Fostering Higher Education Pilot

Des Moines, Iowa – January 19, 2021 – The Youth Policy Institute of Iowa has been selected by the Annie E. Casey Foundation as one of three Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative® sites across the country to pilot Fostering Higher Education (FHE). YPII is collaborating with Foundation 2, Iowa Department of Human Services, and Iowa Aftercare Services Network to test the model in Iowa. FHE, developed by researchers Dr. Amy Salazar of Washington State University and Dr. Kevin Haggerty of the University of Washington, is a model to help youth who have experienced foster care graduate from high school and bridge the transition from high school to college or additional training.

The FHE model consists of several evidence-based components, providing students who have experienced foster care with support from an education advocate, mentorship and a specialized curriculum that helps students identify goals and potential pitfalls in attending college.

In Iowa, FHE will be delivered by Foundation 2 in Cedar Rapids. “We are excited to be partnering with Foundation 2 to implement the model,” said Carol Behrer, YPII’s Executive Director. Foundation 2, which is a member of the Iowa Aftercare Services Network, is well-suited for this work, bringing experience and passion to help young people make successful transitions.

While data shows that Iowa students in foster care are more likely to complete high school compared to foster care youth in other states, post-secondary enrollment and completion by Iowa’s foster care youth fall short of national averages. “This is an opportunity to not only fill a gap in services, but to contribute to the evidence base for this approach through a rigorous evaluation that will be led by Salazar and Haggerty,” continued Behrer. “The pilot and results of the evaluation will help inform how we can help position youth in foster care for educational success beyond high school.”

The first FHE cohort of approximately 15 young people in the Cedar Rapids area will be recruited this Spring. In addition, a comparison group will be selected from Polk County to participate in the study, but not receive the FHE services. Foster Success in Indiana, and the Multi-Agency Alliance for Children in Georgia, are the two other Jim Casey sites that will be piloting FHE over the next two years.

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