

TURNING DREAMS INTO DEGREES: EDUCATION COURSE 1



**Trainer's Guide
April 2024**

Acknowledgments

John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY) operates the Foster Youth College Advancement Project, which works to increase foster youth postsecondary attainment in Los Angeles County. This effort is accomplished under the umbrella of the Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Collaborative, whose vision is for transition age youth in Los Angeles County to have the knowledge and skills necessary to allow them to achieve economic mobility and flourish in their personal lives.

This initiative recognizes the important role that caregivers play in supporting foster youth in their college journeys and has designed these training materials to empower caregivers both locally within LA County, and throughout California, with comprehensive information to support foster youth through early college awareness and preparation.

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Foster and Kinship Care Education

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Introduction

Thank you for your work to empower caregivers with the information they need to support foster youth in their college planning. Together with the accompanying Turning Dreams into Degrees presentation slides for Education Course 1, this trainer’s guide will prepare you to train caregivers on the college planning process. It will also provide you with helpful background information, general facilitation tips, and additional resources for further reference.

It is worth noting that the college matriculation process is a complex and multifaceted process. As such, caregivers and foster youth should begin preparing for this process early on. It is not uncommon for foster youth to postpone college planning until they reach their senior year of high school, or to even wait until after high school graduation to begin making a college plan. This type of delayed planning can greatly reduce the likelihood that a foster youth will complete college, as well as limit their college enrollment options and financial aid resources.

As such, we recommend engaging caregivers in early and sustained conversations about college planning. Education Course 1 is designed for caregivers who have youth in grades 6-10 in their care. It’s never too early to start – this course can also be provided to caregivers with youth in younger grades. As a companion to this course, Education Course 2 provides information that is appropriate for caregivers with youth in grades 11 and 12. Education Course 2 may also be useful for caregivers with recent high school graduates who have not yet entered college. Both courses are tailored for a California context, taking into account California’s unique systems of higher education, state financial aid programs, and local campus programs and student support services. Caregivers who complete Education Course 1 are encouraged to enroll in Education Course 2 once the youth in their care are in grades 11 or 12.

This guide summarizes key learning objectives and provides additional context and ideas for facilitation across various modalities and group sizes. This guide is intended to complement, rather than duplicate, the PowerPoint slide notes. The guide concludes with a list of suggested readings for those looking to further deepen their knowledge on this topic. **It is strongly recommended that trainers take the time to review this guide in advance of presenting the course material.**

Education Course 1 Overview: Supporting Foster Youth Through Early College Awareness & Preparation

Duration: 3 hours

Target Audience: This course is targeted towards caregivers in California with students in the foster care system in grades 6-10. There are a few slides that should be updated to reflect the contact information of local resources and programs as described in further detail on page 11.

Course Terminology: Throughout the training and this trainer’s guide, the term “caregivers” is utilized to be inclusive of the various types of caregivers. For the purposes of this course, the term caregivers includes resource parents, as well as Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP) staff and Foster Family Agency staff that support caregivers to implement the content of this training. Trainers may adjust the language to be specific to their audience, such as using the term resource parent in lieu of caregivers.

In addition, postsecondary education is generally any formal education that happens after high school. This can include apprenticeships, trade school, career and technical education, such as Job Corps, community college, or a traditional 4-year college or university. This training utilizes the terms higher education, college, and postsecondary education interchangeably to refer to the various education pathways following high school.

Course Description: The purpose of this course is to empower caregivers to discuss the value of higher education with their youth and provide ideas for how they can play an active role in supporting their youth into postsecondary education. For caregivers with youth in middle school or in the early high school grades, college can seem so far into the future that it can take secondary importance to more immediate concerns. Caregivers will learn the significance of early college and career exploration and preparation and key steps that they can take to help youth turn their dreams into degrees.

Learning Objectives: Upon completion of Education Course 1, participants should be able to:

- Explain the benefits of postsecondary education;
- Recognize the unique barriers foster youth face in education, including the impact of trauma;
- Identify strategies to create a college-going culture in the home;
- Understand the different postsecondary education pathways;
- Identify resources and strategies to help students explore their career interests and achieve their postsecondary education goals; and
- Describe key educational planning milestones between 6th-10th grade.

Accompanying Materials

All *Turning Dreams into Degrees* Education Course 1 materials, including this Trainer’s Guide, can be found on the John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY) website found here:

www.jbay.org/resources/education-course-1/

For trainers interested in administering Education Course 2 for caregivers with youth in grades 11-12, materials can be found here: www.jbay.org/resources/education-course-2/

Within the link for Education Course 1, trainers can find the following additional materials:

PowerPoint slides- Contained within the PowerPoint slides are embedded links, videos, and slide animation, along with detailed presenter’s notes. The presenter’s notes include scripted text as well as additional “Trainer’s Notes” highlighted in bold that provide instructions and various options for facilitating the interactive activities either in-person or via Zoom. The PowerPoint slides are designed to be utilized on a Mac or PC.

Caregiver Supporting Materials- Supporting materials for caregivers attending this training can currently be found here: www.jbay.org/resources/edcourse1-caregiver-supporting-materials/. This includes the *Postsecondary Education Planning Guide for Adults Supporting California’s Foster Youth* - a comprehensive guide that includes all the information and resources referenced in the presentation. This step-by-step guide provide detailed checklists, resources, and strategies to assist youth with lived experience in foster care to prepare for high school graduation and postsecondary education, including career technical programs, community college, and four-year universities. This guide condenses information that was previously available in multiple handouts into one convenient guide.

This link should be provided to caregivers to easily access the supplemental materials for this course. For in-person trainings, trainers are encouraged to [print materials](#). For virtual trainings, this link can be provided to caregivers in the “chat” or emailed to attendees as well.

This link includes the following handouts and guides:

1. Postsecondary Education Planning Guide for Adult’s Supporting California’s Foster Youth
2. College and Career Bound: A Planning Guide for 9th-11th Grade Students in Foster Care
3. Financial Aid Guide for California Foster Youth
4. Foster Youth Benefits Eligibility Chart
5. Foster Youth Education Law Fact Sheet
6. Youth & Supportive Adult Career Guides
7. LA County College Planning Resources
8. Student Vignettes

Train-the-trainer webinar- This pre-recorded webinar provides a train-the-trainer for Education Course 1 that can be accessed at any time. This webinar is not intended for caregivers.

Archived materials: Additional resources from prior trainings are archived at www.ibay.org/resources/edcourse1-caregiver-supporting-materials/.

General Facilitation Tips

These materials are intended for public use, to be distributed widely and at no cost, provided that proper citation is noted. Each course is intended to be delivered over a 3-hour timeframe to allow sufficient time to review technical information, incorporate interactive opportunities, provide participants with a break, and allow for a question-and-answer period.

Presentation slides also contain notes that further explain each slide's content. As the text on some slides may be limited to make the slide more visually accessible for the audience, the notes section contains detailed talking points as well as additional **"Trainer's Notes"** highlighted in bold that provide instructions for facilitating the interactive activities either in-person or via Zoom. Instructions on how to facilitate these interactive activities are also found within this guide so that presenters may prepare accordingly depending on the modality, group size and platform being utilized.

It is highly recommended that trainers familiarize themselves with the PowerPoint slides and notes to become comfortable with both the content and the technology. Trainers may wish to print a copy of the slide notes to review in advance and to have on hand during a presentation. It's most successful and engaging if a trainer puts the presenter notes into their own words and vernacular, rather than reading from the script.

This training is best facilitated by at least two trainers. Co-facilitation allows trainers to break up the content between speakers and have a more engaging experience for the audience. It's also helpful to have a co-facilitator to help answer questions, monitor audience participation, and assist with technology needs.

Tips:

- Read this guide and the PowerPoint, including the slides and the notes, in advance of the training to become familiar with the content.
- Read the interactive activity suggestions and determine how you will facilitate these exercises based on your modality, access to technology and group size.
- If you are presenting this training outside of LA County, update slides 8, 65, and 66 with the contact information to your local community. See page 11 for more information.
- Practice going through the slides in "Slide Show Mode" to become familiar with the embedded links, videos and animation.
- Use voice dynamics, such as consciously varying your pitch, tone, volume and pace, to keep your speech interesting. Try not to use the same cadence, vocal rhythm and tone.
- When presenting online, make sure your email and any messaging programs like Teams or

Slack are closed or set to “Do Not Disturb” so you and the participants won’t be distracted by notifications during the presentation.

Considerations for In-Person or Virtual Trainings

This course is designed to be delivered either in-person or virtually. Throughout the course, there are various interactive activities designed to engage the audience. Within the presenter’s notes, as well in the section overviews within the Trainer’s Guide, there are suggestions on how to facilitate these engagement opportunities either in-person or via Zoom. While Zoom is referenced for this training, there are many other platforms and tools that can be utilized by trainers.

In-Person Delivery:

To ensure a successful presentation, it is also recommended that trainers providing this training in person have the following resources available:

- Laptop or desktop computer
- Projector and projection screen
- Speakers/audio capability to play embedded videos
- Education Course 1 PowerPoint slides
- Internet access
- Printed slide notes and Trainer’s Guide (for personal reference)
- Post-It notes (optional depending on how the interactive activities are facilitated)
- Pens for attendees to take notes
- Printed copies of the handouts found within the [Caregiver Supporting Materials](#) including hard copies of the [Foster Youth Postsecondary Educational Planning Guide](#).

Note: The Caregiver Supporting Materials have been consolidated into the updated *Foster Youth Postsecondary Education Guide*. The guide is available to download for free and to order for print at jbay.org/resources/ed-planning-guide/. Printing and postage fees will vary depending on the quantity ordered.

Online Delivery:

As mentioned above, this course provides suggestions on how to facilitate this training via Zoom, however, other platforms can also be utilized. Please note though that each platform has different functionality and trainers will need to adapt as needed. Throughout the trainer’s notes, various tools available on **Zoom Meeting** (not Zoom Webinar) will be referenced. Some of these Zoom tools must be enabled in your Zoom account prior to creating a meeting or when you schedule your meeting in Zoom. Refer to the Zoom Support links below for more information. Below is a list of some of those features as well as links to online tutorials about how to utilize those tools within Zoom Meeting:

- **Whiteboard feature-** The whiteboard feature allows you to share a whiteboard that you and other participants (if allowed) can [annotate](#). Learn more [HERE](#).

- **Polls-** The polling feature allows you to create single choice or multiple-choice polling questions for your meetings. You will be able to launch the poll during your meeting and gather responses from your attendees. You also have the ability to download a report of the polling after the meeting. Polls can also be conducted anonymously. Learn more [HERE](#).
- **Breakout rooms-** This feature allows you to split your Zoom meeting in up to 50 separate sessions. The meeting host can choose to split the participants of the meeting into these separate sessions automatically or manually, or they can allow participants to select and enter breakout session as they please. The host can switch between sessions at any time. Breakout sessions allow attendees to engage in deeper discussion and exploration, as well as benefit from peer learning. Learn more [HERE](#).
- **In-meeting chat-** This feature allows you to send chat messages to other users within a meeting. You can send private messages to an individual user, or you can send a message to the entire group. As the host, you can choose who the participants can chat with or to disable chat entirely. This is a great way to get feedback and engagement from your audience, as well as peer learning. Learn more [HERE](#).
- **Non-verbal feedback and meeting reactions-** If the meeting organizer enables this feature, meeting participants can place an icon on their video panel and beside their name to communicate with the host and other participants without disrupting the flow of the meeting. Attendees can access these reactions by clicking “reactions.” For example, attendees can use the “raise hand” function to indicate if they would like to participate or ask a question. In addition, the host can ask attendees yes or no questions and get their feedback by utilizing the “thumbs up” reaction or the “Yes” or “No.”

Below is a list of additional interactive tools that can be utilized throughout this course:

- **Mentimeter-** This tool, found at www.mentimeter.com/, allows for tools such as live polls, quizzes, word clouds, and Q&A’s to get real-time input and engagement with your audience virtually or face-to-face. Attendees will need internet access to participate on either a computer or smartphone. This tool is ideal for large group trainings. For seamless integration, Mentimeter can be embedded into the PowerPoint slides by downloading a plugin. Learn more [HERE](#). Another similar tool for audience engagement is Poll Everywhere found at www.polleverywhere.com
- **Padlet-** This tool, found at www.padlet.com, allows for quick virtual collaboration and peer-to-peer sharing in real time. Participants can easily add posts with comments, questions or suggestions, for all attendees to view simultaneously.

Technology Tips for Embedded Videos

This training uses embedded videos, so participants can hear directly from young people about their postsecondary education journeys. Here are some tips to make sure the videos play correctly during the training:

- Whether you are hosting the training online or in-person, it's always a good idea to arrive to the space early and test the video/sound components of the presentation.
- The links in the course open YouTube video links and there are typically advertisements that play prior to the video. It may be helpful to open these video links in a separate browser window and fast forward to the point where the ads end, prior to starting the training. When you get to the video, you'll have to exit the PowerPoint and share the video from the browser (Don't forget to re-share your screen if you are presenting online!).

Contents and Suggested Pacing

The table below provides an overview of each course section and the suggested amount of time to facilitate each section.

Education Course 1: Supporting Foster Youth through Early College Awareness and Preparation		
Presentation Section	Slides #s	Suggested Timing
Section I: Welcome & Introduction	1 - 9	10 mins
Section II: Why College?	10 - 15	23 mins
Section III: What Unique Barriers do Foster Youth Face in Higher Education?	16 - 23	8 mins
Section IV: What is the Impact of Trauma on Educational Performance and Outcomes?	24 - 30	15 mins
Section V: How Caregivers Can Make a Difference	31 - 41	20 mins
Break [One 10-minute or two 5-minute breaks]	42	10 mins
Section VI: A College Path for Everyone	43 - 51	13 mins
Section VII: Resources on College and Career Exploration	52 - 56	14 mins
Section VIII: Educational Planning Milestones	57 - 63	12 mins
Section IX: Help is Available for Caregivers	64 – 68	6 mins
Section X: College is Possible!	69	2 mins
Section XI: Closing Vignettes, Youth Video and Reflection	70-77	25 mins
Q & A [Either woven in throughout or addressed at the end]	78	10 mins

County Specific Trainer's Information

There are a few slides which should be updated with local programs' contact information and resources within the specific county in which the training is being held. Suggested changes are listed within the trainer's notes on the PowerPoint as well as below:

Slide 65 - Help is Available at the K-12 Districts

The slide is currently set to reflect general information about the County Office of Education Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program (COE FYSCP). Please add the local county name and contact information to the slide as well as any relevant information about their structure and services to the notes. While all COE FYSCP's provide the same general services, there is regional variation in services and structure. Contact information for each COE can be found here:

www.cde.ca.gov/ls/pf/fy/



LA County College Planning Resources (Handout)

This handout is a supplemental material provided to all caregivers receiving this training in LA County. This handout includes relevant resources and their contact information, such as ILP, Foster Youth District Liaisons, LACOE FYSCP and other foster-youth specific academic enrichment programs. Trainers are encouraged to create their own handout with local resources and programs that caregivers can access for their youth. This handout is mentioned on slide 65 and should either be deleted from the slide or replaced with an updated handout for your regional community.

Slide 66 - Independent Living Program

Replace the contact information on this slide with your local Independent Living Program. While all ILP programs offer similar services and have the same eligibility criteria, there is regional variation on services and structure. In addition, some programs may go by the name of Independent Living Services Program (ILSP). It is recommended that trainers contact their local ILP to determine the best language to include on this slide. JBAY maintains a roster of ILP Coordinators for each county that can be found here: jbay.org/resources/ilp-roster/

Education Course 1:

Section Content and Interaction Opportunities

Section I: Welcome and Introduction (slides 1-9)

Caregivers assume responsibility for many aspects of a youth's life, including responsibility for physical safety and holistic health and wellbeing. Compared to many of the day-to-day responsibilities that caregivers must juggle, college can seem like a remote concern that lacks the urgency of other matters. This can be particularly true for caregivers with youth in middle school or in the early high school grades. This introductory section provides context for the audience about the overall learning objectives, and course materials. When people think about a college education, it is often a traditional 4-year college pathway. It is important to clarify early in the course that postsecondary education refers to any formal education after high school, including career and technical education, 2-year and 4-year pathways. These pathways will be explained in further detail in the course, however, clarifying this definition at the onset may help to encourage caregivers to be more receptive to thinking about the youth in their care as college material.

This section introduces the [Foster Youth Postsecondary Education Planning Guide](#). This guide includes all the resources and information shared throughout the training, including a checklist of recommended activities and milestones for youth to prepare for college, by grade level. This guide will be referenced throughout the training as a resource for caregivers.

A caregiver's own firsthand experience with higher education can shape their perceptions of college planning and their level of comfort with this topic. For example, a caregiver who has no previous experience with college may not realize the many steps that are involved in early college planning. In addition, caregivers may not perceive the youth in their care as college material due to factors such as their current behaviors or academic performance. Trainers can use Slide 7 as an interactive opportunity to spark discussion with caregivers about the college and career possibilities for their youth, regardless of their youth's gender, race, or ethnicity, academic performance, or career interests. This slide helps to shift perceptions and educate caregivers about foster youth role models who have gone to college.

Interaction Opportunity (slide 7-8): Are they a former foster youth?

Estimated time: 4 minutes

Slide 7 uses animation to list photos and descriptions of various well-known individuals who experienced foster care. These individuals are of diverse backgrounds, including gender identity, race and ethnicity, and age. They have also achieved success in a range of fields, including sports and the performing arts, public service, technology, and entrepreneurship. What they share in common is that they all experienced foster care and all attended college. This activity is meant to illustrate some of the many possibilities that foster youth can achieve by pursuing a higher

education and their potential for success.

In-person: To use this slide as an interaction opportunity, the facilitator can show all individuals on the slide and then ask attendees to identify the person in each image. Next, the facilitator can go through each person on the slide and ask the group to vote by show of hands for the individual or individuals who they think is a former foster youth.

Via Zoom: If this training is administered via Zoom, the facilitator can either ask the attendees via the chat box to place their guesses or unmute participants who “raise their hand” to answer. Determine the most time efficient method depending on the size of your audience. Attendees can then use the “thumbs up” or “Yes or No” reactions to cast their votes about who they think is a former foster youth. Lastly, the facilitator can create a multiple-choice poll (set to anonymous) with each individual listed and allow attendees to select all that apply.

After participants make their guesses either virtually or in-person, the facilitator can progress to the next slide to share some concluding messaging found in the presenter’s notes. The photo in the slide is of former foster youth students and their support staff from UCLA. Trainers are encouraged to update the slide with photos of any graduates or alumni from their agency or local college to continue to promote the message that college is possible.

Section II: Why College? (slides 10-15)

Section I orients all caregivers, irrespective of previous college exposure, to the urgency of college. It connects postsecondary education attainment to the greater goal of self-sufficiency for foster youth by laying out the economic returns to a college degree. Slide 11 highlights the higher annual earnings that college graduates enjoy, relative to adults who only have a high school diploma. Section I builds off this economic argument to demonstrate the many other ways that earning a college degree or credential can benefit individuals, such as improved health outcomes and greater civic participation.

There is good reason to believe that foster youth are hearing the message that a college education pays; as shown in Slide 13, 91% of foster youth in California say they want to go to college¹. However, the reality is that only 48%² of youth in California who graduate from high school enroll in postsecondary education within one year after graduation, and just 10.9%³ succeed in completing a 2- or 4-year degree by the age of 23 as compared to 35.8%⁴ of 23-year-olds in California with an AA degree or higher. As this training will show, foster youth face many barriers, due to no fault of their own, that lead to these poor outcomes. While youth may know the benefit

¹ Courtney, M., et al (2016).

² <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>

³ <https://www.chapinhall.org/research/cal-youth-wave4-report/>

⁴ [https://data.census.gov/mdat/#/search?ds=ACSPUMS1Y2019&vv=AGEP\(23:24\)&rv=ucgid,SCHL&wt=PWGTP&g=0400000US06](https://data.census.gov/mdat/#/search?ds=ACSPUMS1Y2019&vv=AGEP(23:24)&rv=ucgid,SCHL&wt=PWGTP&g=0400000US06)

of a higher education, caregivers can play a critical role in helping them realize their own potential to attend college and successfully navigate the college matriculation process. Section II includes an interaction opportunity to get caregivers actively reflecting on their own ideas, fears, and questions related to college. Lastly, this section concludes with videos of foster youth who are either current college students or recent graduates. Throughout the training, videos of youth will be shown to allow caregivers to hear directly from youth about ways to inspire, motivate and encourage them to reach their college dreams despite the challenges they have experienced.

Interaction Opportunity (slide 13): “What percentage of foster youth in California...”

Estimated time: 3-minutes

This slide provides a brief opportunity to engage the audience in thinking about the college outcomes for foster youth in California. Animation is built into the slide to allow the trainer to ask attendees to place their guesses for the three questions on the slide before revealing the correct answers.

In-person: The facilitator can ask some attendees to share their guess before revealing each correct answer. Alternatively, the facilitator can give various options and ask attendees to raise their hands to cast their votes.

For example, for question 1: “How many people think the correct answer is between 20-30%? 30-50% 50-80%? Or 80-95%?” Facilitators may consider partnering with their local college to get college related swag to provide as prizes for audience participation.

Via Zoom: If facilitating a small group, attendees can unmute themselves to share a guess. Alternatively, attendees can be asked to share their guess in the chat function or a poll can be created via Zoom to allow attendees to guess the correct answer for each question.

Interaction Opportunity (slide 14): “Reflection”

Estimated time: 10 minutes

This slide lists three discussion questions that the trainer may choose to incorporate in different styles, depending on the size of the group. This slide creates an opportunity for caregivers to reflect on their own perceptions about college and their youth’s potential to successfully attend college. Given the impact of a caregiver’s perceptions, expectations, and support, it’s important that caregivers take time to notice their own internal perceptions and attitudes and how that might impact the level or type of support they provide to youth. Just as youth may have their own fears or concerns, caregivers may hold these beliefs as well. Below are three different ways to facilitate a group discussion with these guiding questions.

In-person:

- **Pair and Share:** Ask participants to introduce themselves to one person seated next to them. As a pair, participants will ask each other the questions listed on the slide. Once the facilitator calls participants back into one large group, volunteers will share

back what responses their partner provided. The facilitator will then guide the discussion to identify common themes and experiences.

- **Post-It Collage:** Before the presentation, the facilitator can place 3 Post-It notes at each seat. The facilitator can ask audience members to jot down their answers on each Post-It that corresponds to questions #1-3. Participants can then stick their notes up on a wall in a section that corresponds to the question. The facilitator can cluster common responses together and read aloud the messages that were most common and guide group discussion.
- **Poll the Audience:** Before the presentation, the facilitator can place a red note card and a green note card at every seat. The facilitator can read aloud several statements and ask participants to hold up a green card if they agree with the statement (or if the statement applies to them) or to hold up a red card if they disagree with the statement (or if the statement does not apply to them). For example, the facilitator might read aloud the statement “I think that college is essential to achieving a meaningful job” or “I think that college is expensive.” Facilitator can then call on 1-2 volunteers to elaborate on why they agreed/disagreed with the statement and facilitate a group discussion. The facilitator can then ask 2-3 participants to share any questions they may have about college that they are hoping to get answered during the training.

Via Zoom:

- Use a break-out room feature to break attendees into small groups or pairs to answer the following questions using the “Pair and Share” interaction opportunity listed above. Have a transcriber and group leader present the answers to the larger group or select just a few volunteers depending on the size of your group. Responses can be gathered on the Zoom “Whiteboard” feature, or through other tools such as a Google Doc or Padlet.

Via Mentimeter:

- For larger groups online, Mentimeter can be a great way to poll your audience and engage them in a discussion. The “Word Cloud” feature can be used to get people to respond to question #1 and #2. The Word Cloud will make common responses show in a larger font. The facilitator can react to the responses by highlighting any common themes or patterns. For question #3, the “open ended questions” could be utilized.

Section III: What Unique Barriers do Foster Youth Face in Higher Education? (slides 16-23)

Section III goes on to lay out some of the reasons why a pronounced gap exists between the self-expressed college aspirations of foster youth and their actual college attainment rates. This section is presented through case scenarios to engage the audience in thinking about the various experiences of a youth in foster care and how these early experiences might impact their educational journey. Foster youth often experience additional barriers to graduation once enrolled

in postsecondary education, such as housing insecurity, lack of childcare and financial instability, however this course focuses on the impact of potential barriers that youth may experience in 6th-10th grade. The impact of trauma is introduced in scenario 5 and expanded upon in the following section to provide caregivers with a greater understanding of how this can manifest in the classroom and strategies that caregivers can utilize to address any underlying trauma.

Interaction Opportunity (slide 16-23): “What unique barriers do foster youth face in higher education?”

Estimated time: 8 minutes

This section provides an opportunity for attendees to respond to each case scenario and determine whether each youth is experiencing a challenge related to postsecondary education. The options are generally “yes” or “no”, but please keep in mind that each youth’s experience is unique, and the impact of these experiences will vary student to student. These scenarios are intended to explore common themes for youth in the foster care system. Animation is built into each slide to allow attendees to respond before showing the correct answer.

In-person: The facilitator can simply ask everyone to vote by raising their hand when prompted with the options of either “yes” or “no.”

Via Zoom: Depending on the size of the audience, the facilitator can poll the audience by using the “yes” or “no” reactions or asking attendees to raise their hand if their camera is on. Additionally, an anonymous poll could be created via Zoom to allow attendees to respond and see the percentage of responses for each option.

Section IV: What is the Impact of Trauma on Educational Performance and Outcomes? (slides 24-30)

This section is a continuation of the prior section and further explains how trauma can also have an adverse impact on a youth’s academic performance and college planning. This section provides some examples of how trauma can manifest through various classroom and home behaviors. It is important to recognize the role of trauma on a youth’s educational journey, but to also instill the message that youth can heal from this trauma and still be successful in higher education. Caregivers will learn about concrete strategies that they can implement to address this trauma in the next section.

Additionally, this section provides brief framing about the impact of racism on youth in the foster care system, both overt and through implicit biases. This is particularly pertinent given the disproportionate number of black youth in the foster care system. A 2019 study found that black children represented 14% of the total child population, but 23% of all children in the foster care system.⁵ One study proposes the following four explanations for this disproportionate

⁵ <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/updates/show/264-us-foster-care-population-by-race-and-ethnicity>

representation of black children: “disproportionate and disparate need of children and families of color, particularly due to higher rates of poverty, racial bias and discrimination exhibited by individuals (e.g. caseworkers, mandated and other reporters), child welfare system factors (e.g. lack of resources for families of color, caseworker characteristics), and geographic context, such as the region, State, or neighborhood.”⁶

This over-representation in the child welfare system is not due to any inherent deficit of the child or family due to their race or ethnicity, which is important to clarify to caregivers. Racial bias can also manifest in the classroom, leading to what is commonly called the “racial discipline gap.”⁷ Research has shown that race plays a clear role in the disproportionate number of suspensions among black students when controlling for other factors such as previous disciplinary issues, socioeconomic status, and economic achievement. Racial bias in schools can lead to not only harsher discipline, but these students are also less likely to be identified as gifted or to have access to quality teachers.⁸ This section on implicit bias is included with the topic of trauma due to the traumatizing impact this can have on children and youth of color.

This section also notes the role of implicit biases. It’s important to note that calling someone a racist and stating that someone has implicit biases are not the same thing. Implicit biases are part of ordinary mental functioning and are often learned through messages from the media, news images, conversations we’ve heard at home or from our education. Implicit bias explains some of the difficulties we experience as a society around race, but it is not the only factor. We all have implicit biases, and caregivers are encouraged to explore their own implicit biases as they think about the role of their own thoughts and perceptions on the youth in their care. Additional resources and readings around the topic can be found at: <https://implicitbias.net/>

Interaction Opportunity (slide 29): The Invisible Backpack

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

This slide includes animation that the trainer can use to solicit audience participation. After a few responses have been shared from the audience, the trainer can then click through the slide animation to show possible thoughts or feelings that the youth may be experiencing.

In-person: Prompt the audience to first share their ideas by raising their hands about some of the beliefs and attitudes that a foster youth may hold, due to their traumatic experiences, which may contribute to the belief or statement of “I don’t want to go to college.” Although youth may understand the benefits of a postsecondary education, they may have their own internalized fears, concerns, or doubts. After they have shared their ideas, show the possible responses in the bubbles. Connect this slide back to the participants’ perceptions and thoughts about college and reflect on how this might affect a youth’s beliefs, attitudes, or thoughts about college.

⁶ https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/racial_disproportionality.pdf

⁷ <https://daily.jstor.org/school-suspensions-racial-discipline-gap/>

⁸ <https://www.thoughtco.com/how-racism-affects-public-school-minorities-4025361>

Via Zoom: Prompt the audience to first share their ideas about some of the beliefs and attitudes that a foster youth may hold, due to their traumatic experiences, which may contribute to the belief or statement of “I don’t want to go to college.” Although youth may understand the benefits of a postsecondary education, they may have their own internalized fears, concerns, or doubts. They can use the “raise hand function” or simply unmute themselves depending on the size of your audience. Alternatively, attendees can be invited to share their ideas in the chat function. After they have shared their ideas, show the possible responses in the bubbles. Connect this slide back to the participants’ perceptions and thoughts about college and reflect on how this might affect a youth’s beliefs, attitudes, or thoughts about college.

Section V: How Caregivers Can Make a Difference (slides 31-41)

While numerous barriers keep foster youth from completing college, the research shows that a consistent, caring adult can make all the difference. Section V aims to empower caregivers to see themselves in that critical role and to provide tips on how they can build a college-going culture at home. Even if caregivers have not attended college themselves, they can develop the necessary skills to support foster youth in attaining their educational goals.

Importantly, caregivers can motivate and encourage youth to set high expectations of themselves and to see themselves as future college students. This section provides some suggestions about how to send affirming and encouraging messages to foster youth about college goal-setting and the importance of building rapport with youth to engage in these early college and career conversations. The trauma many youth in foster care have experienced may impact their ability to form trusting relationships with adults. Therefore, taking the time to build rapport with youth and utilizing an approach that makes the child feel safe is often the first place to start when thinking about the conversation.

Interaction Opportunity (slide 41): Key Ways That Caregivers Can Support Youth Into Higher Education

Estimated time: 4-5 minutes

To encourage peer learning, ask the audience if there are any strategies that they have implemented and found successful to create a college-going culture in the home. This can be facilitated either in-person or via Zoom. Participants can either unmute themselves or write a response in the chat if via Zoom, or simply have attendees raise their hand if in-person.

Section VI: A College Path for Everyone (slides 43-52)

The term “college” can mean a lot of things. While the common college experience portrayed in the media is that of a first-time college freshman enrolling directly at a four-year university, there are in fact many more paths available. Foster youth should be empowered with information about these various paths so that they can make the choice that is best for them. For some foster youth,

this will mean enrolling directly at a four-year university while others may decide to start at a community college with the goal of transferring to a four-year university, completing an associate degree or earning a certificate in a career and technical education program.

Regardless of what a student’s ultimate goal is and where they want to begin their college journey, one thing is consistent: they will be best set up for success if they get started right away. Foster youth students who enroll in community college directly after high school are 40% more likely to persist in college than are students who take a year or more off.⁹ As such, it is important for caregivers to understand the different options available and to help students transition directly into the program that is the best fit for them. Oftentimes, students are not encouraged to pursue college if their current academic performance is poor. This section is meant to illuminate the many pathways available, including non-traditional pathways available at community colleges. Community colleges do not have a minimum GPA requirement and are open-access to all students. All youth, regardless of their academic performance, can still be encouraged to pursue a postsecondary education.

The presentation conveys that there are good reasons to be cautious when selecting a proprietary or for-profit institution. In recent years, there have been several high-profile cases of proprietary and for-profit institutions offering credentials that do not lead to favorable employment outcomes, wage gains, or expanded career opportunities. This is of particular concern when students are expending their financial aid funds and taking out student loans to cover high tuition costs. As such, government agencies have moved to more closely monitor these institutions. For example, the California Student Aid Commission currently restricts use of state Cal Grant and Chafee grant dollars at for-profit institutions that do not demonstrate favorable student outcomes. Foster youth can confirm that an institution is approved by the California Student Aid Commission as one indicator of an institution’s quality before they decide to enroll or visit the Database of Accredited Postsecondary Institutions and Programs found at: <https://ope.ed.gov/dapip/#/home>. Even approved institutions, however, are significantly more expensive than comparable programs found at community colleges.

Interaction Opportunity (slide 45): “Is it a...”

Estimated time: 3 minutes

This activity provides an opportunity for caregivers to test their knowledge about some of the similarities and differences between California community colleges, public 4-year universities and private colleges or universities. While out-of-state college is also a viable option for students, each state and college vary, so caregivers and youth will need to do their research. Animation is built into this slide to provide an opportunity for audience engagement for the four statements listed on the screen. The facilitator will prompt the audience to guess whether the four statements apply to the different college pathways. After they respond, the facilitator can read the correct response and rationale. More than one answer may apply.

In-person: Attendees can be asked to raise their hand for each option.

⁹ Frerer, K., et al (2013), as cited in California College Pathways (2015).

Via Zoom: Attendees can put “a, b or c” in the chat box or polls can be used in Zoom.

Section VII: Resources on College and Career Exploration (slides 52-56)

This section provides caregivers with tangible ways to engage youth in early career exploration as a means to help them determine which postsecondary pathway is the best fit. Youth’s interests and goals will likely change and evolve over time, so this is meant to be an ongoing conversation and process with youth. This section provides career conversation starters and recommends some websites that caregivers can use to guide foster youth in exploring career paths. Some of these tools enable foster youth to take self-assessments to determine what types of careers align with their interests and identified strengths. Other tools enable youth to see what types of jobs are hiring, and what median earnings are in a given profession. These tools can help caregivers and youth learn about professions and fields that are beyond their own frames of reference. In addition to these tools, this section provides suggestions on ways that caregivers can engage youth in these conversations, motivate them and assist them in realistic goal setting throughout their process. It is recommended that caregivers have an opportunity to familiarize themselves with these websites before engaging with youth.

Tip: Some of these websites (like CA Career Zone and Gladeo) require users to pre-register, even to access free services. If you plan to demo these websites to caregivers, make sure you register in advance and have your login and password information ready.

Section VIII: Educational Planning Milestones (slide 57-63) & Section IX: Help is Available for Caregivers (slides 64-68)

Once caregivers have developed an understanding of the importance of college, the trauma and resilience that foster youth have, the postsecondary education pathways and the role that they can play in assisting their youth along these pathways, it is important to provide practical examples of what do next.

The training provides a summary of the most important activities and milestones for students in grades 6 through 10. These milestones build upon each other, with some key activities (such as enrolling in A-G college preparatory courses or meeting with the high school counselor) repeating year after year. Every child is at a different place developmentally and emotionally and some youth may need more time and support along the way. If students have missed a recommended step, they should not be discouraged from continuing to pursue postsecondary education as there are still many options. Lastly, this section also includes a link to the [**Financial Aid Guide for California Foster Youth**](#) for those caregivers who would like to learn more about the financial aid process. There are frequent changes to both the federal and state financial aid processes, so these materials are updated annually and posted on the John Burton Advocates for Youth website.

“Help is Available for Caregivers” provides a list of resources for caregivers to remind them that they are not alone in this process. There are many adult professionals who can provide support, including within their child’s school, within the child welfare system, and at local community-based organizations (CBO’s). Caregivers are encouraged to leverage the Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM) to discuss the youth’s college and career goals and get them connected to the appropriate resources and supports to assist them in reaching their goals. Staff from the child’s school are also encouraged to attend education focused CFTM’s to support teaming and collaboration.

Section X: College is Possible! (slides 69)

In the beginning of the training, caregivers are asked to reflect on their own fears or concerns about their youth attending college. Many of these fears or concerns may be held by the youth as well. This section is meant to send the message that college is possible, regardless of current academic performance, grades, behaviors, or income. This section provides a high-level overview of the various resources available to foster youth that can assist them in their higher education journey. Education Course 2 provides more in-depth information about these various resources.

Given the high costs of college, and the many individuals who end up with student debt, it is not uncommon for caregivers and youth to fear that they will not be able to afford college. In fact, foster youth qualify for a lot of financial aid. There are various forms of financial aid available from the state and federal government, and some of this aid is even available to undocumented students. This aid is often “gift aid” that does not need to be repaid. While other students must provide their parents’ income, foster youth are considered “independent” and do not have to report parent or caregiver’s income if they were in out-of-home care at least one day after the age of 13. This also includes youth who have a legal guardian. This is significant because this means that foster youth will likely qualify for significant amounts of financial aid since they will only need to report their own income. The *Financial Aid Guide for California Foster Youth* provides additional information about the various forms of financial aid and eligibility. Given the frequent changes on the federal and state level, it is important that caregivers check annually to receive the most current information.

Section XI: Closing Vignettes, Youth Video and Reflection (slides 70-78)

This closing section provides an opportunity for caregivers to engage with their peers and apply the information discussed throughout this course through two student vignettes. In addition, caregivers are left to reflect on the content to determine how they will apply this information to the youth in their care. The goal of this course is to not only increase the knowledge of caregivers about how to support youth in care with college planning, but to also influence their behaviors to lead to increased support.

Interaction Opportunity (slide 75): “Let’s Practice- What would YOU do?”

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

Now that trainers have reviewed all information, it is time to practice applying these

concepts! Caregivers should be provided the two student vignettes found within the caregiver materials under “Student Vignettes.”

Depending on the number of people in attendance, divide the audience into two or more groups and provide the two student vignettes. This can be done either in-person or in small groups via breakout groups on Zoom. Depending on time and the size of the group, each group can either focus on one vignette or both. Ask one person in the group to report out to the larger group. As the facilitator, be prepared to provide additional responses if key strategies and themes are not addressed in the report out. Below is information about some of the potential responses for the student vignettes:

Student Vignette #1 Discussion Questions:

- **What steps should Brandon take to prepare for college in the 9th grade?** This question references the educational planning milestones for 9th grade discussed in this training and found within the Educational Planning Guide. Caregivers can be advised to reference this guide as a tool. Key steps to think about in 9th grade include meeting with his academic counselor to ensure that he is on track to graduate and enrolled in “a-g courses” to have a public 4-year university as an option. Given that Brandon doesn’t yet know what postsecondary education pathway is right for him, enrollment in these courses can keep his options open. This can also help him feel more connected to his new school given his frequent school changes. Exploring any academic enrichment programs at his campus or in the community could help him build new relationships with peers and help engage him back into school.
- **What would you do to help create a college-going culture at home and increase his knowledge about college?** It is recommended that the caregiver takes Brandon on a college tour to help motivate him about higher education and build his college knowledge. Given his interest in reading and basketball, caregivers could explore if there are any upcoming college basketball games or events happening at a local campus that could spark his interest. Given his belief that he is not good in math, it would be helpful if caregivers implement strategies to encourage a growth mindset. Brandon should be connected to tutoring and told that through practice and time he can excel in math. This concept can be related back to basketball, and how through practice this skill can be developed. Brandon can be rewarded for his effort to practice more in his courses and gradually improve his grades.
- **What strategies could you implement to engage Brandon in the college and career exploration process?** Brandon is having challenges imagining a future beyond his present educational situation. Activities to help him discover his interests and skills through career assessments could be helpful for him to learn about potential career paths that he would be interested in. Since Brandon doesn’t yet have any career goals, reality testing may not be appropriate for him at this stage. Caregivers need to meet him where he is at and demonstrate patience with his process. Utilizing a “PACE attitude”, i.e.,

demonstrating curiosity and empathy about Brandon’s experience, can help build rapport with Brandon to engage in the college and career exploration process and understand some of his underlying beliefs and feelings.

- **What resources or supports would you recommend for Brandon?** Brandon could be referred to tutoring services either through his academic counselor or district foster youth liaison to help improve his math grades and build his confidence. As mentioned above, an academic enrichment program could be another great resource for Brandon.

Student Vignette #2 Questions:

- **What steps should Mia take to prepare for college in the 10th grade?** The summer after 10th grade is a great time for Mia to get a part-time job to begin developing career readiness skills. It would be ideal if Mia could get a job related to being a cosmetologist so that she can begin to explore if this is still a career she is interested in. Early exposure can help Mia understand the characteristics and typical job responsibilities of working and even owning a salon. 10th grade is also an opportunity for students to take the Practice SAT. Mia should be encouraged to take this exam to keep her college options open; however, given her current career goals she may not be interested in this exam. If not, Mia can take this exam in 11th grade. Mia should also meet with her school counselor to make sure that she is on-track to high school graduation. Lastly, dual enrollment courses could be a great way to build Mia’s interest in college. This could even be a dual-enrollment course in a vocational program related to her interests. A student doesn’t need excellent grades to enroll in these programs. Although Mia is having trouble engaging in her current coursework, the opportunity to study her subject of choice and experience college may help her feel more invested.
- **What would you do to help create a college-going culture at home and increase her knowledge about college?** Given Mia’s current professional goals, it could be helpful to spend time with Mia on Salary Surfer to discover similar cosmetology programs offered by the local community colleges. It may be helpful for Mia to learn about other programs that are free or low-cost for her to attend. Salary Surfer can also show her the typical earnings for this type of field. Career assessments can also help her to discover other potential fields related to her current interests that she may not yet be aware of. Given Mia’s disengagement with school, it could be helpful to educate Mia about the benefits of a high school diploma for future earnings and career options. Visiting a college campus is another great way to build Mia’s knowledge about college. If possible, Mia could visit any local cosmetology programs at the community colleges given her current interests and motivations. Given her current feelings about school, a “PACE Attitude” could be utilized to demonstrate curiosity and empathy to better understand Mia’s perspective and her underlying feelings and beliefs about school.
- **What resources or supports would you recommend for Mia?** It’s

recommended that Mia is connected to therapeutic services to address her history of trauma. Individual counseling or a grief support group could be explored. The Child and Family Team Meeting is a great opportunity to discuss these mental health needs and develop a plan to refer her to services.

Interaction Opportunity (slide 77): Reflection Questions

Estimated Time: 8 minutes

As discussed throughout the training, caregivers can play an active role in supporting their youth to college. Ask the group to reflect on the information that they have learned in the training and ask the new question on the slide that states, “What is at least one thing that you will do differently with your youth within the next 30 days to support them in achieving a higher education?” This is an opportunity for caregivers to reflect on how they will apply the knowledge. Depending on the size of your group, there are many ways to facilitate this.

In-person:

- ***Pair and Share:*** Ask participants to introduce themselves to one person seated next to them. As a pair, participants will respond to the question on the slide. Once the facilitator calls participants back into one large group, the facilitator will select a few volunteers to share back what responses their group discussed.
- ***Group share:*** If it is a small group, ask each participant to go around the room and share their response.
- ***Post-It Collage:*** Before the presentation, the facilitator can place post-its at each person’s desk. Ask participants to write at least one thing that they will do differently with their youth within the next 30 days onto the post-It and then post it on the wall. If they have more than one idea, have them write each idea on a separate post-it. As the facilitator, read aloud some of the responses and highlight any themes.

Via Zoom:

- ***Pair and Share:*** Use a break-out room feature to break attendees into small groups or pairs to answer the question using the “Pair and Share” interaction opportunity listed above.
- ***Group share:*** If it is a small group, ask each participant to unmute themselves and share their response. If it is a large group, ask each person to write their responses in the chat. As the facilitator, read aloud some of the responses and highlight any themes.

Via Mentimeter:

- For larger groups online, Mentimeter can be a great way to poll your audience and engage them in a discussion. The “Word Cloud” feature can be used to get

people to respond to question #1 and #2. The Word Cloud will make common responses show in a larger font. The facilitator can react to the responses by highlighting any common themes or patterns.

Further Reading

California College Pathways (2013). At Greater Risk - California Foster Youth and the Path from High School to College. Available online at:

http://www.cacollegepathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/at_greater_risk.pdf.

California College Pathways (2015). Charting the Course: Using Data to Support Foster Youth College Success. Available online at: http://www.cacollegepathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/charting_the_course_final.pdf.

Courtney, M. et al (2011). Midwest Evaluation of Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 26. Available online at:

http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/Midwest%20Evaluation_Report_4_10_12.pdf

CalYOUTH Study- A Series of reports designed to evaluate the impact of California's extended foster care program on outcomes during the transition to adulthood for foster youth, including educational outcomes from 2014-2020. Available online at:

<https://www.chapinhall.org/research/cal youth/>

Gross, J. (2016). Challenges and Experiences of Former Foster Youth in Postsecondary Education. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin Center for the Advancement of Postsecondary Education (WISCAPE). Available online at: <http://www.cacollegepathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/FFE-in-PSE.pdf>.

Lopez, K. and B. T. Duran (2016). Transition Age Foster Youth: Getting Them Into and Through College. Fresno, CA: Central Valley Higher Education Consortium. Available online at:

http://www.cacollegepathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Foster-Youth_CVHEC_report_final_2-1.pdf.

National Working Group on Foster Care and Education (2014). Fostering Success in Education: National Factsheet on the Educational Outcomes of Children in Foster Care. Available online at:

http://www.cacollegepathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/datasheet_jan_2014_update.pdf.

Wiegmann, W., et al. (2014). The Invisible Achievement Gap Part 2: How the Foster Care Experiences of California Public School Students Are Associated with Their Education Outcomes. Available online at: <http://www.cacollegepathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/the-invisible-achievement-gap-part-2.pdf>.

<http://www.cacollegepathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/the-invisible-achievement-gap-part-2.pdf>.