

# National Foster Care Awareness Month Toolkit:

Strategies for schools and community partners to  
recognize, celebrate and support students in foster care

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*Stronger Together: Align • Act • Achieve*



**Los Angeles County  
Office of Education**

Developed by the Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program

# Welcome

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*Every student deserves stability, opportunity and at least one adult who notices when they are missing.*

## **Why National Foster Care Awareness Month Matters**

Each May, National Foster Care Awareness Month brings attention to the experiences of children and youth in foster care and the important role that communities play in their success. Established in 1988 through a presidential proclamation, this month serves as a time to recognize and support the individuals and organizations dedicated to ensuring students in foster care have the resources, stability and encouragement needed to thrive.

This toolkit is designed to help schools, community organizations, caregivers, social workers and other advocates participate in meaningful and respectful ways while maintaining student privacy. It provides practical guidance on celebrating and supporting students in foster care, recognizing educators and community champions, hosting awareness events, integrating foster care awareness in schools, partnering with local resources and implementing an action plan.

The Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program (FYSCP) at the Los Angeles County Office of Education works to strengthen collaboration across education, child welfare, probation and community partners to improve educational outcomes for students in foster care. By building capacity within local education agencies and connecting partners to resources and training, FYSCP helps ensure students in foster care experience stability, opportunity and the support needed to succeed in school and beyond.

By using this toolkit, you will find strategies and resources to raise awareness, promote positive change and ensure students in foster care feel valued and supported. Thank you for joining us in this important effort.

***Let's work together to make a lasting impact because when systems align, act and achieve together, students in foster care thrive.***

# How to Use this Toolkit

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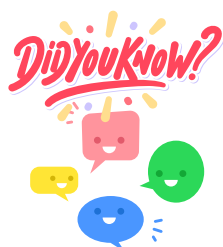
This toolkit is designed to help schools, districts, child welfare partners, probation departments and community organizations recognize and support students in foster care during National Foster Care Awareness Month.

While many activities in this toolkit are designed for National Foster Care Awareness Month, partners are encouraged to adapt these ideas throughout the year to strengthen support for students in foster care.

## **Within this toolkit you will find:**

- Awareness campaign materials and social media resources
- School and community engagement ideas
- Strategies for using strength-based language
- Cross-system collaboration practices
- An action plan to align partners and sustain the work beyond May

Partners are encouraged to select the strategies that best fit their community and work together to promote awareness, celebrate resilience and strengthen supports for students in foster care.



Students in foster care often change schools multiple times while in care. School stability plays a critical role in helping them stay on track academically and socially.

# Quick Start Guide

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## Three Simple Ways to Participate in National Foster Care Awareness Month

Schools and community partners do not need to implement every idea in this toolkit to make an impact. Even small actions can help create a culture where students in foster care feel supported and valued.

Choose one or two activities to get started.

### **Raise Awareness**

- Share a foster care awareness fact through morning announcements or newsletters
- Encourage staff and students to wear light blue
- Display inclusive messages such as “You Matter” or “Every Student Deserves a Champion”

### **Engage Your School Community**

- Create a bulletin board or pledge wall
- Use the coloring pages or crossword puzzle included in this toolkit
- Encourage student clubs to host kindness campaigns or service projects

### **Strengthen Partnerships**

- Connect with your local foster youth liaison or community partners
- Share available resources with caregivers and students
- Participate in cross-system collaboration opportunities

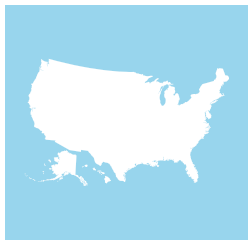
# Foster Care and Education- Key Facts

Students in foster care often experience school changes, disrupted learning and barriers to educational stability. Schools play a critical role in ensuring these students remain connected to supportive adults, stable learning environments and pathways to graduation and postsecondary success.

National Foster Care Awareness Month provides an opportunity for school communities to increase awareness, strengthen collaboration with partners and ensure that every student in foster care feels seen, supported and valued.

Behind every number is a student whose success depends on stable schools, supportive adults and systems working together. ***This is why collaboration matters.***

## The Numbers:



Nearly **330,000** youth are in care across the United States. <sup>1</sup>



California has nearly **40,000** children and youth in care. <sup>1</sup>



Los Angeles County has approximately **10,000** children and youth in care. <sup>2</sup>

## Los Angeles County Graduation



**63%** of youth involved in the foster care system graduate high school in four years compared to **88%** of youth overall. <sup>3</sup>



Approximately **48%** of youth in care attend college, compared to **65%** of Los Angeles County youth overall. <sup>4</sup>

1. United States. Children's Bureau. (2024) [The AFCARS Dashboard](#).

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau.

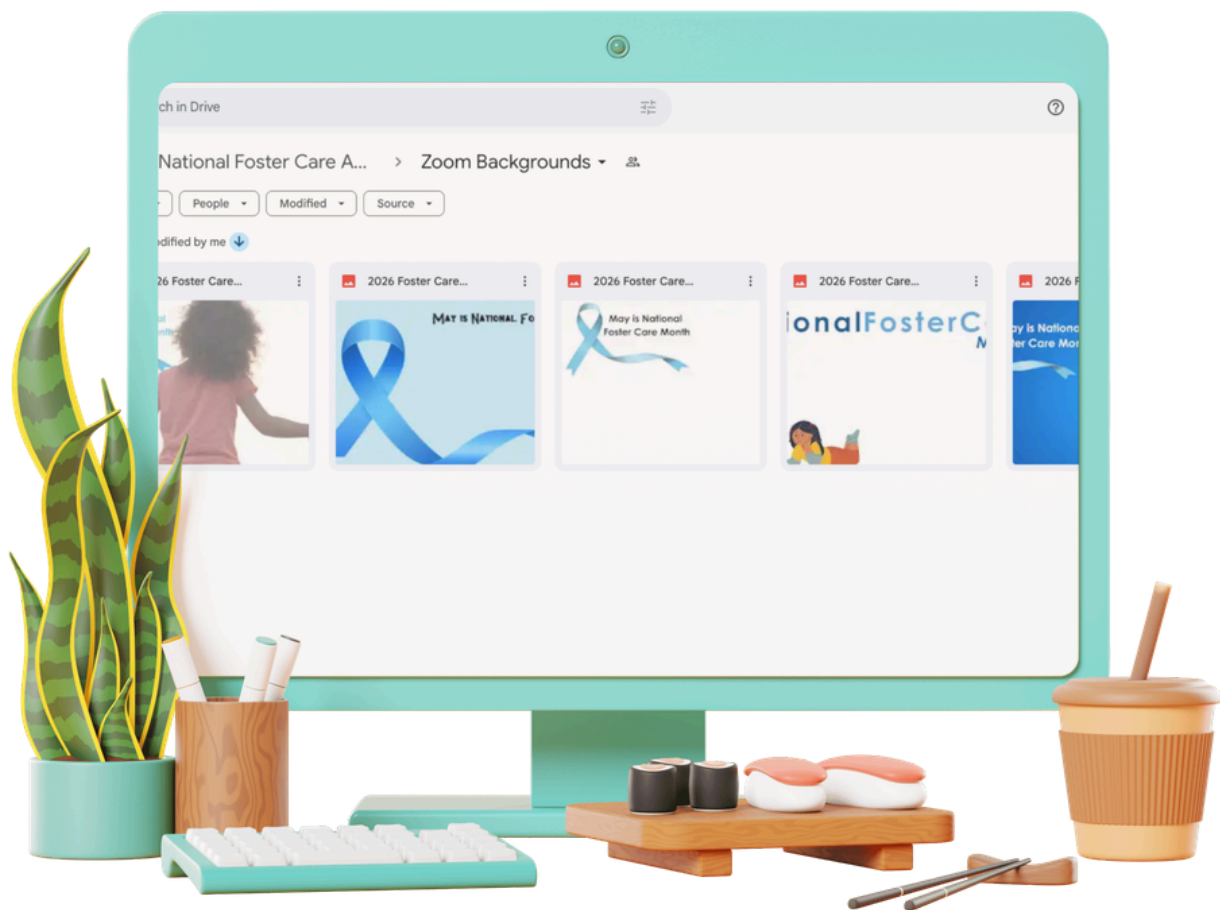
2. Department of Children and Family Services (2025). [Child Welfare Services Data Fact Sheet](#), Fiscal year 2024-25.

3. CDE (2025). [2024-25 Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate](#), DataQuest.

4. CDE (2022). [2022-23 College-Going Rate for California High School Students](#), DataQuest.

# Social Media and Awareness Campaign

Please use the following graphics and materials to help raise awareness about students in foster care and the importance of stability, connection and support. Scan the QR code below or [click on this link](#) to access the social media graphics.



# Highlight Strength and Resilience

See the whole student. Honor the whole journey.

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Students in foster care demonstrate extraordinary strength every day. They navigate systems, transitions and challenges that most adults will never face and they do so while trying to learn, grow and build a future. As professionals across LEAs, child welfare, probation and community organizations, we have both the privilege and the responsibility to see that strength clearly and reflect it back to the students we serve.

Recognizing resilience is not just about celebrating outcomes. It is about honoring the effort, persistence and courage it takes to show up in school, in court, in a new placement, in a new classroom and keep going.

## Shift the Narrative

Too often, conversations about students in foster care center on deficits, what they are missing, where they are falling behind, what systems have failed them. While acknowledging challenges is important, leading with strength changes the dynamic entirely. When professionals across systems consistently reflect a student's capabilities back to them, it builds the self-efficacy and trust that are essential for long-term success.

This Foster Care Awareness Month, challenge yourself and your team to shift the narrative in case notes, in IEP meetings, in court reports, in staffings and in everyday conversations. **Lead with what the student is doing well. Build from there.**

## **Honoring Resilience Across Systems**

### **LEAs and School Staff**

- Incorporate strength-based language into all student-facing documentation, including IEPs, progress reports and counseling notes
- Create opportunities for students to identify and articulate their own strengths through advisories, counseling sessions or career exploration activities
- Train staff to recognize resilience not just in academic achievement but in attendance, relationship-building and perseverance through adversity

### **Child Welfare**

- Use strength-based frameworks in case planning that acknowledge what students and families are doing well alongside areas of growth
- Ensure that educational goals in case plans reflect the student's aspirations, not just system requirements
- Share positive school updates with caregivers regularly, not only when challenges arise

### **Probation**

- Recognize and document academic progress and school engagement as meaningful indicators of a young person's growth
- Actively communicate student strengths to school partners and incorporate educational milestones into case reviews
- Connect youth to mentors and role models who reflect their experiences and demonstrate what is possible

### **Community Partners**

- Design programs that are asset-based, positioning students in foster care as leaders, contributors and changemakers not just recipients of services
- Create platforms for youth formerly in foster care to share their stories and serve as mentors, speakers and advocates
- Partner with LEAs and child welfare to host events that celebrate student achievement across systems

## Sharing Success Stories Responsibly

Across all systems, success stories are among the most powerful tools we have for building awareness, inspiring action and demonstrating impact. **When sharing stories of students in foster care, always prioritize privacy and dignity.**

- Share stories anonymously unless the individual has provided explicit, informed consent
- Focus on the student's strengths and journey rather than the details of their involvement with any system
- When possible, invite former foster youth to share their own stories in their own words, this is the most powerful form of advocacy
- Use success stories in newsletters, cross-system meetings, social media and awareness events to illustrate what is possible when systems work together

### Resilience Is Not a Requirement

One final and important note, **resilience should never be weaponized**. Students in foster care should not be expected to overcome systemic barriers simply because they are strong enough to do so. Highlighting resilience is about **honoring what students bring to the table**, not excusing the work we still have to do to remove the barriers in front of them. **Strength and systemic accountability must go hand in hand.**



In Los Angeles County, there are nearly 11,000 school-aged students are in foster care. Schools and community partners play an essential role in helping these students stay connected and supported.

# School-Wide Awareness and Messaging

## Creating a Culture of Awareness

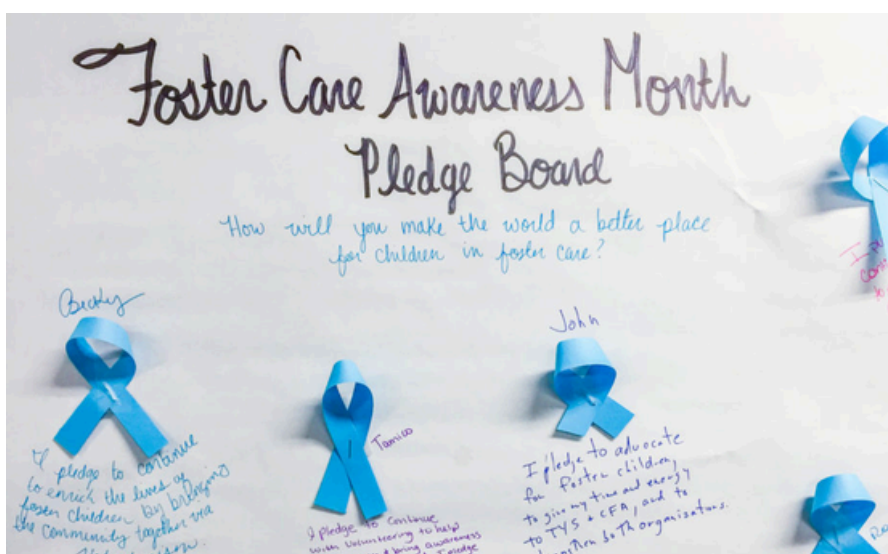
*"If one person at school would've noticed I was absent so much, maybe I wouldn't have had to repeat a grade and I could have received help earlier." - High school student in foster care*

### Creating a Culture of Awareness

Creating a culture of awareness and inclusivity helps foster care students feel supported without requiring them to self-identify.

Schools can engage students and staff through:

- A bulletin board with inclusive messages
  - "You Matter"
  - "Every Student Deserves a Champion"
  - "Your Story is Important"
- Color awareness days
- Morning announcements with foster care facts
- Classroom discussions on belonging and resilience



# Strengthen Access to Resources

**Know what exists. Share what works.**

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Students in foster care often qualify for a wide range of supports across education, child welfare, probation and community systems. Yet one of the most persistent barriers to accessing those supports is simple: students and caregivers do not always know they exist and the professionals who serve them do not always know what their partners offer. Closing that gap is one of the most impactful things our systems can do together.

This Foster Care Awareness Month, we encourage every partner to take stock of the resources within their system, share them across systems and commit to a culture of warm, connected referrals that ensure no student falls through the cracks.

## **Know What You Have. Share What You Know.**

Every system at the table has resources that students and families need. The challenge is that these resources often live in silos, known within one agency but invisible to the others. Building a shared resource landscape across your collaborative is one of the most practical and high-impact steps you can take.

- LEAs should ensure foster youth liaisons maintain an up-to-date resource guide that includes not just school-based supports but also child welfare, probation and community partner offerings
- Child welfare should actively share information about educational rights, tutoring programs, college pathways and financial aid opportunities with caregivers and youth during case planning
- Probation should connect youth to community-based resources, mentorship, workforce development, housing support that address barriers to school engagement
- Community partners should make their services visible and accessible to all system partners through resource fairs, cross-system trainings and shared digital directories

## Key Resources Everyone Should Know

Across systems, there are several critical resources that every professional serving students in foster care should be familiar with and able to share:

### Educational Rights and Stability

- Every student in foster care has the right to remain in their school of origin or enroll immediately in a new school, **even without records or documentation**
- Foster youth liaisons at every LEA are a direct point of contact for navigating enrollment, credits and educational placement decisions
- Students with IEPs or 504 plans are entitled to have those plans follow them through every placement change

### Financial Support and College Access

- The California College and Career Readiness Dashboard helps track postsecondary readiness for students in foster care
- Former foster youth are eligible for the Chafee Education and Training Voucher, providing financial support for postsecondary education and training
- California's AB 12 extends foster care support to age 21 and **youth should be connected to extended foster care resources well before they age out**

### Health and Well-Being

- Students in foster care in California are eligible for Medi-Cal regardless of placement type
- Mental health services should be coordinated across systems to ensure continuity of care through placement changes
- **Caregivers should be connected to support networks and training opportunities that equip them to meet the educational and emotional needs of students in their care**

### Community-Based Support

- Local nonprofits, higher education partners and community organizations often offer mentorship, tutoring, housing navigation and workforce development programs specifically designed for foster youth
- Cross-system resource fairs during Foster Care Awareness Month are an **excellent opportunity to connect students, caregivers and professionals** with these community offerings

# Engagement Strategies

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Schools can foster a supportive culture that benefits all students while ensuring students in foster care feel included and valued.

Examples of school-wide activities include:

## **Kindness Campaigns**

- Encourage students to write uplifting messages on sticky notes or posters displayed throughout the school.

## **Peer Mentorship**

- Create peer mentoring opportunities that allow students to build connections with supportive classmates.

## **Staff Awareness**

- Provide staff training on how to recognize and support students who may be experiencing foster care-related challenges.

## **Student-Led Service Projects**


- Leadership groups or service clubs can organize drives collecting school supplies, hygiene kits or books for children in foster care.

By framing these initiatives as community-wide activities, schools promote inclusion without identifying individual students.

The following activities provide simple ways for students to participate and promote messages of kindness, inclusion and belonging.

These activities promote inclusion, kindness and community while celebrating the theme Stronger Together.

# National Foster Care Awareness Month 2026

 <b>May</b> Monday		National Foster Care Awareness Month			2026
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	
				<b>1</b> Participate in Foster Fridays. For more information, visit <a href="#">comfort.cases</a> on how to create and host your very own event!	
<b>4</b> Expand your awareness of the foster care system and learn about the issues impacting our students in care, by reading from a <a href="#">curated list of books</a> created by the LA County Library.	<b>5</b> The first Tuesday in May is National Foster Care Day, an initiative of the Children's Bureau. Access <a href="#">resources</a> to learn more.	<b>6</b> Bridge the digital divide! <a href="#">iFoster</a> is a national nonprofit that provides resources for our youth in foster care, that helps to close the digital gap. Contact them for more information.	<b>7</b> Pledge to support the Foster Youth Services Scholarship Fund by making a donation to the Greater LA Education Foundation <a href="#">Signature Fund</a> .	<b>8</b> Love baking? Create a birthday cake for a child or youth in foster care! Join For Goodness Cakes' LA Chapter to provide celebration cakes and make a good day GREAT! Visit their <a href="#">website</a> to learn more!	
<b>11</b> Create a meaningful team-building experience by providing a special gift to a child or youth in foster care. Explore team-building opportunities with <a href="#">Foster Love</a> to make a lasting impact together.	<b>12</b> Watch "Congratulations, You're On Your Own: Life After Foster Care" a free <a href="#">PBS SoCal</a> documentary sharing stories of young adults and insights from professionals about entering and exiting the foster system.	<b>13</b> Provide an opportunity for students to explore their interests and careers using the <a href="#">CA Career Zone website</a> .	<b>14</b> Learn about <a href="#">John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY)</a> . For over 20 years, JBAY has supported youth in foster care through training, advocacy, and resources to improve outcomes. Discover how they are making a difference in California today.	<b>15</b> Consider <a href="#">donating to Camp Mariastella</a> , an all-girls summer camp that builds essential life skills. Your support provides scholarships for low-income and at-risk families, including students in foster care.	
<b>18</b> Help eligible students claim free money for college or career training with the <a href="#">CalKIDS Scholarship</a> .	<b>19</b> Connect youth with your <a href="#">Local America's Job Center of California (AJCC)</a> to gain no-cost job and training skills.	<b>20</b> Visit the Department of Children and Family Services <a href="#">website</a> to learn more about becoming a foster parent	<b>21</b> A significant number of youth in the foster care system identify as LGBTQ+. Contact the <a href="#">National SOGIE Center</a> to schedule a training to learn about creating culturally responsive systems for children and their families.	<b>22</b> The <a href="#">LA County Library</a> provides a library card and a free book for every young person (17 and under) in foster care. Eligibility rules may apply.	
<b>25</b> If you know a high school senior in foster care, ensure they complete their FAFSA or CADAA forms, the <a href="#">Chafee Grant application</a> , and encourage campus visits to inspire excitement for their next educational chapter.	<b>26</b> Watch the movie " <a href="#">Instant Family</a> ". Based on a true story, this heartwarming film follows a couple navigating parenthood as they become resource parents to three siblings.	<b>27</b> If you know a student struggling academically, LACOE FYSCP offers free in-home tutoring. To check eligibility and submit a referral, visit the <a href="#">tutoring website</a> for more information.	<b>28</b> Show your support for youth in foster care and their families by wearing <a href="#">light blue</a> in honor of Foster Care Month! Consider making this a weekly activity throughout May to promote awareness and inclusivity for students in foster care.	<b>29</b> Support students in foster care by inviting LACOE Foster Youth Services for staff training. Our sessions boost achievement, connection, and belonging. Contact your regional team through our <a href="#">staff contact list</a> .	

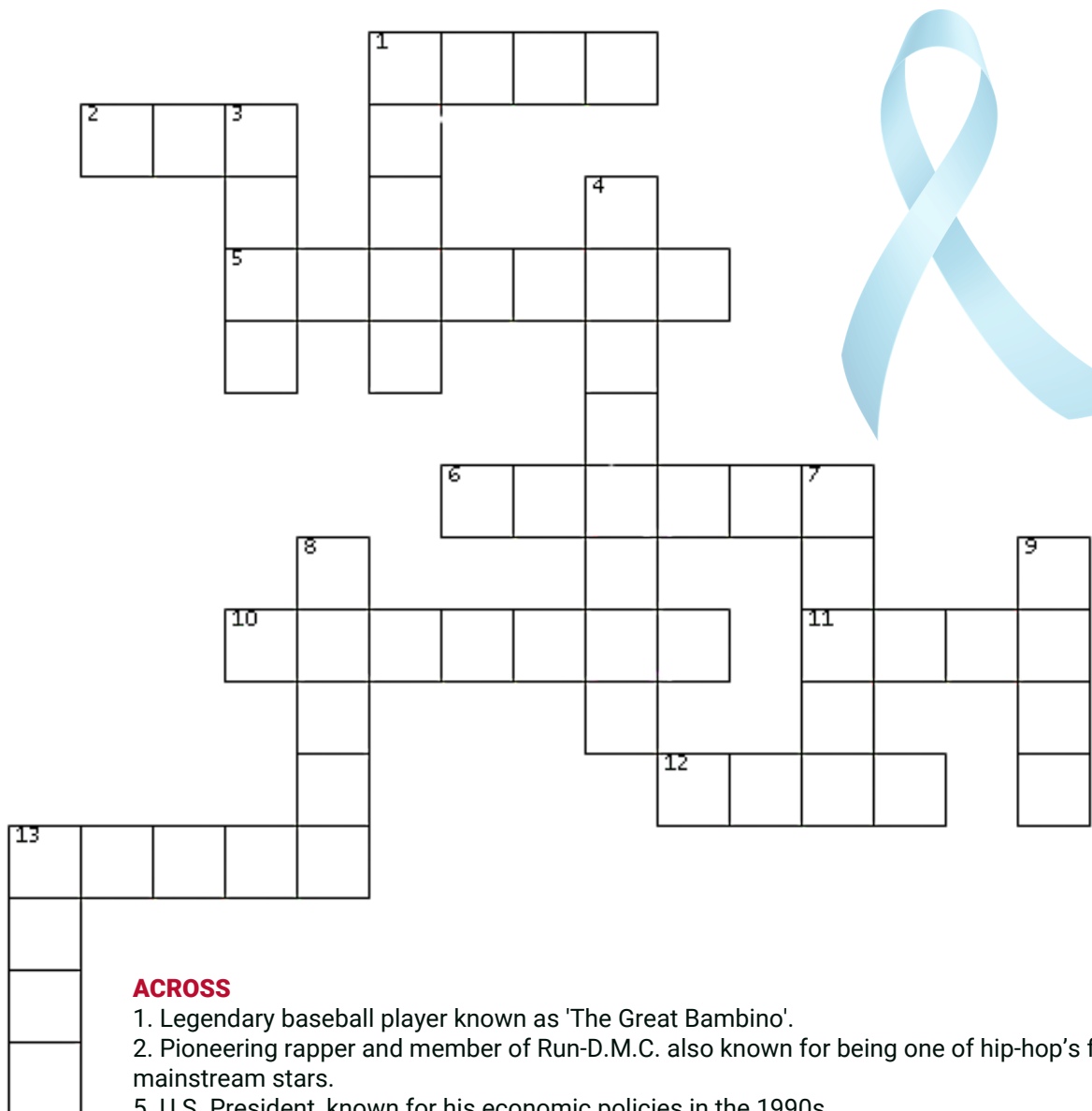
To access the 2026 calendar of events, [click here](#)



# Foster Care Stars: Celebrities Who Overcame the Odds

## Student Activity

Students can complete this crossword puzzle to learn about notable individuals who experienced foster care and went on to achieve success in a variety of fields.



### ACROSS

1. Legendary baseball player known as 'The Great Bambino'.
2. Pioneering rapper and member of Run-D.M.C. also known for being one of hip-hop's first mainstream stars.
5. U.S. President, known for his economic policies in the 1990s.
6. Iconic 1950s and early 60s actress and model.
10. Comedian and actress who broke out with Girls Trip and authored the memoir The Last Black Unicorn.
11. Founder of the Wendy's fast food chain.
12. The 'Goddess of Pop' who won an Academy Award for Moonstruck.
13. Rebellious 1950s icon known for his role in Rebel Without a Cause.

### DOWN

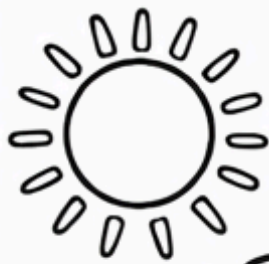
1. Actress and choreographer known for her role in White Men Can't Jump and as a dancer for the Fly Girls on In Living Color.
3. French fashion icon known for popularizing the 'little black dress'.
4. NBA Hall of Famer and Miami Heat legend known for his shot-blocking skills.
7. Comedian and actor known for his roles in Beverly Hills Cop and Coming to America.
8. Most decorated gymnast in history who was raised by her grandparents.
9. British singer famous for his hit 'Kiss from a Rose'.
13. He was part of the 'Fab Four' and famously said, 'Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans'.

# Stronger Together!



Everyone Belongs. Everyone is Valued.





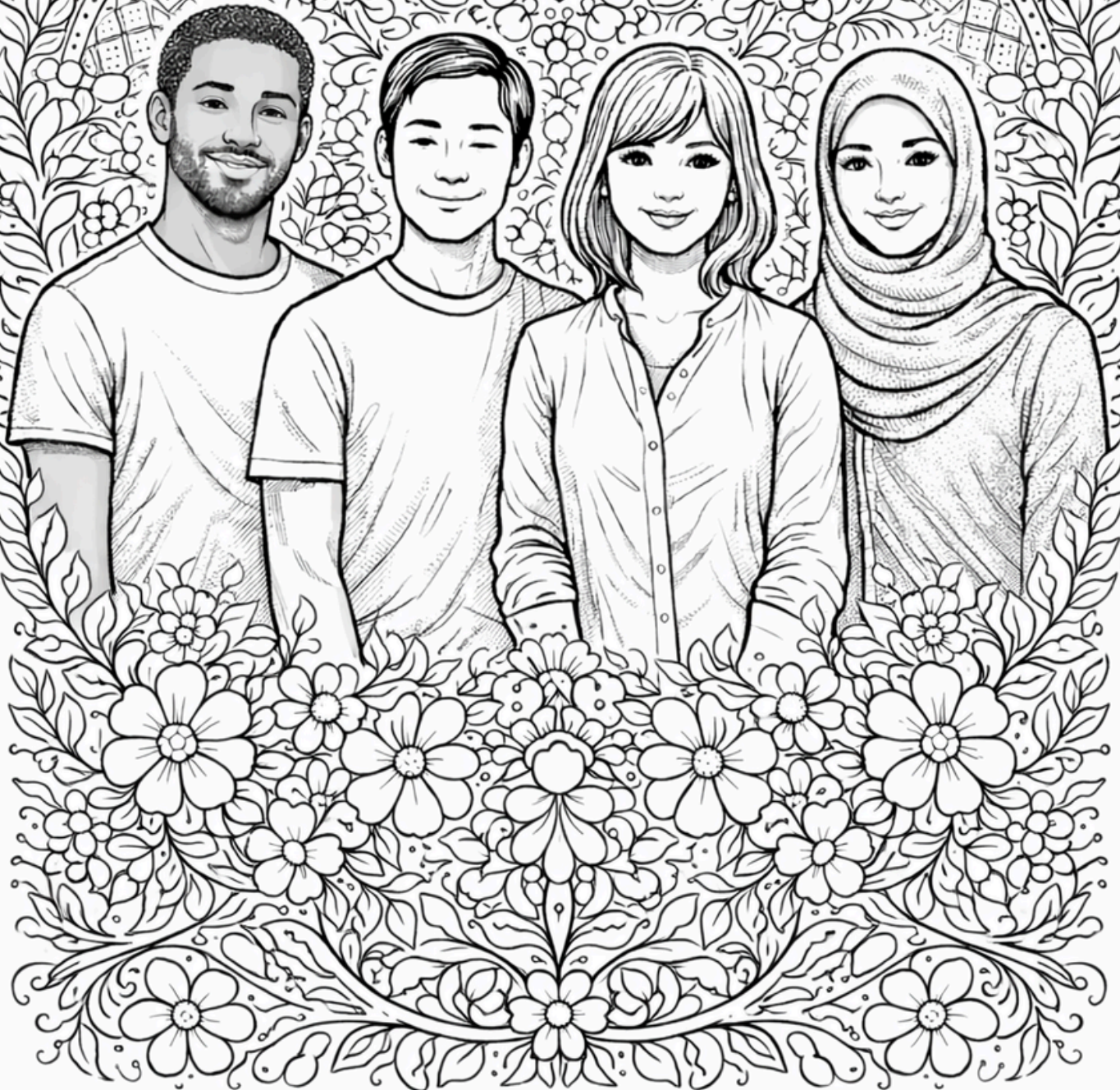
**Kindness,  
Hope, & Love**



**Foster Care Awareness Month**



**Stronger  
Together**





# Celebrate Achievements Privately

## In a Meaningful Way

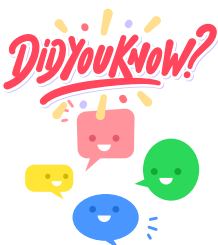
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Recognize students without public identification, ensuring they feel valued.

Recognition should be meaningful but private to respect the identities of students in foster care. Schools can acknowledge achievements through **personalized letters, small awards or private celebrations** rather than public announcements.

Scholarships and financial awards should be offered with an **opt-in option**, allowing students to decide if they want to be recognized. Schools can also provide **quiet affirmations** by having a trusted adult, such as a counselor, teacher or coach congratulate a student personally on their hard work and dedication.

For a more significant impact, schools can host **career panels, life skills workshops or college prep sessions**, inviting all students while tailoring the content to include resources beneficial for those in foster care. By making these opportunities widely available, students can participate without drawing attention to their circumstances.



Strong relationships with caring adults at school can significantly improve outcomes for students in foster care. Even one supportive connection can make a lasting difference.

# Provide Recognition

## Caregivers, Social Workers and Educators

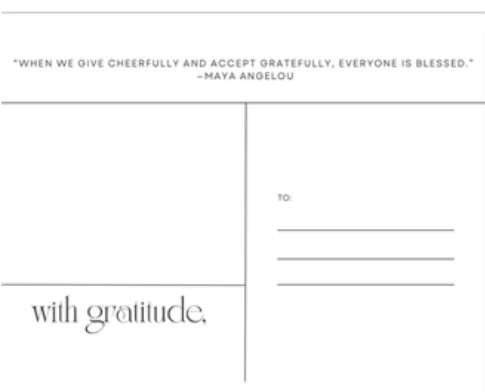
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Appreciate those who support students in foster care while reinforcing a positive message.

Foster care is a team effort involving caregivers, teachers, social workers and community advocates. Recognizing these individuals helps build morale and reinforces the importance of their work.

Schools can send **thank-you notes, certificates or small gifts** to those who support students in foster care. A special **staff appreciation event or luncheon** can acknowledge teachers and counselors who make a difference.

Another impactful way to celebrate is by sharing **student testimonials** (anonymously) about how these professionals have positively influenced their lives. Highlighting successful school-community partnerships also promotes ongoing collaboration and resource-sharing.



[Click here](#) or  
Scan the QR code to download



# Community Partnerships and Local Involvement

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Collaboration between schools and community organizations strengthens the network of support available to students in foster care.

## **Partners can work together to provide:**

### **Direct Student Support**

- Tutoring programs
- Mentorship opportunities
- School supplies and meal support

### **Career and College Exploration**

- Job shadowing
- Internships
- Career panels and college preparation workshops

### **Community Engagement**

- Resource fairs connecting families to services
- Volunteer service days supporting foster youth programs

The Foster Youth Services team also offers a free training:

### **Child Welfare Collaboration: An Introduction to the Department of Children and Family Services**

This training helps educators better understand the child welfare system and strengthen partnerships that support students in foster care.

LEAs are encouraged to participate to enhance collaboration and student outcomes.

# Branding

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## Our 2026 Theme

### Stronger Together: Align • Act • Achieve

This theme is a call to action for every system and every professional who serves students in foster care. It acknowledges that meaningful change requires more than awareness, it requires alignment across systems, concrete action on the ground and a shared commitment to achieving better outcomes for every student in care.

#### Use this theme consistently across:

- Email communications and newsletters
- Social media posts and graphics
- Event invitations and programs
- Presentations and trainings
- Printed materials and toolkits

#### Language and Messaging Guidelines

The words we use matter. Using consistent, people-first language across all systems sends a powerful message to students, caregivers and communities about how we see and value the young people we serve.

- Use "students in foster care" rather than "foster youth" or "foster kids"
- Use "caregivers" or "resource families" rather than "foster parents"
- Focus on strengths and resilience rather than leading with deficits or system involvement
- Avoid language that defines students by their system involvement, they are **students first**
- Use "cross-system collaboration" and "shared accountability" to reinforce the spirit of this year's theme
- When sharing stories, always use anonymized or consent-based examples that **protect student privacy and dignity**

## Visual Identity

This year's campaign should feel cohesive, professional and aligned across all partner organizations. When creating or sharing materials:

- Incorporate the light blue associated with foster care awareness alongside your organization's existing brand colors
- Use the tagline Stronger Together: Align • Act • Achieve on all campaign materials
- Reference the LACOE Foster Youth Services logo on materials produced by or in partnership with our team
- Ensure all graphics and images reflect the diversity of the students and communities we serve
- Avoid images that depict students in vulnerable or distressing situations – choose images that convey strength, connection and possibility

## Hashtags and Social Media

Amplify the campaign across platforms using consistent hashtags that connect our collective efforts:

- #StrongerTogether
- #FosterCareAwareness
- #AlignActAchieve
- #EveryStudentMatters
- #LACOE

Tag @lacoefys on Instagram to be featured and to connect your efforts to our broader campaign. All social media graphics from last year's toolkit have been refreshed to reflect this year's theme and are available for download in the shared Google Drive.

## A Final Note on Branding with Integrity

A campaign brand is more than a logo or a tagline. It is a reflection of our values, our commitment to students in foster care, our respect for their dignity and privacy and our belief that systems working together can change lives. Every email, every post, every flyer and every event is an opportunity to reinforce that commitment. **Brand with intention. Communicate with care.** And let everything we put into the world reflect the students we are honored to serve.

## Images and Graphics to Celebrate Foster Care Awareness Month

Remember all graphics are made available for you in the [Google Drive](#).

# Action Plan

**Stronger Together: Align • Act • Achieve**

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## **From Awareness to Action**

The following Action Plan is designed to help schools and community partners turn awareness into meaningful action. While the earlier sections of this toolkit provide ideas and resources to recognize National Foster Care Awareness Month, this section focuses on practical steps partners can take to strengthen collaboration and support for students in foster care.

Organized around this year's theme, Stronger Together: Align • Act • Achieve, the Action Plan encourages partners to reflect on current practices, identify opportunities for collaboration and take intentional steps to improve educational stability and outcomes for students in foster care.

This framework may be used during staff meetings, leadership team discussions, school planning sessions or cross-agency collaboration meetings. While designed to support activities during National Foster Care Awareness Month, the Action Plan can also serve as a guide for strengthening partnerships and supports throughout the year.

Partners are encouraged to select one or two actions that align with their role and capacity and use this framework as a starting point for continued collaboration. Every partner has a role to play in creating supportive environments where students in foster care can succeed.

## **How to Use This Action Plan**

This Action Plan is intended to support reflection, collaboration and action. Schools and community partners may use the framework to identify opportunities to strengthen support for students in foster care, build partnerships across systems and promote inclusive school communities.

Partners may choose to implement one activity, explore several strategies or use the framework to guide ongoing planning discussions throughout the year.

# Align

## Build a Shared Foundation

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Creating meaningful change for students in foster care requires intentional collaboration across systems. This action plan is designed to guide LEAs, child welfare agencies, probation departments and community partners in working together with purpose and shared commitment.

- Identify key stakeholders across systems including foster youth liaisons, social workers, probation officers, school staff and community partners and establish a shared vision for student success.
- Review current policies, protocols and data across your systems to identify gaps and opportunities for stronger coordination.
- Commit to using people-first, inclusive language such as "students in foster care" in all communications and materials.
- Establish regular cross-system meetings to build trust, share information and ensure all partners are working toward common goals.

# ALIGN

# Act

## Put Collaboration into Practice

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### Act: Put Collaboration into Practice

- Launch Foster Care Awareness Month activities that engage all systems, not just schools, including awareness campaigns, resource fairs and joint professional development.
- Participate in cross-system trainings such as Child Welfare Collaboration: An Introduction to the Department of Children and Family Services, offered free by the Foster Youth Services team.
- Ensure students in foster care have access to stable educational placements, timely enrollment and seamless credit transfer by strengthening communication between schools and child welfare partners.
- Host joint events that connect caregivers, educators, social workers and probation staff around the shared goal of student stability and success.
- Share anonymized success stories across partner organizations to highlight the impact of collaboration and inspire continued action.

ACT

# Achieve

## Measure, Recognize and Sustain

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### **Achieve: Measure, Recognize and Sustain**

- Track key indicators such as graduation rates, school stability, attendance and college-going rates for students in foster care to assess the impact of your collaborative efforts.
- Recognize individuals across all systems, educators, social workers, probation officers, caregivers and community advocates who go above and beyond for students in care.
- Collect feedback from students, caregivers and partners to continuously improve your approach.
- Build on awareness month momentum by identifying year-round strategies, including mentorship programs, ongoing cross-system training and strengthened data-sharing agreements.
- Commit to sustainability, the work of supporting students in foster care extends far beyond May.

ACHIEVE



# Resources for Youth in Foster Care

The following organizations and programs provide critical support for students in foster care, caregivers and the professionals who serve them.

## Community Partner Organizations

Name of Resource	Description	Contact Information
<b>Alliance for Children’s Rights</b>	The Alliance for Children’s Rights advocates for abused and vulnerable children in foster care by helping them access healthcare, education, benefits and housing, while supporting families and creating permanency through adoption, guardianship and services that help youth transition to independence.	Phone: 213-368-6010 Website: <a href="http://allianceforchildrensrights.org">allianceforchildrensrights.org</a>
Name of Resource	Description	Contact Information
<b>California Foster Youth Education Task Force</b>	The California Foster Youth Education Task Force works to improve educational outcomes for foster youth by bringing together experts from over 200 organizations to collaborate across systems.	Website: <a href="http://cfyef.org">cfyef.org</a>
Name of Resource	Description	Contact Information
<b>California Foster Care Ombudsman</b>	The California Office of the Foster Care Ombudsman (OFCO) advocates for foster youth by protecting their rights, providing training on the Foster Youth Bill of Rights and helping investigate and resolve concerns about their care, placement, and services.	Phone: 1-877-846-1602 Email: <a href="mailto:fosteryouthhelp@dss.ca.gov">fosteryouthhelp@dss.ca.gov</a> Website: <a href="http://fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov">fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov</a>
Name of Resource	Description	Contact Information
<b>Independent Living Program</b>	To provide comprehensive services and resources that support transition-age youth (TAY) in successfully moving from dependency to independence.	Phone: 1-877-694-5741 Email: <a href="mailto:youthds@dcfs.lacounty.gov">youthds@dcfs.lacounty.gov</a> Website: <a href="http://ilponline.org">ilponline.org</a>
Name of Resource	Description	Contact Information
<b>John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY)</b>	John Burton Advocates for Youth improves the lives of young people in California who have experienced foster care or homelessness through policy advocacy, community training and research that informs solutions.	Phone: 415-348-0011 Email: <a href="mailto:info@jbay.org">info@jbay.org</a> Website: <a href="http://jbay.org">jbay.org</a>



# Resources for Youth in Foster Care

## Post Secondary Education Resources

Name of Resource	Description	Contact Information
LACOE Foster Youth Services College Foster Youth Programs Guide	Information provided by each college and university's foster youth program outlining available supports and resources for foster youth.	PDF <a href="#">link</a>

Name of Resource	Description	Contact Information
The California State University: Resources for Foster Youth	Students who have experienced foster care or group homes may need additional support to succeed in college. CSU campuses offer resources and programs to help you thrive from your first day through graduation.	Phone: 562-951-4000 Website: <a href="http://calstate.edu">calstate.edu</a>

Name of Resource	Description	Contact Information
LACOE Foster Youth Services 2025-26 Scholarship Grants and Waivers List	This page lists scholarships and is updated regularly. Check back for new opportunities. The LACOE Foster Youth Services Unit only shares these resources and does not manage scholarship selection or payments.	Google Doc <a href="#">link</a>

Name of Resource	Description	Contact Information
CalKIDS	The California Kids Investment and Development Savings Program (CalKIDS) provides eligible students with scholarship accounts and seed deposits to help pay for future higher education costs.	Phone: 1-888-445-2377 Website: <a href="http://calkids.org">calkids.org</a>

## Summer/Recreational Resources

Contact Name & Information	Description	Dates
<b>Happy Trails for Kids: Summer Camp 2026</b> Contact: September Sucher Phone: 310-650-5943 Email: <a href="mailto:september@happytrailsforkids.org">september@happytrailsforkids.org</a> Website: <a href="http://Happytrailsforkids.org">Happytrailsforkids.org</a>	Overnight summer Camp for Children in foster care! Caregivers and DCFS Social Workers may complete camper registration online using this <a href="#">link</a>	All Sessions begin on Saturday and end on Thursday <b>Session 1:</b> June 6 - 11, 2026 <b>Session 2:</b> June 13 - 18, 2026 <b>Session 3:</b> June 27 - July 2, 2026

Contact Name & Information	Description	Dates
<b>You Belong: Foster Youth Initiative (FYI)</b> Contact: Case Manger or email <a href="mailto:FYImembership@ymcaLA.org">FYImembership@ymcaLA.org</a>	The YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles, in partnership with the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), provides a membership program to support youth in foster care.	Year round membership for students in foster care ages 12-26 residing in Los Angeles County. Website <a href="#">link</a>



## May Professional Learning Opportunities

### **Foster Youth Bill of Rights Training | CA Foster Youth Ombudsperson**

**When:** Thursday, May 7, 2026, 10 a.m.

**Description:** This interactive training covers the Foster Youth Bill of Rights, the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard (RPPS) and the role of the Office of the Foster Care Ombudsperson, empowering participants to support youth in care and advocate when rights are violated.

[Click here to register](#)

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### **Beyond the Basics: A Deeper Look at Trauma-Informed Practices for Educators | LACOE Foster Youth Services**

**When:** Tuesday, May 12, 2026, 9 -11 a.m.

**Description:** Building on foundational trauma-informed practices, this session deepens understanding of resilience, regulation and equity-centered support. Participants will explore practical strategies to create healing-centered environments, support staff well-being and elevate student voice through strengths-based, culturally responsive approaches.

[Click here to register](#)

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### **Foster Care Training: Navigating Mental Health Services for Youth on Probation | Chief Probation Offices of California**

**When:**

Wednesday, May 13, 2026, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 14, 2026, 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.

**Description:** Overview of California's mental health system with a focus on trauma, key mental health terms and probation's role in supporting probation-involved youth in foster care.

[Click here to register](#)

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### **Quarterly Homeless Education and Foster Youth Liaison | LACOE Foster Youth Services and Homeless Education**

**When:** Thursday, May 14, 2026, 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

**Description:** Bringing together school districts, county agencies, and community partners to support students experiencing homelessness and foster youth. The goal is to strengthen partnerships and ensure students receive consistent, equitable, high-quality support.

[Click here to register](#)

# Stronger Together

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Supporting students in foster care is not the responsibility of one system alone. When education, child welfare, probation, caregivers and community partners align their efforts, meaningful change becomes possible.

National Foster Care Awareness Month reminds us that awareness is only the beginning. By continuing to align our work, act with intention and measure our progress, we can help ensure that every student in foster care has the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for the work you do each day to support students in foster care. Your commitment to creating stable learning environments, building meaningful relationships and ensuring access to opportunities makes a lasting difference in the lives of these students.

**Together, we are stronger.**

To stay connected and receive updates, resources and upcoming training opportunities, we invite you to subscribe to the LACOE Foster Youth Services newsletter using the [link provided here](#).

THANK  
YOU!

# Sample Board Resolution

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## BOARD RESOLUTION

No. XX: 2025-26

**WHEREAS**, National Foster Care Awareness Month was first recognized in 1988 through a presidential proclamation to raise awareness about the needs of children and youth in foster care and to recognize the many individuals and organizations dedicated to supporting them; and

**WHEREAS**, nearly 330,000 children and youth across the United States are in foster care, including nearly 40,000 in California, underscoring the importance of coordinated systems and community partnerships to support their safety, stability and educational success; and

**WHEREAS**, in Los Angeles County approximately 18,650 children and youth are involved in the foster care system, with about 10,088 living in out-of-home placements and nearly 11,000 identified as school-aged, highlighting the significant role that schools and educational partners play in supporting these students; and

**WHEREAS**, students in foster care often experience school mobility, disruptions in educational continuity and barriers to accessing consistent academic and social supports, making stable learning environments and coordinated services essential to improving their educational outcomes; and

**WHEREAS**, the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), through its Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program, works collaboratively with Local Educational Agencies, schools, child welfare agencies, probation and community organizations to improve educational outcomes and promote school stability for students in foster care; and

**WHEREAS**, National Foster Care Awareness Month provides an opportunity for schools, agencies and communities across Los Angeles County to recognize the assets, strengths and resilience of students in foster care and to strengthen efforts that support their educational success and overall well-being; and

**WHEREAS**, increasing awareness and strengthening partnerships across education, child welfare and community systems helps ensure that students in foster care receive the support, encouragement and opportunities needed to thrive in school and beyond; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Los Angeles County Board of Education hereby recognizes May 2026 as National Foster Care Awareness Month and encourages schools, community partners and residents throughout Los Angeles County to observe this month with programs and activities that raise awareness of the experiences and needs of children and youth in foster care, highlight the importance of educational stability and coordinated support and promote opportunities for students to succeed in school and beyond.

**ADOPTED** this 21st day of April 2026, by the Los Angeles County Board of Education in Downey, California.

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# Contact Information

## Foster Youth Services Leadership Team

Dr. La Shona Jenkins, LCSW - Project Director III, Foster Youth Services Unit  
Jason Gutierrez - Coordinator III, Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program  
Loretta Ledezma - Coordinator III, Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program & Tutoring Program  
Dr. Jennifer Rios-Zambrano, LMFT - Coordinator III, Education Specialist Program  
Larry Canter - Coordinator III, Direct Services Program  
Dr. Ani Aharonian - Research & Evaluation Coordinator  
Jesse Hernandez - Administrative Coordinator  
Michelle de Castro - Supervising Business Systems Analyst

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## Website

[lacoefys.edu/fosteryouthservices](http://lacoefys.edu/fosteryouthservices)

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## Phone Number

562-922-6469

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## Email

[fyscp\\_team@lacoefys.edu](mailto:fyscp_team@lacoefys.edu)

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## Social Media



IG: [@lacoefys](https://www.instagram.com/lacoefys)

