regard to the educational implications for the child can mean that he or she is impacted not only by a new home, but also by a new school. Whenever possible, try to avoid changes in schools when placing children in foster care or changing an out-of-home placement.

If a change in schools is in the best interests of the child or is unavoidable for other reasons, your focus should shift to how you can make the transition as smooth as possible for the child, both academically and socially.

Learning Objectives

When this module is complete, participants should be able to:

- Understand the importance of school stability for children in the child welfare system.
- Determine strategies to keep a child in his or her home school if a placement change occurs.
- Discuss ways to ease the transition for a child who *must* change schools due to a new placement.

Activities

Conduct small group case scenario, “Cassie’s Case,” and in the report back/debrief have a large group discussion about:

- The importance of school stability and the difficulties for children when they have to change schools
- Strategies to keep the child in his or her home school
- Ways to ease transition if a change in schools cannot be avoided

Materials Needed

- ✓ Manuals
- ✓ Flipcharts for each group and one for the report back and markers
- ✓ Small group activity handout: “Cassie’s Case”

Advanced Preparation

- Read Chapter 3 and Section 401.6 of Chapter 4.
- Review Appendices E, F, G, J, K, L, X, Z and AA.
- Make sure each small group has a flipchart and markers.
- Set up a flipchart for the large group report-back.

Trainer’s Instructions

- Introduce the module by presenting the rationale and learning objectives.
- Begin the discussion by breaking the group into small groups of 3-5 participants (or whatever is manageable).
- Ask participants to look at “Cassie’s Case”—a handout in their training packets.
- Read the case aloud to participants as they follow along, and go over the questions listed on the sheet. Ask for and respond to any questions about the case.

- Ask small groups to select a member to write their group's responses to the case questions on their flipchart.
- Tell participants to use the Manual to answer the questions for the case study and to report back on the section of the Manual where they found the information.
- Tell them that they have approximately 30 minutes to work on this exercise.
- Once 30 minutes has passed, ask groups to report out. To save time, ask groups to volunteer to go first and once the first group reports back ask if the other groups came up with anything different that they would like to add to the discussion.
- Discuss the key strategies participants mentioned to avoid school changes and to ease transitions when changes must occur. Point out any particularly innovative strategies groups came up with. Use the Manual to point out any strategies or issues not discussed by the group. Be sure the following ideas are mentioned:
 - Ask the child his/her preference when possible.
 - The factors involved in making a determination if it is in the best interests of the child to stay in their original school or transfer to a new school. Direct the group to Appendix AA for a tool to guide this decision-making.
- If it is determined that the child should stay in the home school:
 - Find a foster home in the same neighborhood.
 - Allow the child to finish out the school year in the home school.
 - Find before/after school care to allow foster parents to be able to transport the child to his/her home

Refer throughout this module to the agency letter implementing the new state law 22-32-138 C.R.S. found in Appendix Z of the Manual.

school.

- Use Colorado School Choice law, McKinney-Vento Act, *Fostering Connections* and the new state law, 22-32-138 C.R.S. to try to keep children in their home schools. Refer to caseworkers' documentation requirements in *Fostering Connections* regarding the decision to keep child in the home school or change schools.
- If it is determined that the child should change schools:
 - Make the necessary notifications to the new school district. Refer to new provisions on notification in 22-32-138 C.R.S.
 - Have records transferred in a timely manner. See below. Review timeframes for this in 22-32-138 C.R.S. implemented by the Agency Letter in Appendix Z.
 - Review timeframes for enrollment under 22-32-138 C.R.S. and provisions prohibiting schools from denying enrollment for lack of immunization records. See Agency Letter in Appendix Z.
 - Arrange for the child to have a tour of his/her new school before his/her first day.
 - Allow the child to have time to say goodbye to friends in his/her old school if a transfer must occur.
- Since timely transfer of school records is an issue that will come up again and again in caseworker practice, you might want to pay special attention to this aspect of transitioning children and youth to a new school. This issue was touched on in Module 3 when issues of confidentiality were discussed when a child first enters the child welfare system but should be more thoroughly discussed in this module

because the issue comes up every time a child changes schools.

- Explain that this is important whether a child is transferring from one school to another or from a school to a facility or a facility to a school.
- Go over the new requirements for transfer of records included in 22-32-138 C.R.S. and in *Fostering Connections*, including required timeframes.
- Mention that 22-32-138 C.R.S. allows the county agency which has custody of a child to request that the school records be released to an agency employee (e.g. a caseworker) for the purpose of transferring the information to the new school. (See the Agency Letter, Appendix Z.)
- Explain that parental consent is not required to transfer records from one school to another.
- Emphasize the importance of timely transfer, especially for secondary school students who need schedules made up that minimize the loss of credits earned at the last school. Go over requirements for certifying coursework under 22-32-138 C.R.S. when students in out-of-home placements change schools.
- Underscore that whenever a child is changing schools, caseworkers need to know who to contact in the school districts involved to request a transfer of records.
- Caseworkers also need to be clear on who will make that request and who will enroll the child.

- Before wrapping up this module review the research findings about the negative impact on educational success of multiple changes in schools for children and youth in the child welfare system. A fact sheet from Casey Family Programs summarizing the research on foster care children includes the following data on the impact of changes in schools (Casey Family Programs, 2007):
 - A 2004-2005 three state study of youth aging out of care found that over one third of the young adults had had five or more school changes (Courtney et al., 2004).
 - A 1996 study of students in Chicago Public Schools found that students who had changed schools four or more times had lost approximately one year of educational growth by their sixth year (Kerbow, 1996).
 - A 1999 study found that California high school students who changed schools even once were less than half as likely to graduate as those who did not change schools, even when controlling for other variables that affect high school completion (Rumberger, et al., 1999).

- Begin to wrap up this module by asking for and responding to any questions, comments or concerns. Bring up the point that a high percentage of children in the child welfare system drop out of school. Ensuring school stability and timely enrollments play large roles in keeping kids in school until graduation. Underscore that point by referring to the series of federal and state laws that have been passed to promote school stability and timely enrollments for this

population. Remind participants to use the helpful strategies discussed in the Manual and in the group discussion.

- Introduce the next module, *Ensuring Daily Educational Success*, by saying:

Now that we have discussed those transitional issues that come up for children in the child welfare system, we will turn our attention in the next module to supporting education day-to-day. We'll examine some of the every-day issues raised by the youth in the DVD and what caseworkers, teachers and foster parents can do to address them.

References:

Casey Family Programs, (2007). *Fact Sheet, Educational Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster and Out-of-Home Care*. Seattle, WA.: Casey Family Programs URL: http://www.casey.org/NR/rdonlyres/A8991CAB-AFC1-4CF0-8121-7E4C31A2553F/1241/National_EdFactSheet_2008.pdf:

Courtney, M.E., Terao, S. & Bost, N. (2004). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Conditions of youth preparing to leave state care*. Chicago, IL.: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

Kerbow, D. (1996). *Patterns of urban student mobility and local school reform*. Technical Report No. 5, October. Washington, D.C. Center for Research on the Education of Children Placed at Risk.

Rumberger, R.W., Larson, K.A., Ream, R.K., & Palardy, G.J. (1999). The educational consequences of mobility for California students and schools. Policy Analysis for California Education, University of California at Berkeley.

U.S. House of Representatives, (2004), *2004 Green Book*, Table II-38 Committee on Ways and Means, Washington, D.C.: U.S. House of Representatives, 2004. URL: <http://waysandmeans.house.gov/Documents.asp?section=813>.

**Small Group Activity:
Cassie's Case**

On Thursday afternoon in Mrs. Callahan's classroom, students are working in pairs on their state projects. Cassie and her new best friend Lynette have chosen to do their report on Arizona. They recently became friends after Cassie moved to town three months ago.

Mrs. Jones, the school principal, walks into the classroom and speaks briefly with Mrs. Callahan— then asks Cassie to come with her. Cassie feels her face flush with embarrassment as her noisy classmates suddenly become quiet and watch her walk to the door. She finds out when she gets to the principal's office that her caseworker is there because there is a problem with her foster home and she will need to leave. She has to be placed in an emergency shelter right away because no foster homes have beds available. She is also told that this means she will have to change schools. The group home is in the school district right next to the one served by her current school. Cassie leaves with her caseworker.

Lynette continues to work on their project, expecting Cassie will be back soon. But the end of the day approaches and Lynette doesn't see Cassie. Friday comes and goes and still - no Cassie.

On Monday morning, after not seeing Cassie out on the playground and realizing that Cassie's desk is still full of her belongings, Lynette asks Mrs. Callahan if Cassie is in some kind of trouble. Why did Mrs. Jones pull her out of class? And why wasn't Cassie in school today? Mrs. Callahan tells Lynette that Cassie will be going to a new school from now on and tells her she can't say anything more about Cassie's situation.

Please discuss the following questions in small groups:

1. Given the circumstances, how do you think Cassie is feeling? What about Lynette and Cassie's other classmates? What can Mrs. Callahan say and what can she *not* say?
2. Remembering times when you changed schools or had a new student in your class, what did parents, teachers and others do to help with the transition or to ease any anxieties? How do you think that differs for children in the child welfare system?
3. What are some strategies you, as a caseworker, can use to avoid changes in schools? Were there any possible ways the caseworker in Cassie's case could have prevented a change in school?
4. If changes can't be avoided, what could you, as a caseworker, do to help ease the transition for a child in Cassie's situation—and maybe their young friends?

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For the Report-Back:

In the report-back/discussion make sure the following points are brought up by the groups and if they are not, raise them yourself:

1. Given the circumstances, how do you think Cassie is feeling? What about Lynette and Cassie's other classmates? What can Mrs. Callahan say and what can she *not* say?

- Discuss the impact on Cassie's socio-emotional well being of changing schools and how that would feel if it happened a number of times during the child's school career.
- The bewilderment of the other kids and the messages it sends to them about kids in foster care – why get to know them if they will just move on?
- Mrs. Callahan's actions and the dilemma she faces about not only being unsure what she can reveal to Cassie's classmates (Mrs. Callahan may not even know what happened because of issues of confidentiality about what the caseworker

feels she can tell school staff) but also the possibility that Cassie might return to the school – so should this be represented to the other kids as a final goodbye?

2. Remembering times when you changed schools or had a new student in your class, what did parents, teachers and others do to help with the transition or to ease any anxieties? How do you think that differs for children in the child welfare system?

- Changing schools is traumatic for all kids but the trauma is eased by the steps parents take to introduce the child to children in the neighborhood before school starts, meet with the teacher to inform them about the child, take the child on a tour of the school and meet teachers before school starts. Contrast that with what Cassie is likely to experience when she goes to her new school.

3. What are some strategies you, as a caseworker, can use to avoid changes in schools? Were there any possible ways the caseworker in Cassie’s case could have prevented a change in school?

- Cassie is being placed in an emergency shelter while she waits for a new foster home. Under the McKinney-Vento Act, children in that situation may fit the definition of “homeless.” You might explain, however, that interpretations of that definition vary by county and that caseworkers should discuss the individual situation of the child with the McKinney Vento coordinator in the school district involved.
- Even if Cassie eventually is placed in a foster home during that school year, if she meets the definition of “homeless” under McKinney-Vento, the Act requires school districts to allow her to finish out the school year in her old school, with transportation provided.
- Emphasize the new requirements in 22-32-138 C.R.S. regarding the responsibilities of caseworkers to consider school stability when making determinations about out-of-home placement. Refer to the agency letter implementing this new state law in Appendix Z of the Manual.
- Also refer to *Fostering Connections* which allows states to use Title IV E funding to cover the “reasonable” cost of travel to permit a child to stay in their home school. (See Chapter 3, Section 301.1)

4. If changes can’t be avoided, what could you, as a caseworker, do to help ease the transition for a child in Cassie’s situation—and maybe their young friends?

- Situations in which it may not be in the best interests of a child to stay in the same school: e.g. safety issues, wanting to make a fresh start, a desire to get away from a gang. Refer them to the checklist for making decisions regarding the best interests of the child in Appendix AA and the documentation requirements regarding this decision-making under *Fostering Connections*.

- Use the list of steps to take to smooth transitions (Appendix J) to make sure the groups cover all of the steps suggested. Pay special attention to the requirements in that list related to 22-32-138 C.R.S. addressing transfer of records, notification, enrollment and certification of coursework for older students. Emphasize especially the importance of transferring school records, including the child's IEP if they are in special education, in a timely manner and avoiding delays in enrolling the child in their new school. Mention that McKinney-Vento and *Fostering Connections* contain similar provisions.
- Explain that under one of the exceptions to FERPA, parental consent is *not* required for one school to transfer records to another school!

Module 5: Summary

Time	Content	Activities	Manual Chapter(s)
<p>Total: 50 minutes</p> <p><i>Introduction:</i> 10 min.</p> <p><i>Large group sharing strategies:</i> 40 minutes</p>	<p>Module 5: <i>Insuring Daily Educational Success</i></p> <p>Socio-emotional impact of being in child welfare system on children’s well being.</p> <p>Avoiding classroom pull-outs</p> <p>Attendance at school events</p> <p>Extracurricular activities</p> <p>Sensitivity in classroom</p> <p>Cultural issues</p> <p>Including foster care in diversity work done in schools</p> <p>Supporting education in the foster home</p>	<p>Introduction</p> <p>Large group discussion, sharing of strategies to support education.</p>	<p>Chapter 3</p>

Module 5: Ensuring Daily Educational Success

Time

Approximately 50 minutes

Rationale

Despite the best intentions of school personnel, foster care carries with it a stigma. An unintentional lack of sensitivity about the child's circumstances can lead to uncomfortable and sometimes painful situations in the educational setting. Caseworkers can help ease some of these issues by bringing awareness to the children, foster parents and school professionals and by carrying out their own roles and responsibilities in ways that avoid a child being stigmatized.

Simple strategies can also be used by caseworkers, foster parents and classroom teachers to motivate and encourage children and youth to overcome obstacles and do well in school.

Learning Objectives

When this module is complete, participants should be able to:

- Be aware of the social awkwardness children in the child welfare system may face in the classroom due to their family status.
- Understand how caseworkers can help children avoid lost instruction time and classroom "pull-outs" due to case-related meetings.
- Learn ways caseworkers can help foster parents support education at home.
- Learn simple strategies all of the adults in a child's life can use to make a difference in the child's educational success.

Activities

- Conduct small group activity: “Drafting a Letter to Foster Parents, Classroom Teachers and Caseworkers” and in the report-back discuss the topics listed below:
 - Socio-emotional issues
 - Avoiding classroom pull-outs
 - Sensitivity in classroom assignments, school events, etc.
 - Including foster care in diversity work done in schools.
 - Supporting education in the foster home.

Materials Needed

- ✓ Manuals
- ✓ Flipcharts for the debrief and markers
- ✓ Small group activity using the handout, “Drafting a Letter to Foster Parents, Caseworkers and Classroom Teachers”

Advanced Preparation

- Read chapter 3 of the Manual
- Set up flip charts for the small groups to use.
- Set up a flipchart for the large group report-back

Trainer’s Instructions

- Introduce the module by presenting the rationale and learning objectives.
- Introduce the small group activity by saying the following:
As caseworkers, many of you are probably intimately aware of the social stigma and discomfort children in the child welfare system can face. There are many situations and activities in the classroom that may seem completely harmless, but in fact, can bring up some embarrassing issues for children in the child welfare system. Adults who

aren't as familiar with these issues may need to be made aware of them. You also may need to suggest to school staff that they take steps to educate other children, preferably as a part of a general discussion on diversity, about the sensitivities of kids in the child welfare system. In addition, sometimes there is a lack of awareness among foster parents of their role in supporting the education of the children in their care. As a caseworker, you will be in communication with many of the adults in a child's life. Take opportunities to educate them!

- Initiate a large group discussion and sharing of strategies caseworkers have used to support the educational and socio-emotional needs of students in out-of-home care. Tell participants they should also talk about any work they've done with foster parents to help them support education. As participants offer strategies and suggestions, list them on a flip chart.
- Be sure to explain that they aren't supposed to list all of the steps to take to support education (that is the subject of the entire Manual!) but only those simpler strategies that can be accomplished relatively easily by individuals.
- Remind them that the DVD provides many examples of these strategies.
- Using this discussion as a springboard, talk about the importance of each adult in a child's life playing a role in supporting that child's education. Make sure that the following are covered either in the report back or by you as the instructor and illustrate these with examples from the DVD:
 - The need to educate other students as well as school staff about the circumstances and sensitivities of

children and youth in the child welfare system, preferably as a part of the school's broader efforts to talk about diversity.

- The need to pay attention to cultural sensitivities. This is particularly important when the location of the child's foster home will mean that the child will be living in a neighborhood and attending a school in which the predominant racial and/or ethnic group is different from their own. This can raise challenges above and beyond those experienced by any child in foster care. (See Chapter 3, Section 303.3 of the Manual for a fuller discussion of these issues.)
- Events parents would normally attend (e.g. athletic games, plays, science fairs/class exhibits, parent-teacher conferences)
- Class assignments involving family issues (e.g. family trees, genetics).
- Getting permission slips signed to attend school field trips and other events
- Importance of encouraging participation in extracurricular activities and the new state law, 22-32-138 C.R.S., that requires schools to waive fees for children in out-of-home placements and prohibits excluding children from opportunities to participate because of the imposition of fees. (See Chapter 3, Section 303.2.)
- Pull-outs caused by appointments with case workers, therapists, etc. and ways to avoid those. Be sure to mention that 22-32-138 C.R.S. requires county human/social services agencies to notify

Caseworkers can easily be overwhelmed by the scope of the topics in this training. This is where you should emphasize again how the smallest gestures/strategies by caseworkers, classroom teachers, other school staff and foster parents can have a major impact on children's resiliency, using the stories in the DVD as examples.

schools in writing when children will be pulled out so that they will avoid unexcused absences.

- Need for support in the foster home: attending school events/parent teacher conferences, making homework a priority, celebrating achievements, etc.
- Begin to wrap up this module by asking for and responding to any questions, comments or concerns.
- Introduce the next module, *Special Education*, by saying,
Module 5 focused on the ongoing support needed by all children in the child welfare system in order to be successful in school. Module 6 will focus on what to do when a concern arises about a child's performance in school and what continuum of services are available to address the child's needs, including special education.

Module 6: Summary

Time	Content	Activities	Pages in Manual
<p>Total: 60 min.</p> <p><i>Discussion of RtI and special education:</i> 45 min.</p> <p><i>Wrap-up</i> 15 min.</p>	<p>Module 6: <i>Special Education</i></p> <p>Role of caseworker in special education</p> <p>Basic elements of special education/RtI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RtI process • FAPE • Special education referral process • Eligibility for special education/ Section 504 • Least restrictive environment • Educational surrogates • Disciplinary process • Due Process rights 	<p>Overview of elements of special education /RtI process</p> <p>Wrap-up: Role of caseworker</p>	<p>Chapters 3, 4 and 5</p>

Module 6: Special Education

Time

Approximately 60 minutes

Rationale

Because many children in the child welfare system have special needs and have fallen behind their peers academically, it is important for caseworkers to have a basic understanding of the laws, regulations and timelines that govern the special education system.

Sometimes a child's difficulties are serious enough to warrant immediate referral to special education. For others, some creative problem-solving with teachers to come up with simple classroom modifications can address the problem. In order to avoid "labeling" a child unnecessarily, it is important for caseworkers to be able to ask basic questions of education specialists to determine if minor adjustments can be made for a child or whether a referral for special education is warranted. The RtI process now used in Colorado schools provides for a continuum of interventions to help students succeed in school.

Children found eligible for special education need ongoing advocacy to make sure they receive appropriate supports, to monitor progress and initiate action if the interventions are not having the intended impact.

Learning Objectives

When this module is complete, participants should be able to:

- Understand the key principles of special education law.

- Understand the rules regarding educational surrogates.
- Learn the steps to take if it is suspected that a child has academic or behavioral problems.
- Understand RtI, the IEP process and the caseworker's role in it.

Activities

Large group discussion about the basic principles of RtI and special education and to elicit suggestions from the group for what caseworkers should do when they have a concern about a student's performance in school and what their role should be in an IEP meeting.

Materials Needed

- ✓ Manuals
- ✓ Flipchart and markers

Advanced Preparation

- Read Section 303.5 of Chapter 3, all of Chapter 4 and Sections 506.0 to 506.12 of Chapter 5 of the Manual Review Appendices H, I, M, N, O, P, Q, R and S.
- Set up a flipchart for the large group debrief.

Trainer's Instructions

- Introduce the module by presenting the rationale and learning objectives.
- Provide an overview of the following elements of special education stressing throughout the role of caseworkers in addressing the needs of children in special education:
 - Addressing concerns before referring to special education
 - RtI (Direct them to visual on RtI in Appendix P.)

- FAPE
 - Changes in who may refer a child for an evaluation under IDEA 2004 and how these changes interface with the RtI process.
 - Two-pronged test for eligibility for special education and eligibility for Section 504
 - Least restrictive environment
 - Educational surrogates, particularly emphasizing that caseworkers may not sign/consent as the parent under any circumstances!
 - Procedural safeguards under IDEA
 - Special protections for students in special education in disciplinary actions.
- Mention that new state legislation passed in 2009, 26-6-106 C.R.S. requires coordination between county departments of human/social services and local school districts to make IEP training available to foster parents upon request.
 - Mention the fact that many disabilities have a hereditary component. Some of the children on their caseload who have learning problems may have parents who struggled with the same problems in school themselves and may not have had good experiences when they were in special education. This may affect their willingness to have their child evaluated and may influence how they feel about the IEP process. If they have language processing issues, caseworkers may need to take that into account when talking to them about their child.
 - Special education can be an overwhelming topic. In the overview, try to reassure participants that the detail they will need to address special education issues is in the Manual, including the changes made in IDEA when it was

reauthorized in 2004.

- Sum up by asking the group the following questions to reinforce what was learned:
 - If you have a concern about a child's performance in school, who should you call?
 - What steps can you take short of referring a child to special education?
 - How does the RtI process work?
 - Who can refer a child to special education?
 - What is your role in an IEP meeting?
 - For children in special education, what do you do if you have a concern that an IEP is not being implemented correctly or you think that additional services may be needed?
 - In the IEP process, can a caseworker sign or give consent as the parent?
- Introduce the next module, *Special Populations*.

Module 7: Summary

Time	Content	Activities	Chapter(s) in Manual
<p>Total: 70 min.</p> <p><i>Introduction:</i> 10 min.</p> <p><i>Discussion of Jaclyn's Case:</i> 30 min.</p> <p><i>Discussion of Kim's Case:</i> 30 min.</p>	<p>Module 7: <i>Special Populations</i></p> <p>Kids 0 to 5: Importance of good prenatal care</p> <p>Importance of early intervention/early learning environments</p> <p>Referrals for early intervention services</p> <p>Older Kids:</p> <p>Credits/academic challenges</p> <p>Mentoring</p> <p>Importance of/obstacles to participation in extracurricular activities</p> <p>Who to involve in planning Chafee services</p> <p>Planning for after graduation</p> <p>Resources available to youth transitioning out of child welfare system</p>	<p>Large Group Activity: <i>Jaclyn's Case</i></p> <p>Optional showing of second half of <i>Speaking Out</i> before Kim's Case</p> <p>Large Group Activity: <i>Kim's Case</i></p> <p>Summary</p>	<p>Chapters 6 and 7</p>

Module 7: Special Populations

Time

Approximately 70 minutes

Rationale

Often the educational needs of the youngest and oldest children in the child welfare system fall through the cracks. It is important for caseworkers to grasp the concept that education does not begin at age 5, but at birth and that the prenatal period in a child's development also has a profound impact on a child's later learning. It's important that pregnant women receive adequate prenatal care, good nutrition and smoking cessation services. Caseworkers also need to be aware of the importance of early care and education programs and early interventions for very young children in the child welfare system.

The oldest children in the system—particularly those beginning to transition out—have particular needs in the high school setting and require guidance to help them with their options once they have graduated from high school and are independent. Caseworkers need to be aware of the resources available to youth to assist them in the decision-making process.

Learning Objectives

When this module is complete, participants should be able to:

- Understand that education should not begin in kindergarten, but at birth for children in the child welfare system.
- Understand what to do if there is a concern about a child's development.

- Discuss the options and resources available to older children transitioning out of the child welfare system

Activities

- Conduct large group activity for participants to discuss the key issues of very young children and those transitioning out of the child welfare system.
- Summarize the special considerations for each of these populations.

Materials Needed

- ✓ Manuals
- ✓ Flipcharts for each group and one for the report back and markers
- ✓ Large group activity sheets: “Jaclyn’s Case” and “Kim’s Case”

Advanced Preparation

- Read Chapters 6 and 7 of the Manual.
- Set up a flipchart

Trainer’s Instructions

- Introduce the module by presenting the rationale and learning objectives.
- Explain that because it’s important for caseworkers to be familiar with the special considerations of both the youngest and the oldest children/youth in the child welfare system, the two case studies, “Jaclyn’s Case” and “Kim’s Case” will be discussed by the entire group.
- Hand out “Jaclyn’s Case” and “Kim’s Case” for discussion by the group and lead the discussion beginning with

“Jaclyn’s Case.” Keep track of the answers participants give on a flip chart.

- For each case study, ask participants to suggest strategies they could use to address the child’s needs, in addition to what support they need from supervisors, teachers, and school staff. Request that they cite the sections of the Manual or Appendices where they found information on these topics.
- Sum up what the groups shared and discuss the following topics if they were not brought up by the groups:

Kids 0 to 5:

- Importance of prenatal care, good nutrition and smoking cessation.
- Educational continuum (education doesn’t start at age five)
- Importance of early learning environments for all children in the child welfare system whether or not they show signs of developmental problems
- Addressing developmental needs of child--not just the needs of parents
- Importance of requirements in the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and IDEA 2004 for counties to develop policies and procedures for referring children 0 to 3 who are involved in substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect to Part C for screening. Also mention the

Option: After discussing “Jaclyn’s Case” you might want to show the second half of “Speaking Out” when the youth talk about their experiences with transition. Then have participants discuss “Kim’s Case.”

new Colorado law, 26-5-108 C.R.S., that expanded that requirement to include children 0 to 5. Refer them to Appendix BB for the Agency Letter implementing this state law.

- Importance of early care and education settings as well as early intervention/preschool special education in promoting school readiness
- What foster parents and kinship caregivers can do at home to enhance children's development.

Older Kids:

- Credits/academic challenges
 - Chafee services
 - Provisions in IDEA 2004, *Fostering Connections* and 22-32-138 C.R.S. related to certification of coursework when youth change schools, transition planning and costs related to extracurricular activities
 - Mentoring, importance of/obstacles to participation in extracurricular activities
 - Planning for after graduation
- Begin to wrap up this module by asking for and responding to any questions, comments or concerns.
 - Introduce the next module, *Wrap-up*.

**Small Group Activity:
Jaclyn's Case**

(Children 0 to 5)

Jaclyn is a three year old girl who has been placed in foster care after being removed from her home for child abuse and neglect. She has recently had a check up at an outpatient clinic and according to the health records, no real concerns were discovered.

Jaclyn has been in her foster home for a little over two months. You have just visited to see how Jaclyn has adjusted. The foster mother tells you that Jaclyn is quite withdrawn and spends most of her time holding a teddy bear she brought with her and sucking her thumb. The foster mother has also noticed that Jaclyn has trouble understanding anything beyond very simple one step directions and that she seems reluctant to express what she needs to her foster mother. The foster mother tells you that when she took Jaclyn to the clinic for a checkup, the doctor told her that it was likely that Jaclyn was just by nature a shy child and that she will probably outgrow her language problems and her withdrawal in the foster mother's good care. He advised her to just wait and see.

The foster mother has two other young children in her care and because Jaclyn is so quiet, she finds her very easy to care for compared to the other, more boisterous children in the home. You try to talk to Jaclyn but find it very difficult to draw her out. You also know that in Jaclyn's biological home, Jaclyn had little opportunity to leave the house and be with other children.

1. What should you make of the health report from the doctor?
2. What steps would you take to assess Jaclyn's needs?
3. What supports could you consider for Jaclyn? How would you go about accessing those supports? Who would you call? What potential barriers would you encounter and how could those be overcome?
4. What could you do to help the foster parent meet Jaclyn's needs?

**Small Group Activity:
Jaclyn's Case**

(Children 0 to 5)

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The foster mother has two other young children in her care and because Jaclyn is so quiet, she finds her very easy to care for compared to the other more boisterous children in the home. You try to talk to Jaclyn but find it very difficult to draw her out. You also know that in Jaclyn's biological home, Jaclyn had little opportunity to leave the house and be with other children.

For the Report-Back:

1. What should you make of the health report from the doctor?
 - Children in the child welfare system often lack continuity of health care. Because of changes in placement, they often see a different medical provider and sometimes their health records aren't available to the new doctor. In this fact situation, the doctor has never seen the child before. Therefore, he or she may be more conservative in making recommendations.
 - Doctors sometimes attribute any developmental problems entirely to the adjustment the child is making to being removed from her home which may or may not be the case. Given the importance of early intervention, caseworkers and foster parents may need to be cautious about following a "wait and see" recommendation and pursue a referral if they are really concerned about the child.

2. What steps would you take to assess Jaclyn's needs?

- Make sure they talk about how they assess that there is enough of a concern to warrant a referral using the materials on developmental milestones in the Appendices to do an initial assessment of where Jaclyn is developmentally.
3. What supports could you consider for Jaclyn? How would you go about accessing those supports? Who would you call? What potential barriers would you encounter and how could those be overcome?
- Jaclyn may need a referral to obtain a developmental assessment. Look in Appendix Y for a listing of those offices.
 - Mention the requirements under CAPTA and IDEA 2004 for counties to develop policies and procedures for referring to Part C, Early Interventions, Colorado, children ages 0 to 3 and how that is being implemented at the local level. Tell them that a new state law has now expanded that requirement to children ages 0 to 5. According to Agency Letter CW-09-05-1 (included as Appendix BB), counties can refer all children ages 0 through 2 directly to the local Community Centered Board which can be contacted through Early Intervention Colorado. Children 3 to 5 can be referred directly to Child Find through their local school district or a Medicaid provider for a screening under the Early and Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment Program. Counties can also choose to train staff in using a standard developmental screening tool such as the Ages and Stages Questionnaire to meet the screening requirement. All children must be referred within 60 days of the date on which the charge of abuse or neglect was substantiated. Tell caseworkers to check with their supervisor about what process is used in their county. Remind them also that children need *ongoing* monitoring of their development even if they receive that initial assessment because some developmental problems don't become evident until later.
 - The caseworker can provide the foster parent with information about how to address the child's needs such as reading to her and talking to her as often as possible. Direct them to Appendix Y for a list of resources for more information.
 - Jaclyn had very little opportunity for socialization in her biological home. Given how withdrawn she is and in light of her language delays the caseworker may want to try to get her into a preschool or Head Start Program.
 - Discuss potential funding/transportation barriers to enrollment. Be sure to discuss the possibility of waiting lists at a preschool or Head Start Program and what to do in that case. Head Start programs in Colorado place children in foster care at the top of their waiting lists – the caseworker or foster parent just needs to ask!

**Small Group Activity:
Kim's Case**

(Transitioning Out)

Kim is a sixteen year girl who has been in the foster care system for five years and has recently mentioned that some of her friends are planning for life after high school. She is in her Sophomore year, is well-liked by her peers and teachers and was a valued member of her soccer team. However, due to multiple appointments causing her to miss practices and games, and her low grade point average, she has lost her membership on the team. In your discussion with her, Kim scoffed at the fact that she was removed from the team by stating that it really didn't matter if she was on the team or not because nobody in the stands was ever there to see her play.

Although her grade point average is not high, her teachers consistently praise Kim's participation in class and her creative thinking. She is clearly an intelligent young woman, but her grades don't necessarily reflect that; Kim is underperforming. No one in Kim's family has attended college. Further, Kim is concerned that she will not be able to afford college or gain acceptance into a good post-secondary program because of her low G.P.A and lack of funds.

Kim is not completely sure what she should do after high school and needs some advice and guidance. Using the Manual and within your group, please answer the following questions:

1. What might be behind Kim's underperforming and what suggestions could you give Kim about her post-secondary future?
2. Come up with a brief plan to help Kim with her remaining high school life and her post-secondary preparations. Be sure to include the key people you would need to involve to help Kim.

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Kim is not completely sure what she should do after high school and needs some advice and guidance. Using the Manual and within your group, please answer the following questions:

For the Report-Back:

1. What might be behind Kim's underperforming and what suggestions could you give Kim about her post-secondary future?

- Kim may be eligible for some tutoring under the No Child Left Behind Act or the Chafee Act. You might also ask her teachers if they can provide her with some extra help or some classroom modifications that might help Kim bring her GPA up. High school teachers have many students but if they know there is someone looking out for that child, they are more likely to make her needs a priority.
- There may be some mental health issues that are getting in the way of Kim performing to her potential. Or there may be a learning problem; Kim may have been able to use her intelligence to compensate for this but may now be having trouble as the work becomes more difficult. Ask what help can be given her through the school system's RtI process before referring her for an evaluation for special education.
- It's also possible that because Kim is so bright, she is bored by the classes she is in. Because of stereotyping about foster children and a tendency toward low

expectations, no one may have considered her for honors or AP classes and the additional challenges of those classes may be just what she needs to become more motivated.

- Perhaps opportunities to job shadow would provide Kim with more of a sense of connection between her education and her future in the workplace and this might in turn motivate her more.
- Kim needs to be encouraged to pursue post secondary education and informed that there are special resources to help pay for that through the Chafee Act. Explain too that while it's important for her to try to improve her GPA, even if she is not able to boost her grades, the requirements for admission to community colleges are less rigorous.
- Kim may need a mentor from a mentoring program to provide her with some one-on-one encouragement. Direct them to sources for mentoring in the Resource list in Appendix Y.
- Perhaps a volunteer opportunity might help boost Kim's self esteem and generate interest in a particular field.
- Organize visits to campuses of colleges/post secondary schools.

2. Come up with a brief plan to help Kim with her remaining high school life and her post-secondary preparations. Be sure to include the key people you would need to involve to help Kim.

- Use the suggestions above as guidance.
- People/agencies to involve include:
 - ✓ High school guidance counselor
 - ✓ Chafee worker
 - ✓ Foster parent
 - ✓ Social worker
 - ✓ Classroom teachers
 - ✓ Orphan Foundation of America
 - ✓ Mentoring program
 - ✓ Mental Health agency
 - ✓ Child welfare liaison (School districts must designate someone to fill this role under 22-32-138 C.R.S.)

Module 8: Summary

Time	Content	Activities	Chapter(s) in Manual
Total: 20 min. <i>Wrap-up discussion</i> 20 min.	Module 8: <i>Wrap-up</i> Review of themes of the training Plans for applying what's learned to caseworker practice	Wrap-up discussion	NA

Module 8: Wrap-up

Time

Approximately 20 minutes

Rationale

Participants need time to conclude any unfinished business and reflect on what they have learned over the course of the training.

Learning Objectives

When this module is complete, participants should be able to:

- Discuss the key themes learned throughout the training
- Identify some next steps and ways to apply what was discussed in the training

Activities

- Large group discussion of key themes
- Large group discussion of how participants plan to apply what they learned in the training

Materials Needed

- ✓ Flipchart and markers

Advanced Preparation

- Set up a flipchart for the large group discussion.

Trainer's Instructions

- Begin by thanking participants for their participation and hard work throughout the training.
- Ask the group what key points they learned during the training, and record those points on the flipchart for all to see.
- Ask for volunteers to discuss any points they feel will be

especially helpful to their work or any materials they received at the training that they are planning to use right away.

- Discuss any issues on the “Parking Lot” list that have not yet been addressed or give participants some resources to get their questions answered.
- End by acknowledging how challenging it is to take on this educational advocacy role when, as caseworkers, they have much on their plates. Yet be sure to cite examples of how addressing educational concerns can stabilize placements – meaning less intensive intervention and less work in the end. Emphasize that in this training we have tried to incorporate strategies into what they already do in regular casework practice. Sometimes the simplest acts can make a huge difference in a child’s life, as we learned in the “Speaking Out” DVD. Educational success is pivotal to the well-being of children now—and into adulthood—and caseworkers *can* make a difference!