



NRC-FAHE: National Research Collaborative for Foster Alumni and Higher Education

Feb 2020

WELCOME!

The National Research Collaborative for Foster Alumni and Higher Education (NRC-FAHE) is a network of researchers and practitioners whose aim is to improve practice and influence policy related to foster care youth/alumni and higher education by creating and advancing a clear research agenda and facilitating communication and collaboration among interdisciplinary scholars and practitioners to promote postsecondary access and retention of youth in care and foster care alumni. The NRC-FAHE promotes innovative ways to use research and best practices to inform and influence policy making and values practice-informed research and the voice of youth in care and foster care alumni in improving access and outcomes in higher education.

Our Leadership:

Angelique Day, PhD
School of Social Work
University of Washington

Lisa Schelbe, PhD
College of Social Work
Florida State University

Amy M. Salazar, LMSW, Ph.D.
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Washington State University
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Thank you to those who contributed to the creation of this newsletter:

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Welcome and Introduction

I am proud to share the 5th issue of the National Research Collaborative for Foster Alumni and Higher Education newsletter with you. We had great participation at our meeting at the Society for Social Work Research conference Washington DC in January of 2020. I was able to share some policy updates with attendees, including the inclusion of the foster care and higher education bills in the House version of the Higher Education Re-authorization Act of 2019, entitled, "College Affordability Act". If you missed this presentation, no worries, I will be providing an a more in depth webinar to explain these legislative updates and how can get involved in August of 2020.

Our speakers program is organized by Dr. Amy Salazar; information about past and future webinars can be found on our website at ([put link to website here](#)). We would like to thank Dr. xxx for the presentation she gave in January, xx, 2020 and are looking forward to the presentation by Dr. xxx on Feb. x, 2020. If you miss a webinar, don't fret. All presentations are recorded and available on our website. If you are interested in being a featured speaker for a future webinar, please contact Amy at amysal3@myuw.net

In this issue we highlight the First Star Academy program at Loyola University and the recent publication of Sebrene Jackson and colleagues that was published in late 2019 in the journal entitled, "Best Practices in Mental Health".

Also featured in this newsletter are the latest policy developments occurring at the state and federal levels that impact our work. As always, we encourage all of you to be active participants in sharing your research and expertise with your elected officials and to do our part in ensuring that legislation that impacts college enrolled foster alumni is informed by the best practice research we have all worked so hard to produce.

In solidarity,
Angelique Day

ANGELIQUE DAY, Ph.D.



Angelique Day received her Ph.D. in interdisciplinary health science in 2011 from Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. She earned an MSW from Michigan State University in 2005 and a BS summa cum laude in sociology/psychology from Central Michigan University.

Much of her research focuses on foster care youth, including examining the differences in college retention rates between foster care youth and other low-income first-generation college students, and examining "youth voice" and its impact on child welfare, education and health policy reform.

From 2011-2016, she was an assistant professor of social work at Wayne State University, where she taught both undergraduate and graduate classes. She's been an evaluator, principal investigator or project coordinator on major studies funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and McGregor Fund, among others.

Day has received many awards and honors, including a year-long congressional fellowship awarded during the 2016-2017 academic year by the Society for Research on Child Development and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. She was assigned to the office of Congressman Danny K. Davis where she helped develop the congressman's child welfare and higher education legislative portfolios.

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Program Highlight – Loyola University

As a special for this issue, we highlight the First Star Academy program at Loyola University.

BRIDGET COUTURE, PHD.

Can you give us some background on your program and how it got started?

Bridget Couture: First Star Academy was founded in 1999 as a national organization dedicated to improving the lives of foster youth by partnering with child welfare agencies, universities, and schools to ensure foster youth have the academic, life skills, and adult support needed to transition to higher education and adulthood successfully. It currently runs out of 18 universities and has been running at Loyola for six years. We were initially approached by someone in the law profession that represents foster youth and asked if there was a program like First Star Academy in the state of Chicago. We were then asked if Loyola would be interested in starting one, and with their financial support, opened the academy.

How about some background on funding for your program?

Our funding is based on a contract with the Department of Children & Family Services in Chicago. We also have three private donors, who are associated with First Star's national board.

How many youth would you say your program serves?

We're about the same all over the country; each cohort has no more than 30 youth, and these youth stay in the same group for four years.

What is your role within the program?

As the director, I oversee all aspects of the program. Our program comprises of two main components. As part of First Star, we offer students a monthly academy on the 2nd Saturday of each month, where they are to visit Loyola. This is so that they can be acclimated to university settings and be able to visualize themselves there in the future. We also host a summer residential program, where participants live on campus for up to one month during their senior year. This program consists of academic, social and emotional coursework, as well as field trips, which allow students to have a great experience of Chicago during the summer. The academic and social/emotional learning is facilitated during both the summer residential program, as well as the monthly Saturday academy. We usually start with their own experiences, and then weave in discussions about race, class, gender, and other identities. This lets them share their own thoughts and opinions, and then brainstorm best practices to overcome this. In addition to these two aspects, I also oversee case management. I am in weekly contact with caregivers and caseworkers, guardian ad litem, different counselors, and many other people. I try to help with IEPs, go to meetings, and help with support in any way I can.

Of the aforementioned components, which do you feel are the most successful and which would you focus more resources on if you could?

I'll answer this from the kid's perspective. A lot of the times, they'll say that their cohort members feel like a family for them. They feel connected to the other kids, as they don't have to explain themselves or where they're coming from. First Star provides a community and support from not just their peers, but also the staff and adults. It's important for them to see a healthy parent/adult relationship.

If we had more resources and time, I'd love to increase the number of adults

that are working with the youth. Each kid deserves a parent, and having a mentor assigned to each one would be great.

Do you have one or two specific challenges that you feel your program faces (e.g. recruitment and confidentiality limits on identifying potential participants, working with other departments on campus or in the community, helping students with adjustment to campus)?

There's a lot of judgement of kids in our program. Not just in a university setting, but in general. When you take a group of kids, specifically, Black boys anywhere, it can be difficult for them, with racism, classism, etc. Learning how to advocate for them has been difficult. We have a Black police officer, who is meeting with the boys separately in our next academy session to talk about police brutality, how to work with police, how to trust them, and how to advocate for yourself.

Another challenge is trying to get everyone's needs met. It's difficult to meet all of the kids' needs in a group setting. Each kid could use some 1 on 1 time, but they don't have that much time. Being present with each kid can be difficult.

Are there any specific things (new programs, better outreach, etc.) you would like to see your program achieve in the future?

We would love to offer more opportunities during the month for kids to get together to be on campus; once a month is a great start but it's not enough. They have asked for more time. I think ideally, if we had the budget and resources, it'd be every other week.

Any other information you would like readers of this newsletter to know about yourself or the program?

Kids are amazing, and they are resilient and they are full of life and energy and determination and I think often times we stereotype kids in care and foster kids

and that these kids certainly are bigger than their stereotypes that they are subscribed to. I just love when people meet them, because you get such a - inspiring and loveable and normal teenager.

Policy Updates

New updates from Congress are forthcoming as many of the bills from last year are waiting to be reintroduced. Here is the list of bills introduced in the 115th Congress that are waiting to be reintroduced in the 116th. Please reach out to the original bill sponsors of these bills and encourage them to re-introduce them!

If you're not sure who your elected officials are, visit <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials/>

FEDERAL BILL HIGHLIGHTS

H.R. 5572 (Rep. Trone, David J. [D-MD-6] / S. 3179 (Sen. Gillibrand, Kirsten) - Family Support Services for Addiction Act of 2020

This bill was introduced in the House and Senate on January 9th, 2020. It currently sits in the House Committee on Energy and Commerce for review, and the Senate referred it to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

This bill would establish a grant program for family community organizations that provide support for individuals struggling with substance use disorder and their families. These funds would be used to develop, expand, and enhance community and statewide evidence-informed family support services, build connections between family support networks, including providing technical assistance between family community organizations and peer support networks, and with other family support services, focused on enhancing knowledge of evidence informed interventions for family members and loved ones of individuals living with substance use disorders, or problematic substance use, and reducing harm by educating service providers on current evidence regarding addiction and the family.

To learn more and track this bill, go to: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/3179/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22increasing+opportunity+for+former+foster+youth+act%22%5D%7D&r=1&s=1>

B%22Family+Support+Services+for+Addiction+Act+of+2020%22%5D%7D&r=2&s=3

S. 3025 (Sen. Grassley, Chuck [R-IA] - Increasing Opportunity for Former Foster Youth Act

This bill was introduced to the House on December 11th, 2019, and referred to the Senate Committee on Finance.

If enacted, this bill would establish innovation grants under the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood to improve adulthood outcomes for youth aging out of foster care, and for other purposes. This bill aims to support the development of programs that improve outcomes for transition-age foster youth, specifically by identifying programs with evidence of effectiveness, determining if they can be replicated with fidelity and demonstrate results, and scaling up successful programs so more youth receive effective services that help them to transition successfully to adulthood.

To learn more and track this bill, go to: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/3025/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22increasing+opportunity+for+former+foster+youth+act%22%5D%7D&r=1&s=1>

S. 3144 (Sen. Smith, Tina [D-MN] - Youth Workforce Readiness Act of 2019

This bill was introduced to the Senate on December 19th, 2019 by Senator Smith. It was read twice, and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pension.

This bill would help establish a competitive grant program to support out-of-school-time youth workforce readiness programs, providing employability skills development, career exploration, employment readiness training, mentoring, work-based learning, and workforce opportunities for eligible youth. In addition, this bill would reestablish youth councils, and would specifically require representatives of vulnerable populations, which would include foster

youth, minority youth, as well as youth with disabilities.

To learn more and track this bill, go to:

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/3144/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22foster+youth%22%5D%7D&r=12&s=5>

This list is, by no means, all inclusive. There may be legislation in your state that was not listed here. If you know of a specific effort in your state that you would like us to mention in the next newsletter, please email Angelique Day at dayangel@uw.edu

Article Highlight

We are always excited to share the work of our collaborative members. In this issue we highlight a recent article by Dr. Sabrena Jackson and colleagues. For a complete list of resources, please see the Library tab on our website.

About the Authors

Dr. Sabrena Jackson is an Assistant Professor and MSW Program Director in the School of Social Work at The University of Alabama. She is a licensed clinical social worker with over 20 years of social work practice experience. Her research and practice now focus on two primary areas: social work education and youth transitioning from foster care. She founded the National Social Work Enrichment Program (NSEP) to inspire foster youth to graduate high school and attend college. She has presented this work both nationally and internationally. She received the 2009 NASW Georgia Social Worker of the Year Award and the 2017 NASW-Alabama Social Worker of the Year Award for her work with youth transitioning from foster care.

Dr. Alexander Colvin, Ph.D is the Kenneth F. Kahn '69 Dean and the Martin F. Scheinman '75, 'MS '76 Professor of Conflict Resolution at the ILR School, Cornell University. He is an associate member of the Cornell Law Faculty. His research and teaching focuses on employment dispute resolution, with a particular emphasis on procedures in nonunion workplaces and the impact of the legal environment on organizations.

Dr. Angela Bullock has several years of experience in the human services field. While working at Atlanta Housing Authority, she successfully assisted families with identifying and moving into mixed income communities. She has assessed and counseled dually diagnosed clients, assisted with developing treatment goals with clients and facilitated groups that focused on

the disease of addiction. During her employment at Fulton County Department of Family and Children Services, she worked with children in foster care, as well as, work with birth families utilizing management skills, attending court hearings, developing court documents and participate with multidisciplinary team meetings.

Jackson, S. M., Colvin, A. D., & Bullock, A. N. (2019). Strategies to Address Mental Health Challenges of Foster Youth Transitioning to College. *Best Practices in Mental Health*, 15(1), 20-31.

Study Summary

Foster youth who enroll in college face multiple barriers to college completion. They experience mental health challenges at much higher rates than their peers. This article expounds on those mental health challenges while also discussing the mental health services utilization challenges they experience on college campuses. Self-determination theory is used to review strategies for addressing mental health needs of transition-age foster youth in college. Implications for practice in college counseling centers and the need for wrap-around services for foster youth will be discussed.

Key Findings

With barriers to mental health utilization in mind, college campuses must work hard to increase access to mental health services for foster youth. Individuals are innately motivated to take on and overcome adversity, although external factors can interfere with this natural drive, mental health services may be key to improving the educational outcomes for transition-age foster youth. For example, campuses might develop strategies that better identify ways to connect with transition-age foster youth, increase their awareness of Strategies to Address Mental Health 25 campus and other local resources, and facilitate their connection to services and supports. In addition, because the social environment is crucial in meeting

an individual's innate psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, mentorship and academic support coupled with counseling services help foster youth achieve success throughout their college careers.

To ensure their academic success, foster youth should have more access to professional help through campus support services when mental health symptoms emerge.

Implications

Based on evidence discussed in this article, foster youth transitioning to college arrive on campus with complex needs. However, counseling centers do not appear to be aware of those needs nor do they appear to be prepared to meet them. These findings have significant implications for mental health practice designed to serve foster youth on college campuses. For this reason, it will be advantageous to examine the practical strategies that institutions of higher learning can employ to aid foster youth in transitioning to college. These strategies may include creating more access to information about the programs that currently exist, as many foster youths are unlikely to be aware of what is available. Ensuring that counseling center staff are aware of the needs of transition-age foster youth, particularly the mental health challenges they experience, is a further important step. Specialized training in collaboration with child welfare workers may prove beneficial. Counseling center staff may also benefit from training and information sessions provided directly by foster youths. The designation of a staff member within the counseling center to focus on working with foster youth is also likely to be beneficial, building trust across this population of students and increasing their awareness of an identified resource in the counseling center. This designated staff member may also help to reduce the stigma foster youth often attach to receiving mental health services.

Universities are struggling to keep up with rising numbers of students seeking

support. Additional strategies should be considered to address this need. More counseling centers should also begin to collaborate with the college support programs that have been created to serve foster youth. Finally, transitioning foster youths often report an overall lack of emotional support from adults in and out of college.

Additional support programs, including wrap-around services on college campus, can be important in developing transition-age foster youths' intrinsic motivations to persist with their college studies.

If you would like to have your recent article highlighted, please send an article summary in this same format to nrc.fahe@gmail.com and we will work on including it in the future.

Highlighted Opportunities

Keep an eye out here for upcoming webinars, training sessions, or conferences that our collaborative members are hosting or attending. We will share any potential funding or employment opportunities that we think may be of interest. Please let us know if you would like a specific opportunity to be promoted in our next newsletter!

CONFERENCES

National Conference on Foster Alumni and other traditionally hidden college populations.

The conference will be held February 19-20, 2020, in Washington D.C. and co-located with the 39th Annual Conference on the First-Year Experience, which will be held in the same location February 21-23, 2020.

FUNDING

No current opportunities highlighted as of this publishing.

EMPLOYMENT

No current opportunities highlighted as of this publishing.

UPCOMING WEBINARS



February 26th, 2020:

11am-noon Pacific Time (2-3pm Eastern Time).

The presenters will be: Maddy Day, MSW, Site Liaison for the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, and Rachel Rosenberg, Ph.D., Research Scientist at Child Trends.

This presentation is entitled Utilizing Data from the Jim Casey Initiative to Improve Educational Outcomes. The Jim Casey Initiative is focused on all young people aged 14-26 who have experienced one day or more in foster care after their 14th birthday have the relationships, resources, and opportunities to ensure well-being and

success. This webinar will provide highlights from recent research publications by the Initiative and discuss the practice and policy implications to support young people to achieve educational success.

April 15th, 2020:

1-2pm Pacific Time (4-5pm Eastern Time): Megan Piel, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, University of Texas at San Antonio (topic TBD)

Check out the NRC-FAHE Webinar Archive to see the past Webinar presentations (<https://www.nrc-fahe.org/archive-webinars>). You can also sign up for our ListServ via the NRC-FAHE website [here](#) for future communications.