

Increasing the High School Graduation Rate for Foster Youth



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Introduction

In the U.S. today, nearly 270,000 children and youth in foster care are school-aged. Data show that only 50 % of youth in foster care graduate from high school by age 18 versus 83 % for all students. (U.S. Department of Education).

Foster youth tend to have lower graduation rates, higher dropout rates and slower grade progression than other students (Roscorla, 2017). Without a high school diploma, young adults are vulnerable to poverty, homelessness, incarceration and substance abuse.

Research Question

What is the most effective program to increase the high school graduation rate among foster care youth?

Recommended Prevention/Intervention Program

Treehouse Graduation Success Program work one-on-one with students to:

- ❖ Create personalized high school graduation plans.
- ❖ Build problem solving and self advocacy skills
- ❖ Connect to resources like tutoring, credit recovery, and college and career prep
- ❖ Recognize and develop support systems around foster youth, from caregivers, to social workers, to school teachers and counselors .
- ❖ Resolve educational barriers like school transitions, special education needs, disciplinary actions and credit recovery.

Rationale for Recommended Treatment

Advantages:

- ❖ 53 out of 83 (64%) Treehouse Graduation Success seniors graduated in 2016 (“Treehouse”, 2018).
- ❖ 54 out of 80 (68%) Treehouse Graduation Success seniors graduated in 2018 (“Treehouse”, 2018).
- ❖ Available to middle and high school students.
- ❖ By 2022, Treehouse Graduation Success Program is expected to graduate foster care youth at the same rate as their peers (“Treehouse”, 2018).

Limitations:

- ❖ Treehouse Graduation Success Program is not available in states other than Washington and only partners with King County, Tacoma and Spokane school districts.

Methods

- ❖ Databases: Academic Search Complete, ERIC (EBSCOhost) and SocINDEX with Full Text
- ❖ Search Terms: Academic Performance, Dropout rates, Education, Programs, Foster care system, Foster youth, High School and Graduation rates
- ❖ Search Engine: Google
- ❖ Inclusion criteria: Articles published in peer-reviewed journals, Empirical articles with experimental and quasi-experimental designs, systematic review or meta-analysis

Total: 10 articles



Other Programs Considered

- ❖ The Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program, helps youth face the challenges of adulthood and independence (“Texas Department”, n.d.).
- ❖ Academic Support and Achievement Program (ASAP), was recently initiated in Los Angeles however no research has been conducted to determine effectiveness. “Student Support Programs, n.d.).
- ❖ The Fostering Academics, Mentoring Excellence (FAME) program is 3 day summer camp offered to foster youth that focused on college readiness (Day et al., 2018)

Conclusion & Recommendations for practice and research

Treehouse Graduation Success Program was found to be most effective program to increase the high school graduation rate among foster you. The program provides education planning, monitoring, coaching and support services to students. Education specialist typically meet with students weekly (Lindley, 2013).

Recommendations

- ❖ The Treehouse ABC (Attendance, Behavior, Course Completion) Plus model should be utilized in all school districts nationwide.
- ❖ More research is needed to track Academic achievements and high school graduation rates, to ensure that the Treehouse Graduation Success Program is effective in all states.